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FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TARGET LANGUAGE SUBJECTS' EFFICIENCY AS A PREPARATION FOR A B2 LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
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Abstract

The present thesis reports the findings of a mixed method study that combined the qualitative, quantitative and documentary research. The purpose was to explore university students' perceptions at Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, regarding their formative English learning courses and their efficiency as a preparation for a B2 level of proficiency. This thesis also inquired into the relationship between these perceptions and the actual certification of the language, according to certified evaluations and reports. A questionnaire and computer files from a department at Facultad de Lenguas were the instruments collected as data. The results revealed the participants' awareness and perceptions toward issues regarding language learning (materials, teachers, curriculum, CEFR) are significantly related to actual certifications. Additionally, they revealed an improvement in the levels of approval regarding Target Language subjects in two different periods.

The findings in this study cannot be generalized, however, they may represent similar perceptions from different students at the same Faculty.

Chapter I Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and describe the issues under study, as well as the motivations that led me to do this research about such topics. Also, the Research Questions that directed the study are presented.

1.1 Rationale for topic selection

As students of the School of Languages of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, we struggle not only to acquire a second language but also to certify it in order to graduate. The *Facultad de Lenguas* bases its standards on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Therefore, one of the learning objectives of the curriculum is supposed to be an effort to have students approaching the B2 level of the CEFR. Reviewing the subjects in the curriculum, it may be noticed the existence of ten subjects aimed to help students develop their language skills (5 Target Language courses and 5 Workshops).

The curriculum states that students would be able to take 5 terms to accomplish these subjects (following the 4-year curriculum design). That is 2 and a half years -10 hours a week- for the study of the required level of language. Apparently, that should be enough to accomplish and certify a B2 level.

However, after this time at the School of Languages, the number of students who certify the level is low. Some of the students take extra courses in the House of English so they can be prepared for a certification exam. It may be inferred that students struggle with different issues, such as lack of confidence and/or knowledge, lack of time and extra practice, among others. The main issue may be that after students finish all Target Language subjects and workshops, they still need to gain extra preparation to present an international certification exam, which in many cases is not achieved.

This is the main reason I decided to investigate about students' perceptions regarding this School of Languages preparation to acquire and certify their second language.

1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is a twofold investigation. On the one hand, it aims to explore students' perceptions about the efficiency of their Target Language subjects as a preparation for a B2 level of proficiency in English, and on the other hand, to examine the relationship between these perceptions and the actual certification rate of students at the B.A. of English Language Teaching of the School of Languages.

1.3 Research questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 What is the overall students' level of awareness regarding the CEFR and the certification rate at Facultad de Lenguas during a two-year period?

RQ2 To what extent are students at Facultad de Lenguas able to attain a B2 level in a certification exam, according to their perceptions?

RQ3 What are the students' perceptions toward Target Language subjects in the LEI program?

RQ4 What are students' perceptions about the efficiency of their Target Language subjects in regard to language skills development?

Chapter II Literature review

In this chapter, I explore related previous studies to understand the importance and relevance of this investigation. This chapter also presents some essential concepts to acknowledge English language learning as a complex process, in which several factors take part (learners, teachers, curriculum, materials, environment, evaluation, etc.). Thus, in this chapter, these theoretical concepts are reviewed and discussed, to establish the basis of the research.

2.1 Communicative competence and evaluation

According to Jack C. Richards (1985), evaluation may be defined as a systemic gathering of information for making decisions. That is to say, when an evaluation is carried out, there are several methods which help to gather information about what is being evaluated and, by means of the collected information, it is decided whether to implement changes or not, what type of changes, and how to implement them. When talking about English language learning and teaching it cannot be an exception, since every single aspect of them may be evaluated –mastery, proficiency, performance, lessons, courses, etc.

Traditionally, language proficiency was seen as a mastery of grammatical structures of language –rules, lexicon, etc. However, this mastery was not adequate for speakers who learn a language in order to use it for communication, for all the grammatical knowledge does not provide by itself enough material to communicate fluently. There was a bridge to build between the simple *knowledge* of language and the actual *use* of it, to go from the morpho-syntactic to the pragmatics field (Yalden, 1987).

It was Chomsky (1965) who stated the foundations of communicative competence, when he first claimed a distinction between what he called linguistic competence (what a speaker *knows* about the language) and linguistic performance (how the speaker actually *uses* the language). The two of them represented different approaches to language learning. He was aware of the various dimensions that language may be presented at. Nevertheless, it was

necessary to go further language grammar. Although it was not sufficient to ultimately develop a new concept, it provided essential input for others to work on it.

Learning a language has to do not only with the knowledge of its grammar rules and structures, but also being aware of its usage. As an answer to Chomsky's linguistic competence and performance, Hymes (1979) stated the components of what he called communicative competence. "He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner." In other words, language should not be measured in regard to what is known, but the way it is used. He claimed four to be the components of it:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally *possible*;
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails."

Considering the concept and description, Canale and Swain (1980) worked further on its evolution. They specified four components of communicative competence:

1. Grammatical competence (mastery of the language code).
2. Sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness of utterances with respect to both meaning and form).
3. Discourse competence (mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve unity of a spoken or written text).
4. Strategic competence (mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used to compensate of breakdowns in communication, and to make communication more effective).

The concept of communicative competence is not restricted to the linguistic field; furthermore, it has been demonstrated to be useful for educational purposes, such as for

curriculum and syllabus design, evaluation and assessment. Communicative competence is helpful in the measurement of language abilities and test design.

In order to establish a common understanding of how communicative competence and performance are achieved, different types of assessment have been created and used to evaluate language use and communication.

2.1.1 Types of assessment

As evaluation is defined as the systematic gathering of information for making decisions, these decisions may occur at different points of the course. For it, there are two major types of evaluation according to at what point of the course the information is gathered: *formative* and *summative*. Formative evaluation takes place during the development of the curriculum. In other words, formative evaluation provides information about how the course *is going*, with the purpose of giving a different direction to it in order to improve. On the other hand, summative evaluation only occurs at the end of the course, that is, it gives an overall idea about how the course *has been*, so changes are implemented in a new version of the course. Both of them provide clues that help to improve the course or curriculum (Brown, 1989).

In recent years, the dominant summative evaluation approach has been of norm and criterion-referenced tests. At this point, it is worth noting that there are two different approaches to language testing: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. In norm-referenced tests, the scores and results of the candidates are interpreted in regard to the rest of individuals, e.g., in a 20 individuals' group, an examination is carried out, only 10 of them are to be accepted to pass the test, although in a 0-10 scale 6 is a passing score there will be accepted just the 10 highest scores. In other words, a norm-referenced test provides information about an individual in regard to others who have taken the same test (Bachman, 1989).

Contrary to norm-referenced tests, there are criterion-referenced. Criterion-referenced tests provide information of an individual in regard not to other individuals but to

a concrete criterion of performance, that is, a task to be completed. In this case, competence may be a criterion for applying language tests in order to evaluate an individual's performance or domain of language –in this point, communicative competence plays a vital role as a base for test design. Criterion-referenced tests are also referred as “objectives-based tests”.

2.1.2 CEFR descriptors

In the late '70s and '80s, there was a necessity to organize the language topics for a universal teaching system/framework, since in curriculum and syllabuses, there was just a sequence of grammar structures that did not lead to whole learning. The problem of finding a greater language framework was not new at all. It had been worked over several years by different authors. Bachman (1990) lists a series of authors who proposed a framework for language teaching and testing:

“There have been a number of descriptors of the characteristic of language testing methods over the years. Savard (1968) and Mackey (1968), for example, proposed classification schemes that would be useful for cataloguing language test. Carroll (1968) provided an extensive treatment of test method facets (...) Cohen (1980) also discusses factors such as the item stimulus and response formats, (...) A similar framework has been described by Clark (1972), who discusses ‘test modalities’. (...) Weir (1983), drawing in the work of Munby (1978), Morrow (1977, 1979), and Hawkey (1982), presents a different framework of categories for describing what he calls ‘communicative test events’.” (p. 116-117).

This illustrates the need and work that preceded the creation of the CEFR, which was first released in 2001 by the Council of Europe. As it states (2001):

The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. (...) The taxonomic nature of the Framework inevitably means trying to handle the great complexity of human language by breaking language competence down into separate components.

On the Cambridge English website, the CEFR is defined as:

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners to C2 for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other exams in their country.

In other words, the CEFR compiles all of the work and research carried out by language teaching and learning specialists, taking the concept of communicative competence as a base. There are six different levels in the scales, from A1 to C2, which show language domain as follows:

A1 – A2: Basic User

B1 – B2: Independent User

C1 – C2: Proficient User

As the Facultad de Lenguas Curriculum states, by the end of the degree, students will domain an Upper Intermediate B2 level. For a more explicit description of the CEFR levels, see Appendix 1.

2.2 Learning factors

In ESL / EFL teaching and learning, several factors must be considered in order to develop an efficient level of proficiency and competence. These factors might include personal factors involving motivation, autonomy, and learning styles, or external factors regarding materials development.

2.2.1 Learning styles

Learning can be defined as a change of conduct and behavior in the learner as a result of a meaningful experience (Zhou, 2011). On the other hand, Guevara (2021) defines learning styles as the approaches followed by students when acquiring a foreign language or other types of information. These approaches are helpful for learning new concepts, expressing ideas and finding solutions to problems. Well known is the definition by Dunn & Griggs (1988, p.3): “learning styles is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others.”

Oxford (2003) describes four aspects that strongly influence EFL and ESL learning: sensory preferences (visual, auditory, kinesthetical, and tactile), personality types (extroverted, introverted, intuitive-random, sensing-sequential, thinking, feeling, closure-oriented or judging, and open or perceiving); desired degree or generality (global or holistic, and analytical); and biological differences (biorhythms, sustenance and location). It is worth noting that learners’ personalities are not dichotomic (one or another); however, they usually present stronger characteristics, and teachers should seek a balance in the classroom activities to meet them.

Among the characteristics described by Oxford (2003), sensory preferences present a major level of interest for researchers. According to Jensen (1997), 98% of information and learning is first processed through the senses, and individuals experience it in a different manner. Some are better visual learners, whereas others can be tactile or auditory. Moreover, these learning styles strongly determine how and to what degree students learn a second or foreign language (Oxford, 2003).

In this respect, visual learners prefer visual stimuli, while oral discussions without visual support seem complicated. On the other hand, auditory learners relish on conversations and oral discussions, while they might present difficulty with written or visual work. Lastly, kinesthetic and tactile students are keen to move and work with physical objects, while oral or visual stimulus might be insufficient (Oxford, 2003).

In turn, Nunan and Wong (2011) depict four types of language learning styles, based on Willing (1994): communicative (learners who enjoy conversations, listening to native

input, watching TV, and using English out of the classroom), analytical (learners who prefer to study grammar structures, reading books and studying alone), authority-oriented (learners who expect the teacher to explain their topics, work on textbooks and making notes), and concrete (learners who prefer games, films, pictures, audio, and to use English out of the classroom).

As a consequence of not working with their preferred learning styles, learners may lack interest in the subject (Arias, 2020). Zhou (2011) claims that “learning a foreign language without guidance is similar to sailing without a good map. When teachers are aware of the importance of learning styles, they can provide a good map to their students”. Furthermore, Guevara (2021) states that, when considering their learning styles, students find language learning less daunting and challenging. Thus, it is important to know their interests, strengths and weaknesses.

It is worthwhile to mention that compatibility between the students' preferences in regard to learning styles and the methodology used by the teacher provides an environment of confidence, where learners perform well. On the contrary, if there is a conflict between these two factors, it might lead to poor learning performance and a state of anxiety (Oxford, 2003). And not only do learning strategies in the classroom promote meaningful learning, but also the teachers' attitudes, which can lead learners toward better experiences (Arias, 2020).

Helping students realize and identify their learning styles and strategies may result in more effective learning and use of strategies. Nunan and Wong (2011) assert that there is enough evidence to claim that teaching learners how to learn can bring positive effects on language acquisition, and it also has a meaningful impact on students' strategies and motivation. Hence, it is vital for teachers to discover the students' preferences in order to create effective instruction and teaching styles that develop language skills according to a variety of activities (Zhou, 2011).

However, learning styles may be affected by external factors out of the learners' control: the school's philosophy, specific requirements of the community, or even teaching styles (Arias, 2020). That is to say, though learners are born with determined preferences

toward learning, these can also be developed and influenced by the environment and culture. To sum up, there exist several factors when talking about preferences and styles of learners (Oxford, 2003). However, these specifications are difficult to find in one same context. For this reason, students should learn how to cope and occasionally go beyond their preferences.

Additionally, in the classroom not only learning styles should be considered, but also the theory of multiple intelligences developed by Gardner (1985), which states there exist nine types of intelligences, developed at different levels by each learner. To enhance effective learning, learning styles and multiple intelligences should be combined in teaching activities that permit learners to develop their capacities in the way they feel more comfortable (Armstrong, 2009).

2.2.2 Materials

Materials development and adaptation play a fundamental role in ELT. And, though historically teachers have made use of textbooks as the core material, these do not necessarily reflect the reality of students. However, as Ramírez Salas states: “Materials development and/or adaptation is a teaching topic that has recently caused great concern among English teachers as a way to bridge the gap between what the current English textbooks offer and what the learners really need in their learning environment.” (2004, p. 1).

2.2.2.1 Textbooks and contextualization

Textbooks, however, are useful for teachers, since they present a coherent sequence to follow and that supports daily language teaching, and this sequence can be adapted according to cultural and institutional needs (Ramírez Salas, 2004). According to Harmer (2003), good textbooks provide a reasonable amount of input, both in grammar and vocabulary, which leads to a stepped advance in language skills, and can relieve the teacher from thinking of classroom activities. Moreover, they allow to attain objectives; Ramírez Salas states that “a course without a textbook is very similar to a ship without a clear destination (...), without it, precious time can be wasted and, eventually, the ship can get

completely lost.” (p. 4). Additionally, Gill (2000, as cited in Mishan & Timmis, 2015) claims that, whereas to a senior teacher materials could seem (or become) a minor aspect in the classroom, they certainly help less experienced teachers to find a teaching style through trial and error and activities experimentation.

On the other hand, it is common for textbooks not to present the reality of students. Block (1991) notes a major problem in commercially-based materials: timeliness, since audios, texts and input sources might be out-of-date, and hence no longer true and relevant for learners. If teachers blindly follow a textbook, the learning process might become a routine and repetition of the same activities, thus, less exciting and motivating for learners (Harmer, 2003), added to the fact that textbooks tend to present decontextualized information: places, maps, fictitious characters and information that students might not be interested in. In this case, teachers need to decide what to change, add or delete, and this adaptation is what maintains the class stable. Contextualization creates more exciting and engaging material, therefore, more meaningful experiences (Ramírez Salas, 2004).

2.2.2.2 Materials and resources

Beyond textbooks, in recent years, with the various available options of ELT materials, there is a problem in selecting what to use in the classroom (Block, 1991). ELT materials are any resources used in class that enhance language learning. These resources might be CDs, DVDs, photocopiable activities, books, realia, etc. Materials can be developed or adapted by teachers on account of the learners’ needs (Tomlinson, 1998).

Mishan & Timmis (2015) claim a distinction between resources and materials: whereas resources are any type of language content (e.g., a YouTube video), it does not become material unless it is added a pedagogical purpose (e.g., review tenses). The only limits to this consideration remain on the teachers’ imagination and capability to transform resources into materials.

2.2.2.3 Development and adaptation

Materials development includes a wide range of activities made by the teacher to facilitate learning in the classroom: it goes from creating grammar exercises to creating a textbook. On the other hand, materials adaptation focuses on strategies to make a piece of material more effective, taking into consideration the learners' needs. These strategies can be addition, omission, reduction, extension, modification, replacement, reordering and branching (Maley, 1998, as cited in Ramírez Salas, 2004).

Materials development can be seen as a systematic research process: it follows a needs analysis, creation, piloting, and evaluation. And, through this process, teachers can conduct experiments to innovate in the classroom (Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2014). In order to evaluate materials, it is crucial to consider not only the learners' engagement and joy, but to what degree they can deal with the target language.

In the development process, Ramírez Salas (2004) points out four fundamental characteristics, namely:

- Impact: to be relevant, useful and to raise curiosity in learners.
- Exposure to real language: to provide real-life input and to foster interaction.
- Learning styles and multiple intelligences: to consider the students' preferences regarding language learning (visual, auditory, kinesthetical or tactile).
- Guidance toward learners' autonomy and independence: to learn to take responsibility for their own learning, along with an active role in the learning process.

Similarly, Mishan & Timmis (2015) list five key purposes of ELT materials:

- Meet a psychological need: enhance motivation among learners and give a sense of order and progression throughout the learning process.
- Provide exposure to the language: whereas teachers themselves are of great importance as models, additional input provides a greater variety of written and oral language.
- Be vehicles of information: materials provide information about grammar, vocabulary and culture, which can be more comprehensive than the teacher alone.

- Provide a stimulus for other activities: text, videos, audio, etc., can elicit oral or written responses by students (an opinion, debate, summary), or enhance broader interaction.
- Act as teacher educators: materials, especially accompanied by a teacher's book, can provide models of practice to less experienced teachers.

To involve students and to make them take an active role, it is important to integrate materials development and adaptation in the classroom activities (Ramírez Salas, 2004). This development by teachers results beneficial both for teachers and learners: learners take an active role in the class activities, whereas they feel motivated and attracted toward learning; on the other hand, teachers find themselves as agents of change in the learning process (Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2014). Another benefit of materials development is to create a more inclusive environment: there is a need to provide quality learning to diverse communities and different types of learners.

2.2.2.4 Students' perceptions

According to Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales (2014), most teachers possess the ability to develop materials according to their learners' needs, considering their teaching experience and students' language knowledge. Also, learners' opinions are to be taken into consideration; thus, teachers can improve the type of exercises, instructions, layout, etc. This makes the students aware of the teachers' concerns regarding their learning.

Furthermore on learners' perceptions, Block (1991) opposes to Sheldon's (1988) vision of language teachers as deficient materials creators, who argues that learners prefer materials developed by *professionals*, rather than teacher-generated activities. However, as discussed before, it is usual for materials developed by professionals (e.g., textbooks) not to be contextualized to most learners' realities; hence they might seem irrelevant and unattractive for students, since they do not find an emotional or personal tie to it.

Contrary to Sheldon's (1988) idea of students not appreciating unprofessional teacher-generated content, Block (1991) claims that, when teachers prepare their materials,

students realize it and appreciate its value, making remarks such as “You work hard”, thus, creating awareness on the importance of commitment and responsibility. On the other hand, complaints about sticking to and following the course books without personal effort are usual to hear. Ramírez Salas (2004) states that, even if materials creation is time-consuming, it is worth trying, as long as it results in engagement and motivation by the learners.

Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Ramos (2014) assert there are three essential questions teachers need to answer in order to determine objectives when creating materials:

- What kind of materials do I plan to realize (a test, an exam, a lesson, an exercise, etc.)?
- Who am I going to work with (alone, with a co-teacher, with a team, etc.)?
- Why do I create material (to review a topic, to motivate, to innovate, to complement, etc.)?

Moreover, when developing or adapting materials, proofreading is essential. Though there are plenty of material resources, these must be revised in order to avoid mistakes that affect the language input quality. Teachers should ask for revision and comments from colleagues so that these materials can improve. Materials should not be used in the classroom without the supervision of others. Additionally, another fundamental characteristic of materials is the layout, since whereas it is important to present materials that are attractive to students’ sensory stimulation, other areas such as spelling, instructions and clear speech must be revised carefully, and there must be a balance between the components (text, pictures, colors, size, etc.) for teachers to maintain the learners’ attention and interest. (Ramírez Salas, 2004; Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2014).

2.2.3 Autonomy

In traditional language classrooms, students usually tend to be dependent on the teacher (Ho & Crookall, 1995) and to be told what to do and how to do it. However, there is a need to overcome this state and help learners attain a major degree of awareness regarding autonomous learning. Autonomy in the classroom is the ultimate goal teachers can aim their

students to achieve. The concept of autonomy, though somewhat problematic and difficult to define, can be understood as the ‘ability to take charge of one’s own learning (Holec, 1981).

According to Dafei (2007), autonomous learning should not be confused with self-education, self-study or out-of-class learning. It rather refers to a student-centered classroom, where learners can develop reflective skills, interact with each other and experiment, becoming more active and independent. It is important to develop good attitudes toward one’s own learning and willingness to take responsibility for it. Reaching a higher level of learning autonomy can help students not only to be motivated, but also to become more confident when it comes to communication and to take an active role in their learning. It certainly should not be taken as learning without any support from the teacher; indeed, it can be part of the objectives of a course (Hafner et al., 2011; Tran, 2020).

Autonomous learning starts with self-consciousness of what must be learnt and why it is important. And, although it has to be encouraged by the teacher, the learners are the ones responsible for its development, which is reached through meaningful experiences that create knowledge through creativity and critical thinking (Ho & Crookall, 1995; Hafner et al., 2011).

Ho and Crookall (1995) list the steps an autonomous learner needs to follow: choosing instructional materials, setting learning objectives and prioritizing them, determining when and how long to work on each objective, assessing progress and achievements, and evaluating the learning program.

Despite the fact that autonomy in language learning is of vital importance, cultural factors affect it and are to be considered, for they facilitate or inhibit its development. It is also essential to consider every learner, for each of them already has a different level of autonomy (Ho & Crookall, 1995; Sakai & Takagi, 2009). At last, it is worth noting that autonomy does not refer to a specific way of learning and/or teaching, but to an approach and attitudes toward learning (Benson, 2001).

2.2.4 Motivation

Motivation is considered a key factor in second and foreign language learning, decidedly affecting learners' achievements. And, not only in second language acquisition, but in most enterprises and tasks, motivation plays a key role in either success or failure (Alizadeh, 2016). It is commonly thought that, depending on the level of motivation, students cope better (or worse) with the learning process. In ESL / EFL learning, all the elements in the classroom (teachers, learners, learning styles, etc.) presuppose the existence of motivation to a certain degree (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016).

2.2.4.1 Defining motivation

McDonough (2007, as cited in Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016) claims motivation to be the reason that triggers learners to learn English. And this includes four components: the reasons why they want to learn, the strength of the desire to learn, the kind of person who learns, and the task and what requires from learners. Gardner (1985) defines motivation as “the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 63). However, motivation in the context of language learning refers to a combination of both the desire to learn and the effort put into achieving such objective. Desire by itself is not sufficient, and effort is not necessarily driven by desire (Alizadeh, 2016).

2.2.4.2 Types of motivation

Brown (2000) and Gardner (1985) stated that there are two types of motivation regarding language learning: integrative-oriented and instrumental-oriented. Integrative orientation refers to the willingness to learn to be part of a community and attain intrinsic goals (Gardner, 2010). On the other hand, instrumental orientation refers to the willingness to learn led by professional or educational objectives, including benefits of language learning, such as future opportunities, social status and financial income (Wang, 2008 and Gardner, 2010). Learners with integrative orientation present favorable attitudes toward learning, and it is related to success and better competence in the target language. In contrast, instrumental

orientation, motivated by external factors, is less related to success (Othman & Shuqair, 2013). Nevertheless, though in the language learning process learners might present a tendency for either integrative or instrumental motivation, it is common to present a combination of both types (Dörnyei, 1998, as cited in Alizadeh, 2016).

In addition to integrative and instrumental orientation, Dörnyei (1998) defined motivation as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Whereas intrinsic motivation focuses on the inner satisfaction of accomplishing a task, along with the enjoyment of the process, extrinsic motivation is led by the expectation of an external reward or punishment after completing the task, that is, with instrumental purposes (Wang, 2008). Though intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might seem similar to integrative and instrumental, they present differences, and there can exist intrinsic-plus-integrative motivation, intrinsic-plus-instrumental motivation, extrinsic-plus-integrative motivation, and extrinsic-plus-instrumental motivation (Brown, 2000 as cited in Alizadeh, 2016).

Students with intrinsic motivation tend to make more extraordinary efforts in English learning, present a higher level of proficiency, and develop learning strategies and self-confidence. Students with extrinsic motivation might learn English for several external reasons, such as passing exams, graduation, career opportunities, etc.; furthermore, if there are no external rewards, they might not pursue language learning proficiency; also, they might develop guilt and anxiety (Wang, 2008).

2.2.4.3 Factors that enhance motivation

The self-determination theory proposes there to be three psychological needs in learners:

- **Autonomy:** to experience being free and responsible for one's own actions.
- **Competence:** succeed at completing specific tasks and be able to perform certain activities.
- **Relatedness:** perceive a sense of communication and relation to others.

When external factors accomplish to include these needs, they promote intrinsic motivation and enhance better learning (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004, as cited in Wang, 2008).

On the other hand, motivation can be spoiled by unpleasant experiences in the learning process, such as poor proficiency or public degradation; moreover, learning events (e.g., environment in the classroom and teachers' or classmates' behaviors) might have negative effects (Dörnyei, 2011 as cited in Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016). Motivation can also be attributed to the perceptions of success and failure in language learning. When these are attributed to task difficulty, it mitigates motivation; in contrast, when it is attributed to personal effort, it boosts motivation (Othman & Shuqair, 2013)

Different factors can mitigate motivation in the classroom, for instance, personal factors (being shy, lack of knowledge, lack of study, lack of belief in self-abilities), academic factors (non-integrated learning styles, teaching styles, approach in the class), functional factors (when learners find difficult to apply knowledge outside the classroom, the subject might become irrelevant), classmates (when close friends are willing to learn, it is more probable to be motivated), and environmental factors (lighting, order, visuals, materials and classroom facilities) (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016).

Alizadeh (2016) sets three to be the key factors that enhance or mitigate motivation in language learning:

1. Positive attitudes towards the L2 community: motivation can be higher or lower depending on to what extent the learner aspires to be part of the L2 community and culture.
2. The enjoyment of learning: whether students present intrinsic or extrinsic, integrative or instrumental motivation, what truly matters is to what extent the learning process is enjoyable for them, since it determines whether to continue studying the language or not.
3. External pressures: external factors affect language learning, whether it is to receive an award, avoid punishment or please someone's expectations.

2.2.4.4 Implications of motivation

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) state that motivated learners put more effort into the process, develop autonomy, take responsibility, set objectives, and enjoy learning. According to Othman & Shuqair (2013), “motivated learners are enthusiastic, eager to work hard, concentrate on the tasks given, do not require constant encouragement, are willing to confront challenges, and could even motivate others, facilitating collaborative learning (p. 123).” However, when there exists demotivation, learners might present a lack of interest and commitment to L2 learning: diffidence to the environment, insecurity when participating, no close relation to the teacher or classmates, etc. These factors, when long carried, can create a screen against learning, which might be hard to overcome (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016).

Nevertheless, although intrinsic and integrative motivation can be commonly related to better proficiency and success in language learning, there is not sufficient data to support it, and studies present similar learners’ results both with instrumental and integrative motivation (Alizadeh, 2016). Moreover, Othman & Shuqair (2013, p. 125) indicate an inconsistency regarding the relation between integrative oriented, intrinsic motivation and better language competence and proficiency:

Nevertheless, the issue is not as precise as may be presumed. As Au (1988) argues, conflicting findings or outcomes, ranging from nonexistent, negative, and positive correlations between proficiency and integrative orientation, have emerged from studies in various learning settings. For instance, Gardner and Lambert (1972) did discover that in bilingual Montreal an integrative motivation was more closely related to proficiency in the French language. Yet, in the Philippines, an instrumental motivation appeared to be more useful for English learners. This latter finding is not completely surprising and one would expect the same trend in any society where interaction with English-speaking nations is an integral component of the economy; in fact, a research in India discovered the value of an instrumental motivation in acquiring proficiency in English (Lins, 2007). Moreover, other researchers in various settings have challenged the value given to integrative orientation; Burstall and colleagues (1974 as cited in Graham, 1997, 98), for instance, discovered that for second language learners in UK schools both an integrative and an instrumental motivation contributed much to achievement.

Regardless of what type of motivation learners present, another important factor in learning is to what extent they are motivated. There are different levels of internalization,

i.e., motivation, in the learning process, all of them involving several degrees of motivation (Wang, 2008):

- Amotivation: unwillingness to perform an activity.
- External regulation: to perform an activity to satisfy an external request.
- Introjected regulation: partial internalization of acts from other individuals, though not seen as own.
- Identification: deeper internalization of motives accepted as own.
- Integrated motivation: fully internalization of reasons behind behavior and determined performance of activities.

To conclude, language learning proficiency lies not on the type of motivation, but rather on the environmental factors that foster motivation, namely: to visualize attainable objectives, measured input, challenging activities, the utility of the learnt knowledge, self-confidence and acceptance, interesting materials, and positive experiences (Alizadeh, 2016). Educators working on second language acquisition should notice the weaknesses in students' motivation and attitudes, and hence develop strategies to enhance more positive feelings toward learning (Othman & Shuqair, 2013).

2.3 Curriculum design

The concept of curriculum may be understood and used in various ways, from a general to a quite specific idea. That is, it may imply a school's whole educational structure or a specific lesson activity. According to Eisner (1994), in its etymology, from the Latin *currere*, it is found the idea of a race to be completed that once it is done, one is rewarded with a prize or, in education terms, with a degree. To continue with Eisner, the curriculum development process cannot be precisely described beyond the realization of visions and aspirations of an ideal. As long as poetic this definition may seem, it gives an idea of what curriculum development is concerned with. However, a more concrete definition may be found in Brown (1995). He describes it as a series of activities which provide a framework in order to achieve an academic objective. This is carried out by the faculty, staff,

administrators and students. This framework is thought in order to students to learn as effectively as possible.

In order to develop a language curriculum, it is necessary to follow certain steps. Rodgers (1989) lists them as follows: needs analysis (a study of the context in which the curriculum is to be applied: students, teacher, facilities, etc.), goal setting (the ideal to be achieved at the end of the course), syllabus design (the specific topics and the order to be developed along the course), methodology (the materials and techniques to be used) and evaluation (to decide whether or not to implement changes in the curriculum); whereas Brown defines the process as: needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, teaching and evaluation.

Eisner (1994) claims that the statement of objectives is the most critical step when it has to do with curriculum; all the other components will work in regard to the objectives. For a curriculum to be effective, its objectives must be clear and specific and, overall, they must be stated in terms of performance, that is, in terms of competences, as stated before. On the other hand, developing a curriculum is not enough by itself, it is also necessary to evaluate it. For that purpose, some questions need to be answered, such as whether the goals and objectives are accomplished, whether the people involved are satisfied, etc.

2.3.1 Syllabus design

Since syllabus is defined as a selection and organization of linguistics content (Rodgers, 1989), it should not only include grammar and vocabulary, but notions and functions of language, that is, competences. A syllabus must aim to prepare foreign language speakers to use the language in context. A syllabus provides an order of topics to be studied, selected through a rational needs analysis and objectives planning.

As a syllabus definition, it is essential to be clear about its components. These are three: what the learner will be able to do, how well he/she will do it, and under which conditions this task will be done. Nunan (1988) sets an example of these three components:

“(...) consider the three-part performance objective: In a classroom simulation, learners will exchange personal details. All utterances will be comprehensible to someone unused to dealing with non-native speakers.”

An effective syllabus must be specific about what students will be able to do at the end of the course. A clear idea of the goals, as in curriculum planning, will simplify the design process and, once a syllabus is in place and carried out, a final evaluation shows whether or not it has been effective. Regularly, both formative and summative assessment give a greater perspective about the effectiveness of a syllabus.

McKay (1978) lists four types of syllabuses; Brown (1995) develops a greater variety of them: structural, situational, topical, functional, notional, skills and task syllabi. It is possible to mix two or more of them to have an eclectic syllabus that is more efficient and obtain better results.

2.3.2 Adapting the CEFR

Since the release of the CEFR in 2001, language teaching has evidently changed regarding measuring language abilities, syllabus design, curriculum planning and language assessment. The CEFR does not provide answers for every language teaching issue, but it is enough help to improve language learning and teaching. In other words, the CEFR descriptors do not provide methods or techniques to be applied in the classroom in order to achieve the competences; however, it is enough to work on language teaching and assessment.

International language tests have been (re)designed in order to fit the CEFR requirements, not only in English (Cambridge/TOEFL), but in French (Delf/Dalf), Italian (Cils/Plida), etc. So as in the Facultad de Lenguas, a commonplace in curriculum objectives is to be able to pass an International Standardized Test, so the syllabuses and materials are to be designed in regard to the CEFR descriptors.

2.3.3 Target Language at LEI program: its adequacy to the CEFR

In the Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, LEI students are to be able to domain, by the end of the five Target Language subjects, a B2 level. However, the syllabus for such subjects only specifies a little about their contents. It is limited to describing in a brief form the previous knowledge the student must domain and the final profile of him. Neither does it specify any materials, methods, competences or topics to deal with during the period. On the other hand, it describes the time dedicated to the lessons, along with the profile of the ideal teacher to deliver the subjects. The human values of students are also mentioned.

It is implied, then, that a student and a teacher who are involved in the class do not have a guide in order to fulfill the CEFR requirements, instead, the teacher must find a way to help students to do it.

2.4 International Standardized Tests

Considering that summative evaluation takes place at the end of a program, standardized tests may be helpful to provide this information. Cambridge English offers a great variety of standardized tests (B2 First, CAE, Linguaskill, IELTS, etc.), such as TOEFL does (IBT, ITP, Junior, TOEIC, etc.). As a requirement to obtain the degree, LEI students must obtain a B2 level. Such exams have a significant history, as the CEFR does. All of them are evaluated in regard to the descriptors.

In 1988, Bachman, Kunnan, Vanniarajan, and Lynch contrasted the characteristics of the TOEFL and CPE. Their findings reported differences in the reading passages, such as the number of words and clauses. In the TOEFL, the complexity of structures in sentences was higher too. In regard to speech acts, the B2 First was found to include a much wider variety.

2.4.1 TOEFL ITP

TOEFL ITP is an International Standardized Test aimed to High School and University students. According to the ETS website, more than 2,500 institutions in 50+ countries administer the test annually. There are three different types: two tests according to

the candidates' level, and one speaking test. Level 1 measures the candidate's abilities in listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension; it is aimed to intermediate – advanced students. Level 2 measures the candidate's abilities in listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading and vocabulary; it is aimed to high beginner – intermediate students. The speaking test consists in different independent and integrated speaking tasks.

TOEFL ITP may be used for different purposes, namely: admission to scholarship programs, admission to degree programs, progress monitoring in English proficiency, certifying proficiency in English, and placement in English-language learning programs, among others.

The test provides a score that ranges from 310 – 677 points. This can be interpreted in the CEFR levels as follows:

310 – 336:	A1
337 – 459:	A2
460 – 542:	B1
443 – 626:	B2
627 – 677:	C1

The scores are valid for a two-year period, due to the changing nature of language proficiency a candidate can demonstrate throughout time.

2.4.2 B2 First (FCE)

B2 First, formerly known as First Certificate in English, is an International Standardized Test provided by Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge. According to the Cambridge English website, this qualification proves the candidates possess the skills and abilities to live, work and study independently in English-speaking countries.

The test is designed according to the B2 level in the CEFR and measures the candidates' abilities in all language receptive and productive skills: reading, use of English, writing, listening and speaking.

The results are reported according to the Cambridge English Scale, in which scores find an equivalent in the CEFR levels as follows:

80 – 100:	pre-A1
100 – 120:	A1
120 – 140:	A2
140 – 160:	B1
160 – 180:	B2
180 – 200:	C1
200 – 230:	C2

The qualification is lifetime valid, and, according to the Cambridge English website, is the most popular and most accepted certification along universities and companies around the world.

Chapter III Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodology used to answer the research questions that guided this study. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions about Target Language subjects and their relation to the certification rate at the CCIA (Centro de Certificaciones Internacionales y Acreditación). The instrument designed to obtain the data, the setting where it was applied, and the participants are described in detail.

3.1 The research importance

This research took place at Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, where LEI students must demonstrate a B2 level according to the CEFR to obtain their degree. Since not all the students demonstrate this level at the end of the degree, or, ideally, when their formative English courses are finished (Target Language V, around the fifth period), it may be inferred that there are some problems through this language learning process. This investigation aims to explore LEI students' points of view toward the Target Language subjects. By doing this, it was pretended to collect information about students' perceptions that may be useful to improve various aspects regarding these courses: syllabus, methods, teachers, worked skills, and others.

This research project may contribute to making Target Language subjects more effective by noticing the main issues that affect, according to students, their overcoming level of English.

3.2 Approach

This research followed a mixed method approach, combining both a quantitative, qualitative and a documentary approach. As defined by Creswell (1994), "a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of

informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” Students’ perceptions about Target Language subjects were analyzed and interpreted to obtain an overall point of view toward the matter under study. Moreover, as defined by Scott & Marshall (2015), a documentary approach is “research that uses personal and official documents as a source material. (...) such as newspapers, diaries, stamps, directories, handbills, maps, government statistical publications, photographs, paintings, gramophone records, tapes, and computer files.” Data from the CCIA is presented to illustrate an overall panorama of the certification rate at Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, as well as a sample of exam results.

3.3 Choice of methodology

This study follows a mixed method approach (Creswell, 1994), both qualitative and quantitative data are presented and interpreted. And the study is enlightened by a documentary analysis of computer files collected by the CCIA to illustrate and compare students’ perceptions and the actual rates of certification of L2 at the School of Languages.

3.4 Context

Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, is a public institution, located in Puebla city, in central Mexico, which offers two different bachelor’s degree programs: Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés (LEI), and Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Francés (LEF). For this study, LEI is the one under study. It is aimed to train students to develop a career as English teachers. Students at this Faculty acquire the necessary abilities in both linguistic and pedagogical fields. English is studied as a foreign language. The average degree length takes approximately four years to be completed. It is divided into eight terms and, by the end of the fifth one, students are supposed to be graded in a B2 level. The average students’ age ranges from 18 to 25 years old.

3.5 Participants

The selected participants in this study are described below. It is important to notice that due to the complexity of the Research Questions and the data, to be able to answer them, different groups of participants were considered, and different instruments were administered; it depended on the characteristics of the participants. For instance, a hard copy questionnaire in face-to-face interaction was administered to some of the groups. However, some other questionnaires were collected by means of virtual tools. On the other hand, in the last case only certification results of some participants were considered. In order to better illustrate the form participants and data were collected see the table below.

Table 3.1 Participants

Number of participants	Gender	Date of instrument administration / collection	Instrument	Participants' characteristics
52	Men: 17 Women: 35	March 2020	Questionnaire	Students who had finished all Target Language courses
46	Men: 16 Women: 30	August 2022	Questionnaire	Students who had finished all Target Language courses or were taking the last one
196	-	October 2022	Computer file	Students who had applied a TOEFL exam from February 2020 – September 2022
22	-	October 2022	Computer file	Sample of TOEFL results of students enrolled in 2015.

A) LEI students who had completed their formative English learning process (i.e., the five Target Language subjects) at the moment of the first instrument application, March 2020. According to the responses to the questionnaire, these participants should, ideally, have reached the B2 level a couple of years ago, and consequently, they should have already presented an IST. From this category, 52 participants took part in total.

B) LEI students who had either completed their formative English learning process or were taking the last course (Target Language V) at the moment of the second instrument application, August 2022. According to their responses to the questionnaire, most of these participants should, ideally, have reached the B2 level one year ago, then again, they should consequently have already presented an IST. From this category, 46 participants took part in total.

C) LEI students who have presented the TOEFL ITP test at the CCIA in the last three years (February 2020 – September 2022). To these participants, the questionnaire was not applied, rather the intention was to illustrate the panorama of the certification rate at Facultad de Lenguas. Also, it is important to note that it was not possible to obtain more data from these participants than their enrolment year in LEI, which goes from 2008 to 2021. From this category, data from 196 participants was provided by the CCIA.

D) LEI students enrolled in 2015 who had presented the TOEFL ITP test from 2018 to 2021. Once more, the questionnaire was not applied to these participants. Their information, a sample of test results, rather serves to illustrate a brief panorama of the students’ performance in an IST. From this category, data from 22 participants was provided by the CCIA.

Although it is plausible to think that the participants in the first and second categories (participants who answered the questionnaire) are, by some means, included in the third and fourth categories (data provided by the CCIA), the study regards them separately, and only to enlighten the information, since there was not sufficient data to prove that they were the same students.

The tables below illustrate the participants’ information, such as gender and age.

Table 3.2 March 2020 participants’ gender and age

MARCH 2020 PARTICIPANTS					
Age (years old)	22	23	24	25	26
Male	4	6	4	2	1
Female	14	14	6	1	0

Table 3.3 August 2022 participants’ gender and age

AUGUST 2022 PARTICIPANTS							
Age (years old)	20	21	22	23	24	25	28
Male	1	4	3	3	2	2	1
Female	2	15	6	3	4	0	0

The table below illustrates the period in which participants took Target Language V. It provides evidence of when most participants took this subject and how long ago they finished their basic formative English language level. It can be noticed that most participants (twenty-four) from the March 2020 collection took the subject during the Fall 2017 period. Whereas most participants (seventeen) from the August 2022 collection took the subject during Fall 2021. This means that they finished their formative language level approximately five and one year ago respectively. Spring 2018 and Spring 2022 are also relatively frequented periods.

Table 3.4 Period in which participants took Target Language V

	Spring 2017	Summer 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Summer 2018	Fall 2018	Other
March 2020	7	1	24	9	3	7	2
	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Other
August 2022	1	1	9	17	11	7	0

3.6 Instrument

Throughout this study, there were two main instruments used. First, a questionnaire. This was administered both in presence modality and in virtual form, as may have seen in the table above. As a method of data collection, de Vaus (1996) defines a questionnaire as a technique in which various persons are asked to answer the same set of questions. The questionnaire contained eleven lists and category questions (plus information about the participants' age, gender and period in which they took Target Language V). There were assertions where students ranked their level of agreement -strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, and disagree. The first part of the questionnaire regarded the knowledge and understanding of the CEFR and its descriptors. The second part included questions asking the students' self-perceptions of knowledge and language skills. The last part included closed questions about Target Language subjects and skills practiced in the courses (you may see this questionnaire in the Appendix 2). During the piloting process, there were no significant

problems but the period in which participants took Target Language V (which they seemed not to remember), and there were some added options.

In addition to the questionnaire, the second instrument was two computer files provided by the CCIA. These data were examined, and charts were designed to illustrate the information. The first file contained information about the number of TOEFL ITP applications at Facultad de Lenguas from February 2020 to September 2022. The second file contains a sample of TOEFL ITP results applied to students enrolled in LEI in 2015.

Both the questionnaire and a sample of the computer files can be seen in Appendix 2.

3.7 Data collection

Due to the pandemic and other issues, this study followed a one year and a half data collection process. The questionnaire was first administered at Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, in March 2020 to the first two groups above. Due to the health emergency, some other questionnaires were administered via Google Forms, a software that allows creating online surveys and quizzes. This may cause inconsistency in the results, since to be able to appreciate the entire context in which participants answered may be needed; however, it was the more effective and practical procedure to use to collect data. During this first application, 52 questionnaires were collected, as may be seen in the table above.

A more recent data collection was performed once more at Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP, in August 2022, in different classrooms where several students were taking their Research Seminar and Research Methodology lessons. During this second application, 46 questionnaires were collected, as may be seen in the table above.

Information provided by the CCIA was requested at the department located at Facultad de Lenguas. It was received via email in Excel format.

3.8 Data analysis

For this study, data regarding the participants' general information, such as age and gender, as well as the information provided by the CCIA, was analyzed and presented in tables. On the other hand, the results obtained from the questionnaire were reported in bar charts, where, in most of the questions, the vertical axis represented the number of students that, shown in the horizontal one, agreed or not with the statements about the CEFR, their language abilities, and the Target Language subjects. Once these answers were reported, they were compared, analyzed and interpreted through various aspects: the number of participants who answered the same way, differences and similarities in both data collection performances, what the implications will be for the study, whether it is coherent, etc. Through these interpretations, it was pretended to identify the main issues that, according to students, affect the Target Language subjects and, therefore, their formative language learning process.

3.9 Chapter conclusion

This chapter illustrated in detail the methodology used in this study, presenting information about the location, participants, and the instruments to obtain the necessary data to be analyzed in the next chapter. It also described the importance of exploring the students' perceptions about their learning process and subjects.

Chapter IV Results

In this chapter, the results of the questionnaires applied to 98 students from the LEI program are presented, described, compared and discussed. This research tried to include a sample that may be representative of the Faculty population. The number of participants and their answers to the subsequent questions may not be oversimplified, but they certainly represent the perception of students toward the issues under study.

4.1 Research questions

To contextualize the results and, as stated before, the following research questions are aimed to be answered:

RQ1 What is the overall students' level of awareness regarding the CEFR and the certification rate at Facultad de Lenguas during a two-year period?

RQ2 To what extent are students at Facultad de Lenguas able to attain a B2 level in a certification exam, according to their perceptions?

RQ3 What are the students' perceptions toward Target Language subjects in the LEI program?

RQ4 What are students' perceptions about the efficiency of their Target Language subjects in regard to language skills development?

4.2 First and second Research Questions - Results from the questionnaire

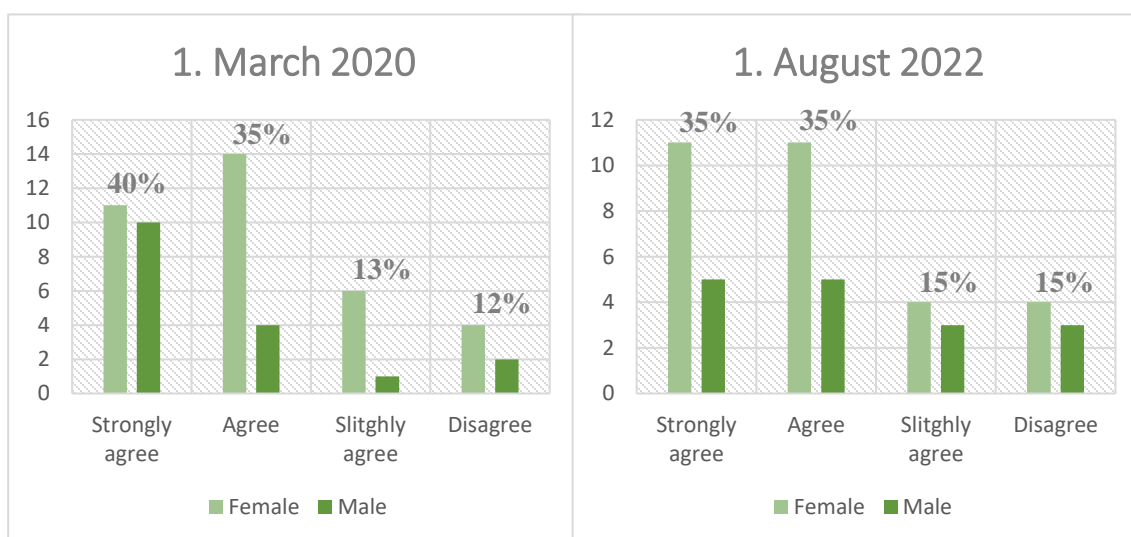
In order to answer the first Research Question, the following graphs show participants' general answers concerning their awareness, feelings and attitudes toward their English level, knowledge, courses and skills. In order to provide a comparison/contrast of the data collected in the two main periods, the data is presented in bar charts. Left-side charts

always present the data collected in the questionnaire of March 2020 application; whereas the right-side charts illustrate the more recent application of August 2022.

4.2.1 CEFR and self-perceptions, and TOELF results comparison

The first section of questions in the questionnaire regarded students' perceptions about the CEFR, and self-perceptions about proficiency in English. I contrast and compare the information from the questionnaires and the data provided by the CCIA, which includes the number of TOEFL ITP applications and a brief sample of results. Altogether, these pieces of information aim to answer research question 1 and research question 2.

Figure 4.1 Question 1: *I know what CEFR is and what it is about*

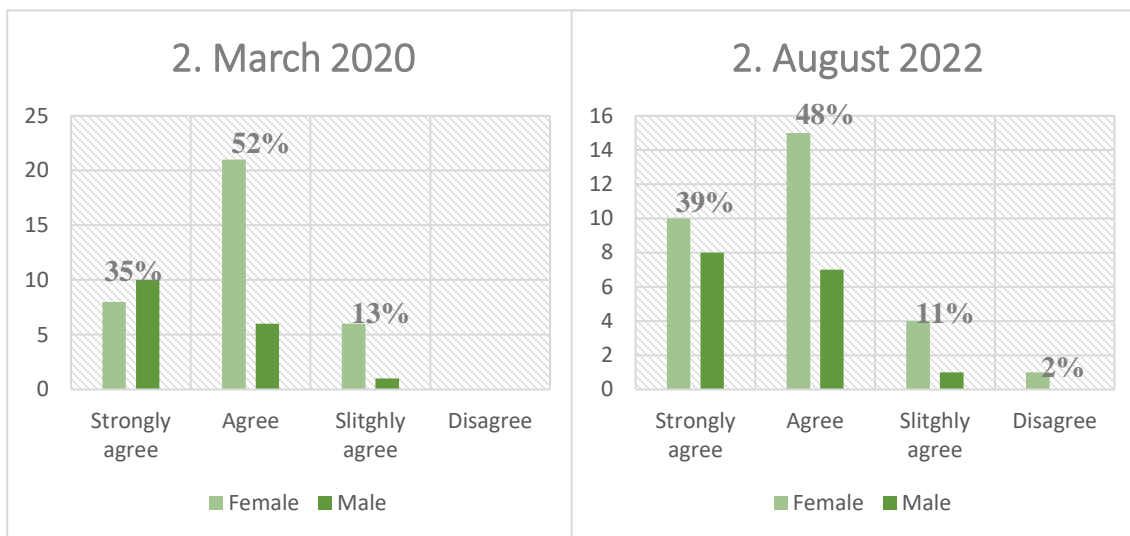


This question of the instrument illustrates the level of awareness toward the CEFR of the LEI participants under study. In March 2020, more than half of them (39, which makes 75%) claim to know what the CEFR is and what it is about (21 strongly agree, 18 agree). This means that the rest of the thirteen participants do not know, or know very little, about it.

On the other hand, results from August 2022 were very similar: 32 (70%) claim to know the CEFR. These answers suggest that most of them are truly confident about their knowledge and understanding of the CEFR.

The following question deepens into their awareness by asking about the CEFR concepts, criteria, stages and descriptors.

Figure 4.2 Question 2: *I am aware of the descriptors for each level*

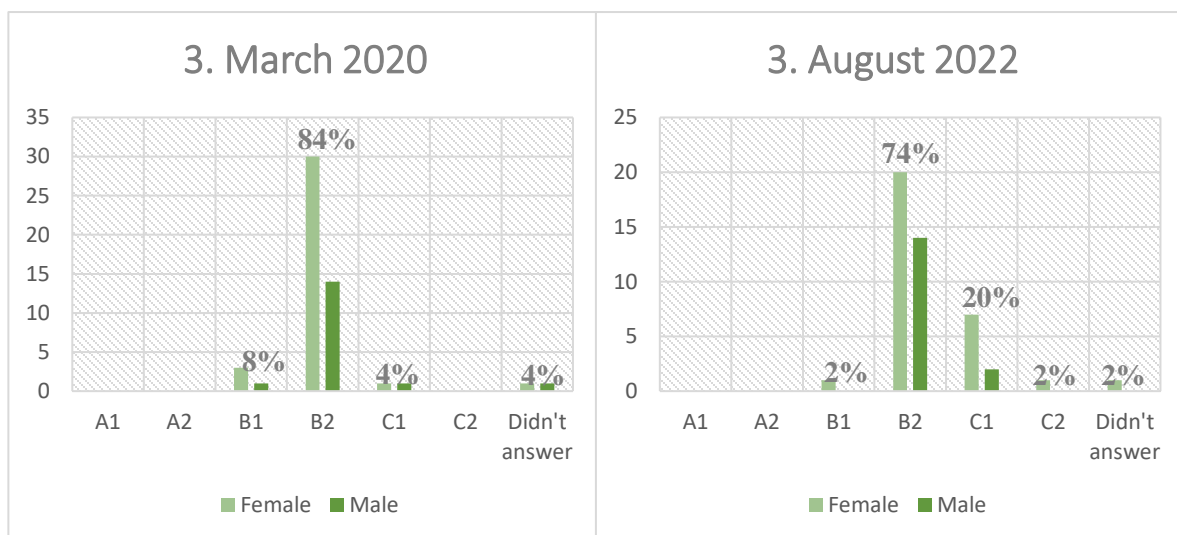


This second question dives not only into the notion of the Framework, but into a deeper awareness of its descriptors. In this case, from March 2020, 18 participants (35%) strongly agree to be aware of the descriptors, compared to 27 (the majority, 51%) who agree on being aware. Altogether, they make a good percentage of people who truly understands the CEFR. The minority of 7 participants claim to be slightly aware. None of them states not to be.

The data from the August 2022 collection is very similar: 18 participants (39%) strongly agree to be aware, and 22 (48%) agree to be aware. Only 5 participants slightly agree, and 1 disagrees.

These results suggest that the participants’ position toward the descriptors is clear. It can be noticed that nearly all of them have a clear idea about it, which can lead to a self-explore exercise regarding their language level and learning experience. This may imply, by being aware of what they must learn, they can consciously use different strategies to achieve it.

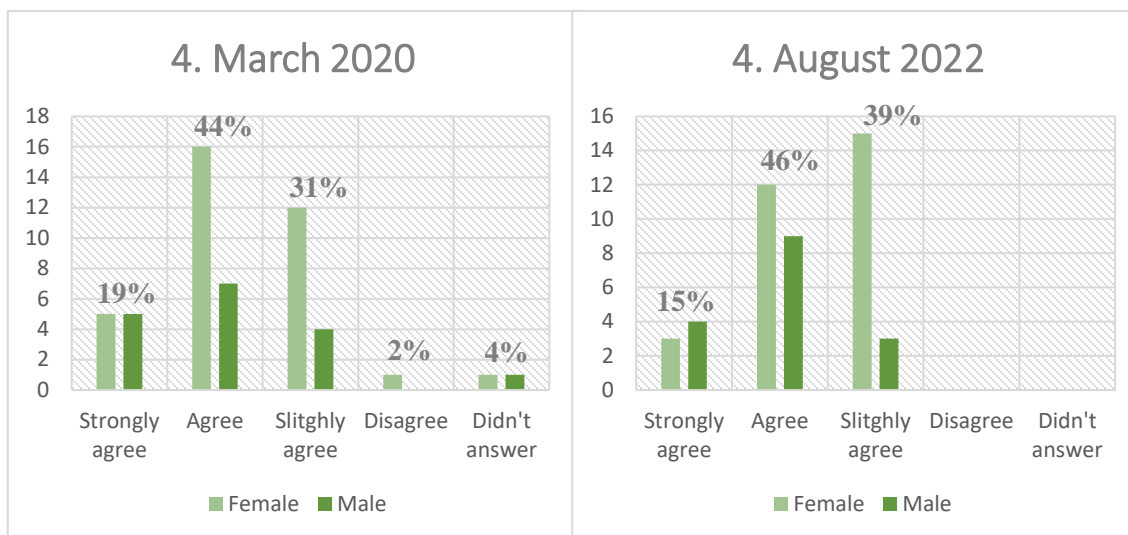
Figure 4.3 Question 3: *The level of the CEFR LEI students must acquire in order to obtain their degree is...*



The present question inquires about students' consciousness of the level they must reach to obtain their degree or, ideally, by the end of the Target Language subjects. A significant majority of participants from March 2020 (44, or 84%) assures B2 to be the required level. A minimal section affirms B1 and C1 to be the level. And, in this group, two participants did not answer this question.

The results from the August 2022 collection are once more similar: 34 participants (74%) claim B2 to be the target level. However, this time a more considerable amount of participants (9, 20%) claim C1 to be the level (though the required level is B2, this certainly affects the answers to the subsequent question). A few participants claimed B1 and C2 to be the level. In this second group, one student did not answer.

Figure 4.4 Question 4: *I fulfill the requirements of these level descriptors*



To advance on participants' awareness of the CEFR section, the fourth question explored whether or not the participants considered themselves to have attained the level they are asked for. In this case, from the March 2020 application, 10 participants (19%) strongly agree to satisfy the descriptors, and a more significant majority (23, 44%) agrees to have acquired the required level. Nevertheless, a considerable percentage of participants (16, 31%) agrees only slightly to have acquired such level.

On the other hand, the data from August 2022 is slightly different, for 7 participants (15%) strongly agree to be on the level, whereas 21 (46%) agree, and a considerable number (18 participants, 39%) slightly agree. It is worthwhile to remember that on the previous question, some students considered C1 to be the required level; therefore, it could have had a slightly negative impact on this question, for it is more probable to be confident on being B2, than on being C1.

These results give evidence of how participants are confident about their knowledge and abilities in regard to English. However, in both cases, a considerable number of participants (37% and 39% respectively, which stands for a third of the total students under study), affirm not to fully accomplish the requirements of the level. This data is essential for the research, for most participants have claimed to know and be aware of the CEFR

descriptors and concepts, along with the level they are asked to attain. And finally, the results show that a considerable number of them believe in only partially satisfying it.

To complement and deepen into these two research questions, some information about students' enrollment year and TOEFL applications is presented.

Figure 4.5 TOEFL ITP applications presented by LEI students from February 2020 to October 2022.

YEAR	STUDENTS' ENROLMENT YEAR													Total		
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		2021	
2020					3	1	3	5								12
2021					1	10	9	10	11	11				1		52
2022	5		1	1	3	14	12	8	21	21	3	2				91
Total	5		1	1	7	25	24	23	32	32	3	2		1		196

Figure 4.5 displays information about the number of TOEFL ITP applications presented in the CCIA throughout 2020, 2021 and 2022. It is worth noting that in 2020 the number of presented exams is scarce due to the health emergency and the consequent cancellation of applications for most of the year. In this year, only 12 LEI students presented a certification exam. In 2021, more applications took place, for 53 LEI students presented the exam. In 2022, the data indicates an increase of 171% in applications compared with 2021, since 91 exams were presented until September. This suggests that the number might be duplicated by the end of the year.

Considering only the applications in the last three years, it can be stated that, to benefit the LEI students and the Facultad de Lenguas, the number of TOEFL applications has been increasing throughout time. Also, it is worthwhile to note that Facultad de Lenguas is not the only valid certification center in Puebla where students can present an exam (there are nine different ones, as stated on the CCIA website). This suggests that an unspecified number of LEI students might have presented a certification exam, and whose results are not possible to access in this study. Lastly, it is crucial to consider that, though TOEFL ITP is the most popular and presented test at Facultad de Lenguas (on average, applications took place twice a month in 2022), it is possible to present a Cambridge test FCE / CAE / CPE in any other

cities along the country. Hence, the data presented in the tables might lack those students who presented a certification exam outside Facultad de Lenguas.

To conclude the answer to the first and second research questions, considering the answers given to the questionnaire until now, as well as the information from the CCIA files, it can be suggested that both can be inconsistent. Whereas most of the students claimed to know and to understand the CEFR and its descriptors (75% from March 2020, and 70% from August 2022), and most of them perceived to have acquired the required level (63% from March 2020, and 71% from August 2022); the number of students who have presented a certification exam in the last three years is low. Nevertheless, the number has considerably increased throughout this two-year period, which indicates an acceptable advance compared to the past years.

Figure 4.6 Sample of TOEFL ITP results obtained by 2015 LEI students.

	Application date	Result		Application date	Result
Student 1	Jan 2018	A2	Student 12	Mar 2020	B2
Student 2	May 2019	B1	Student 13	April 2021	B2
Student 3	June 2019	B2	Student 14	April 2021	C1
Student 4	Sep 2019	B2	Student 15	May 2021	B2
Student 5	Sep 2019	B2	Student 16	June 2021	B2
Student 6	Oct 2019	B1	Student 17	Aug 2021	B2
Student 7	Oct 2019	B1	Student 18	Sep 2021	B1
Student 8	Feb 2020	C1	Student 19	Sep 2021	B2
Student 9	Feb 2020	B1	Student 20	Oct 2021	B2
Student 10	Feb 2020	B1	Student 21	Oct 2021	B1
Student 11	Mar 2020	B1	Student 22	Oct 2021	B1

Figure 4.6 presents a sample of TOELF ITP results obtained by 22 LEI students enrolled in 2015. These results reveal that 10 students (45.5%) still need to obtain the required level: 1 student (4.5%) obtained an A2 level, and 9 students (41%) obtained B1. However, the rest (12 students, 54.5%) obtained the required level or above: 10 obtained B2, and 2 obtained C1.

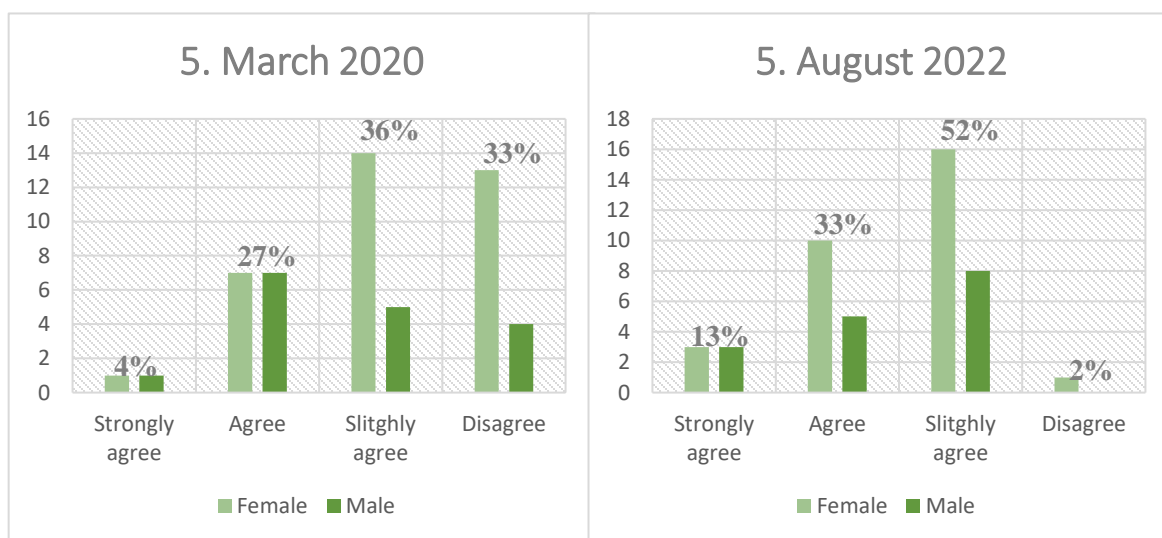
Considering the results obtained in these tests, as well as exploring participants' perceptions about having acquired the required level (63% from March 2020, and 71% from August 2022 agreed to have attained a B2 level of proficiency), it can be stated that the actual TOEFL results present a slightly lower level in respect to students' perceptions. Nevertheless,

it is important to remember that participants who answered the questionnaire are not necessarily the students whose exams results were provided by the CCIA. Unfortunately, the researcher could not access to more than 22 results, a minimal number considering the 196 applications presented in 2020 - 2022. Broader data could have illustrated a better panorama of the issues under study.

4.3 Third Research Question - Perceptions toward Target Language subjects

The following section of the questionnaire regarded students' perceptions toward their Target Language subjects in the LEI program. General preparation, curriculum, teachers' commitment and materials are discussed. Altogether, these perceptions aim to answer research question 3.

Figure 4.7 Question 5: *My five Target Language courses gave me all the necessary to achieve the required level*



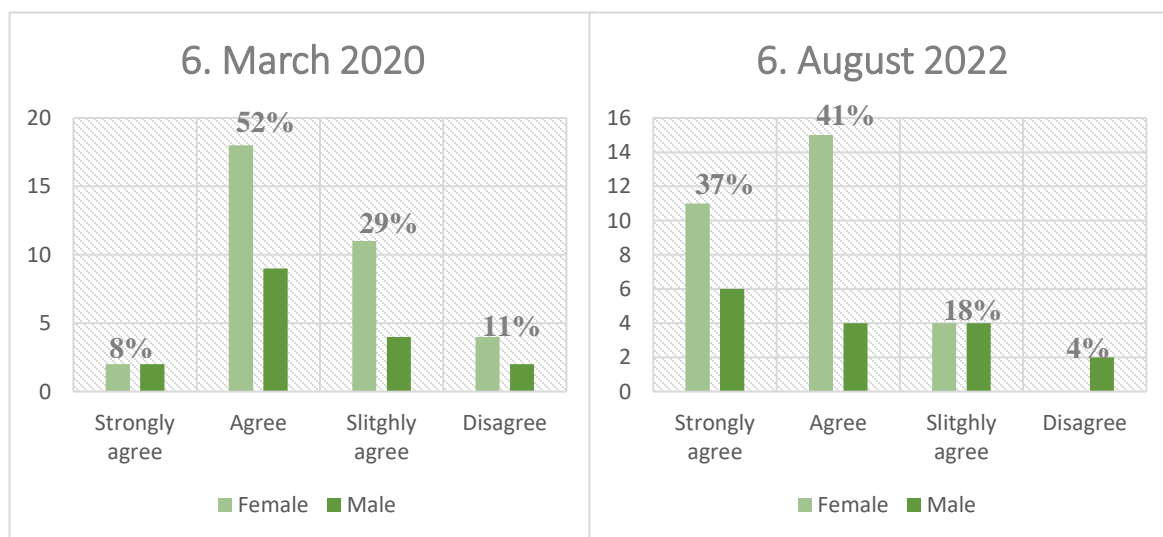
The fifth question in the questionnaire opens a new section that advances from the CEFR to a Target Language subjects' focus. It examines whether or not these subjects were enough preparation, during the participants' language learning process, to achieve the required level B2. In contrast to all the previous answers, from March 2020, only 2 participants (4%) strongly agree that Target Language subjects were sufficient to achieve the

level; 14 (27%) agree with it. On the other hand, 19 participants (36%) slightly agree that the subjects were sufficient, and other 17 (33%) disagree with this affirmation.

Meanwhile, participants from August 2022 do not have significantly different perceptions: 6 of them (13%) strongly agree and 15 (33%) agree. An appreciable majority (24, 52%) slightly agree that Target Language subjects were enough preparation, and only one of them disagrees.

According to LEI students, these answers suggest that at least half of the requested participants consider Target Language subjects as a non-sufficient B2 formative English language course. And, although the information given up to this point does not give a complete idea of students' perceptions satisfyingly, throughout the subsequent questions, more information will continue to explore it.

Figure 4.8 Question 6: *In every Target Language subject I took, I was aware of the required level to pass the subject*



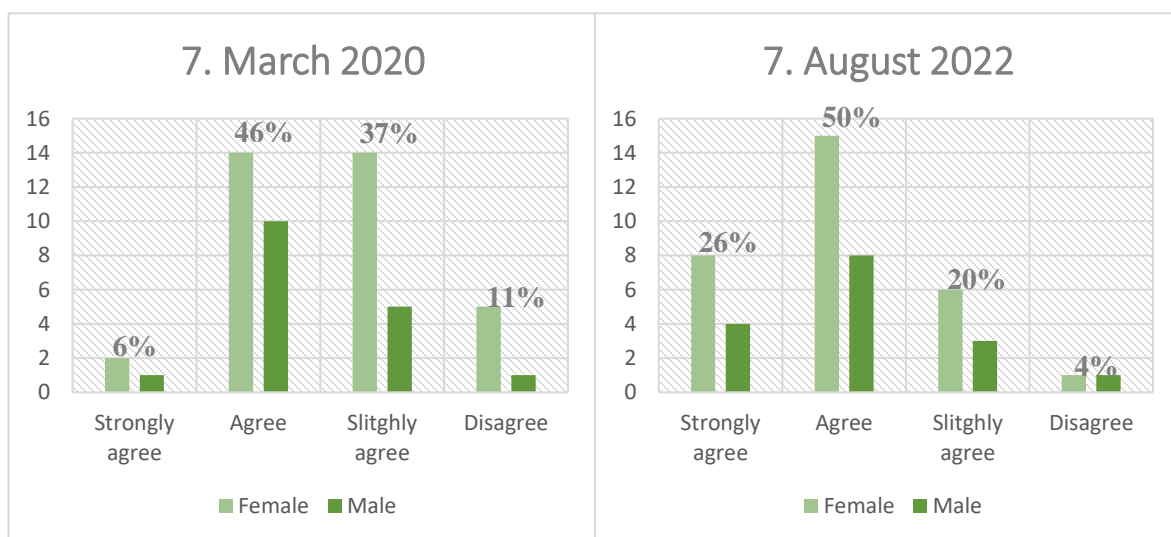
Continuing on perceptions about Target Language subjects, the sixth question inquires about the participants' awareness regarding the level every subject covered during their language learning process. For this question, 31 participants (60%) from March 2020 claim, either strongly or not, to have been aware of the required level in every subject (4 of

them strongly agree; 27 agree). However, the other 21 (40% of them) declare not to have been at the same level of awareness (15 slightly agree, and 6 disagree).

Results from August 2022 are, in this case, different, and the participants claim a stronger level of awareness: 17 of them (37%) strongly agree, and 19 (41%) agree to have been aware. A minor number of students (22%) admit not have been aware (8 slightly agree, 2 disagree).

Considering the results from question 5, which represented participants' conception of Target Language subjects as insufficient preparation, it can be added the fact that in March 2020 only 60% of them were aware of the aims of every subject, that means, the level to be achieved. However, it is worth mentioning that there is an improvement in more recent data, since in August 2022, 78% of participants were aware of the subject objectives.

Figure 4.9 Question 7: *All my five Target Language subjects followed a coherent sequence*



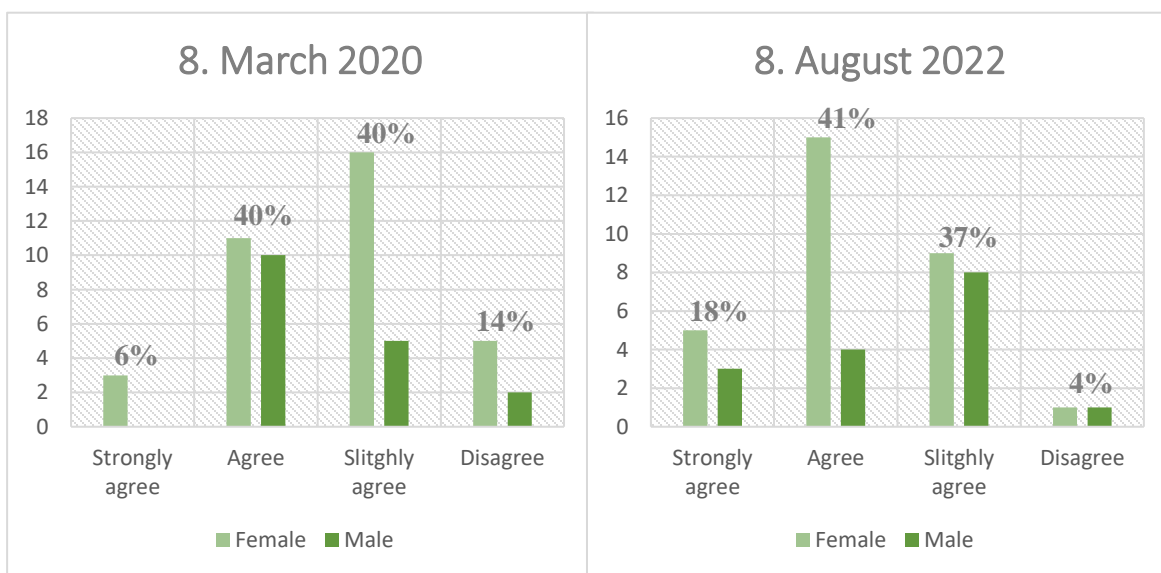
The seventh question aimed to explore whether or not Target Language subjects, according to the participants, followed a coherent sequence. For instance, if after TL I, students at an A1 level continued to work on an A2 level in TL II, B1 in TL III, etc. The data from March 2020 is interesting to analyze, since it is clearly divided: 27 participants (52%)

approved the statement (3 strongly agree, 24 agree). However, this number represents slightly more than half of the responses. The rest declared to slightly agree (19, 37%) or disagree (6, 11%).

As for participants from August 2022, the data indicates an improvement in their perceptions, for 12 of them (26%) strongly agree with the statement, and 23 (50%) agree. A minor number claims to slightly agree (9, 20%) or disagree (2, 4%).

The differences in students' perceptions, both in this and the precedent question, might be due to two factors: that there was a change in the requirements to enroll in the LEI program, and candidates must already deal with the English language at an A1 level before starting the bachelor's degree, therefore, it is less complicated to advance forward on the CEFR levels. The second factor regards a change in the textbooks used in the subjects: in Spring 2017, the Cambridge Empower series were implemented and substituted the Oxford English Results series; also, not all teachers used a textbook, which might have caused inconsistency in the participants' learning process, since in March 2020, participants considered there was a lack of order on the subjects and their learning process. However, there is considerable improvement in the perceptions of the August 2022 participants.

Figure 4.10 Question 8: *All my five Target Language teachers were committed to the lessons*

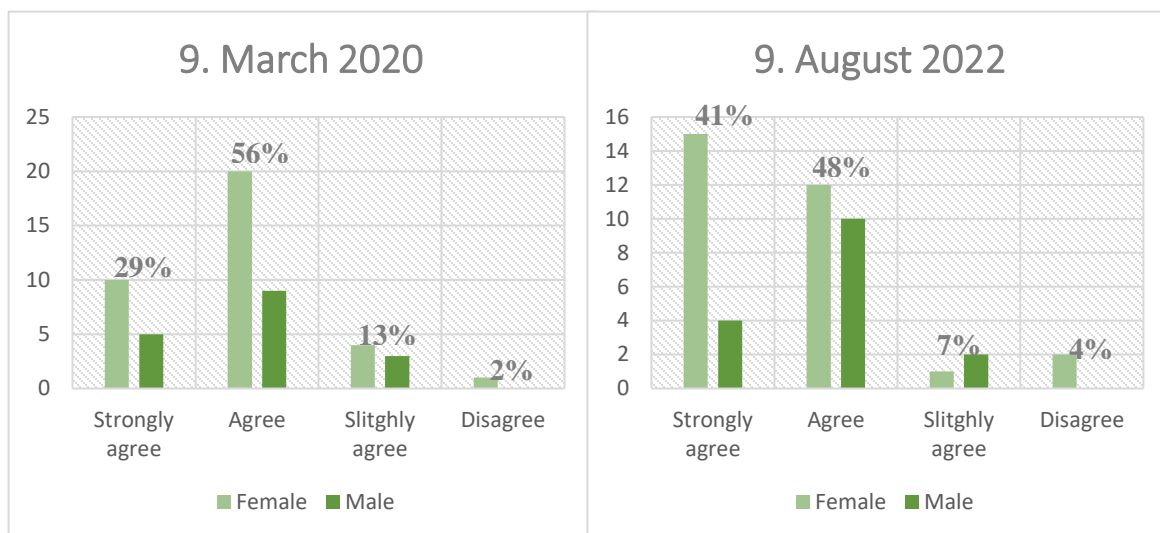


The eighth question in the instrument focuses on one of the most important aspects (perhaps the most important one) regarding the language learning process: teachers. It aims to explore the overall perceptions the participants had in matters of teachers. Unfortunately, not being able to explore all of their characteristics in detail, the question focuses on one concept that might summarize them: commitment. Participants from March 2020 once more are divided: 23 of them (46%) considered their teachers to be committed to the lesson (3 strongly agree, 21 agree). However, slightly more than half of them (54%) affirmed teachers were not wholly committed to their lessons (21 slightly agree, 7 disagree).

On the other hand, participants from August 2022 have slightly better perceptions of teachers: 27 of them (59%) considered teachers to be committed to the lessons (8 strongly agree, 19 agree). And, in this case, the level of disapproval to teachers' commitment is lower, yet still considerable, since 17 participants (37%) slightly agree with the statement, and 2 (4%) disagree.

Unfortunately, the reasons for participants to have these perceptions are not the objective of the study, and cannot be explained in detail; however, it would be interesting to explore in further research. Nevertheless, it is plausible to think that, during and after the 2020 health emergency, teachers felt a major commitment to the students' learning process and, consequently, the perceptions improved.

Figure 4.11 Question 9: *My Target Language teachers used different types of materials (audiovisuals, texts, ICT).*

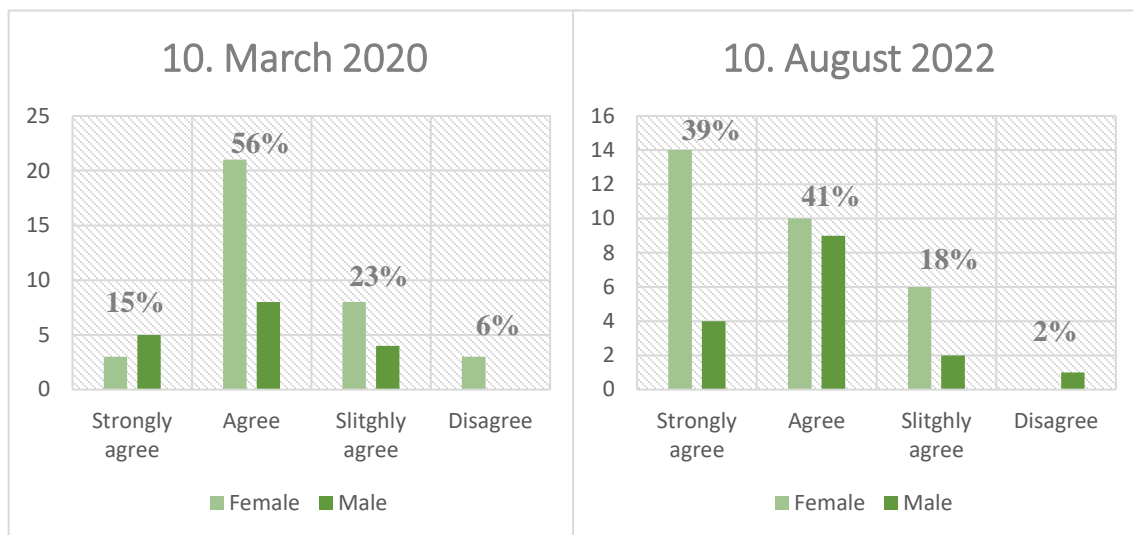


Continuing on teacher-related analysis, the ninth question inquires about the various materials used in the classes. From March 2020, a significant majority (85%) admitted teachers used different materials during the lessons (15 strongly agree, 29 agree). A minimal number of participants (15%) consider these materials were insufficient (7 slightly agree, 1 disagrees).

The results from the August 2022 collection present similar perceptions, for a similar significant majority of participants (89%) considered the materials to be sufficient (19, 41% strongly agree; and 22, 48% agree). Once more, the participants who slightly agree (3, 7%) and disagree (2, 4%) are minimal.

Although both data collections exhibit similar responses, it is worthwhile to notice that in August 2022, the number of participants who strongly agreed with the statement is higher. As the answers to the precedent questions, this fact might be due to the 2020 health emergency, since teachers and students had to search for new tools and materials to help the learning process. This variety, of course, is reflected in the participants' answers.

Figure 4.12 Question 10: *All materials were useful*



In relation to the previous information, the tenth question inquires once again into the materials used during the Target Language courses; this time, it illustrates whether or not the participants consider these materials were useful and helpful to attain the required level. From the March 2020 collection, 37 participants (71%) claim that, certainly, the materials were useful (8, 15% strongly agree; 29, 56% agree). However, the 15 participants left (29%) do not affirm the same (12, 23% slightly agree; 3, 6% disagree).

In contrast to these results, students from August 2022 exhibit considerably better perceptions, mainly in the strongly agree section, since 18 participants (39%) selected this option. A similar number of 19 participants, (41%) agree. 8 participants (18%) slightly agree, and a minimal number, 2 participants (4%) disagree with the statement.

It is crucial to notice that in the precedent questions, participants from August 2022 tend either to strongly agree or agree to the statements more frequently than those from March 2020. However, despite this agreement, it is evident that in both cases, although participants considered there was a vast variety of materials, a minimal section of them were not considered useful for their learning process.

The participants' responses to the precedent questions permit to obtain a general idea of their feelings in regard to Target language subjects. Also, it is interesting to analyze the contrasts throughout time, which present improvements regarding the students' perceptions.

In matters of Target Language subjects as sufficient preparation to achieve a B2 level of proficiency in English, data from March 2020 mainly presented considerable disapproval (69%). Nevertheless, in 2 years, these perceptions lowered down to 54%. And, although the number might seem still high, it certainly suggests an advance in the effectiveness of the subjects, from the students' point of view.

Added to this improvement in perceptions, in March 2020, only 60% of students claimed to have been aware, during their learning process, of the level to be achieved. Once more, it is important to mention that, in August 2022, 78% of participants claimed to have been aware of the subject objectives.

Also, sequence in Target Language subjects, regarding learning content, presents a substantial advance. In March 2020, 52% of participants considered the subjects to follow a coherent order; this percentage, however, rises to 76% in August 2022. This suggests a right choice regarding the textbook substitution previously discussed.

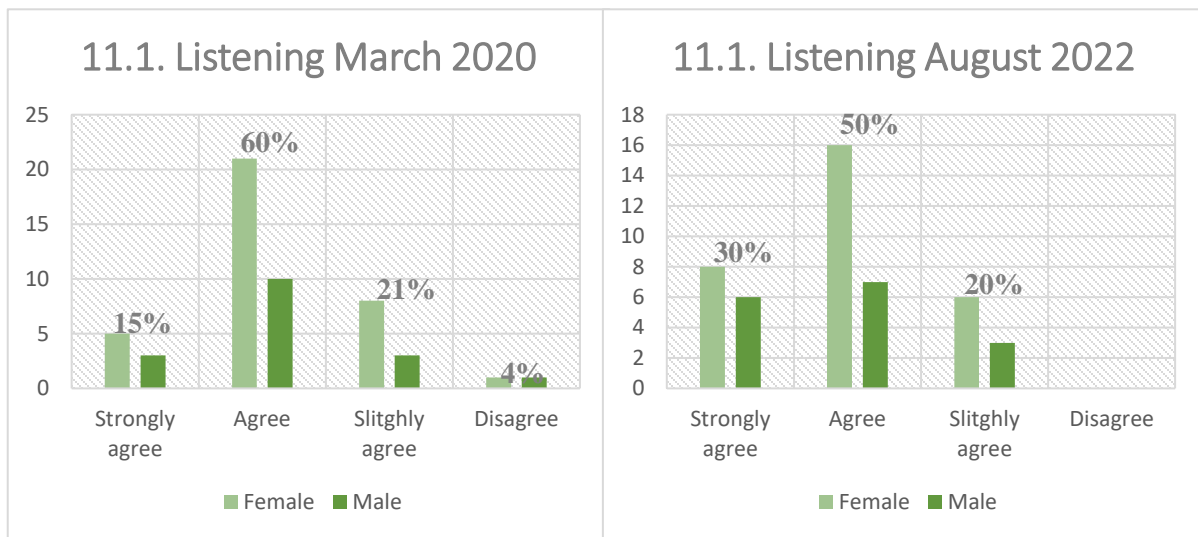
Both teachers' commitment and variety of materials present an improvement in the students' perceptions. Approval of teachers' commitment rose from 46% in March 2020, up to 59% in August 2022. On the other hand, 85% of participants from March 2020 claimed the subjects to have included a variety of materials; this number rises to 89% in August 2022. These materials, nevertheless, present a lower level of usefulness to enhance better learning, according to participants (71% in March 2020 stated materials were useful; however, better perceptions were obtained in August 2022, for 80% thought these materials helped them acquire the required level).

To conclude, there is a visible improvement in the LEI students' perceptions about their Target Language subjects. Some areas, of course, present major areas of opportunity. Hence, these areas should be explored in more detail in further research, and through this process, changes might be implemented to Target Language subjects and guarantee a better learning experience.

4.4 Fourth Research Question - Perceptions about the efficiency of skills development in the Target Language subjects

The last section of the questionnaire regarded students' perceptions about the language skills development in the Target Language subjects: listening, reading, grammar, speaking and writing. Altogether, these perceptions aim to answer research question 4.

Figure 4.13 Question 11.1: *During my Target Language courses I practiced enough: listening*



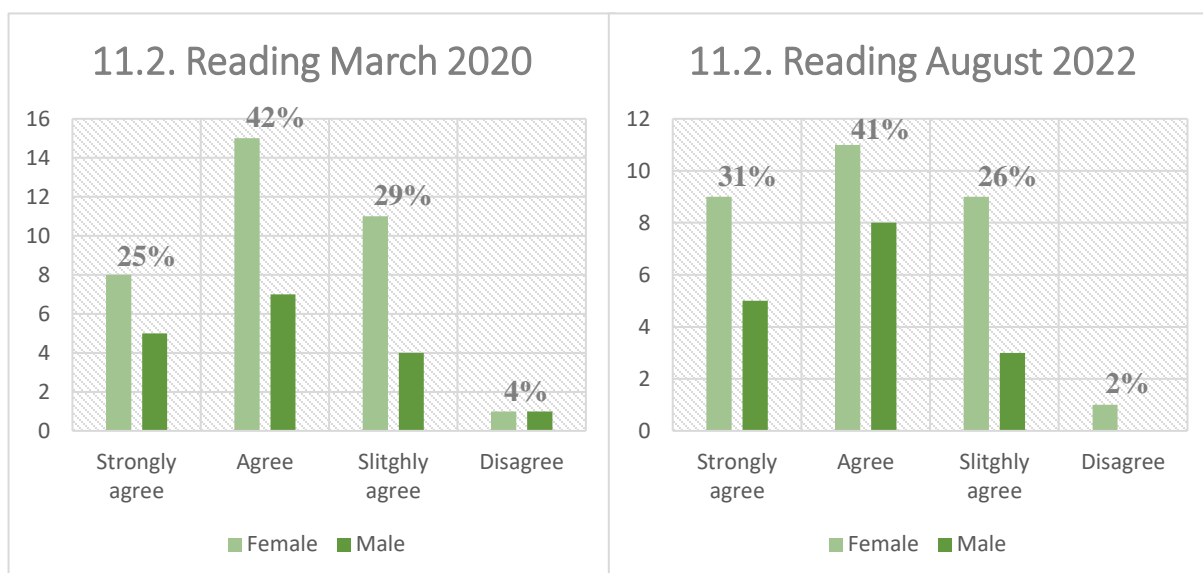
From this question onward, the last section regarding the development of language skills is open. Every skill (listening, reading, grammar, speaking and writing) and the students' perceptions toward them are carefully analyzed and compared. Unfortunately, for all of them, it is not possible to explore details or subskills, since the purpose of the study is to explore the overall perceptions. Once more, each skill merits its own study.

Question 11.1 focuses on students' perceptions about listening practice during the Target Language subjects. In the March 2020 collection, the data indicates that 8 participants (15%) strongly agree with the statement, whereas the significant majority, 31 participants (60%), agree. On the other hand, 11 participants (21%) slightly agree, and only 2 (4%) disagree.

As for participants from August 2022, the results are not considerably different: 14 participants (30%) strongly agree, and once again, the majority, 23 participants (50%), agree. A similar percentage of participants (9, 21%) slightly agree and no one disagrees.

It is worthwhile to notice that, both in March 2020 and in August 2022, the percentage of agreement (75% and 80%, respectively) is very similar; however, in August 2022, more participants selected the strongly agree option, which leads to believe that during their formative learning, listening was practiced more effectively.

Figure 4.14 Question 11.2: *During my Target Language courses I practiced enough: reading*

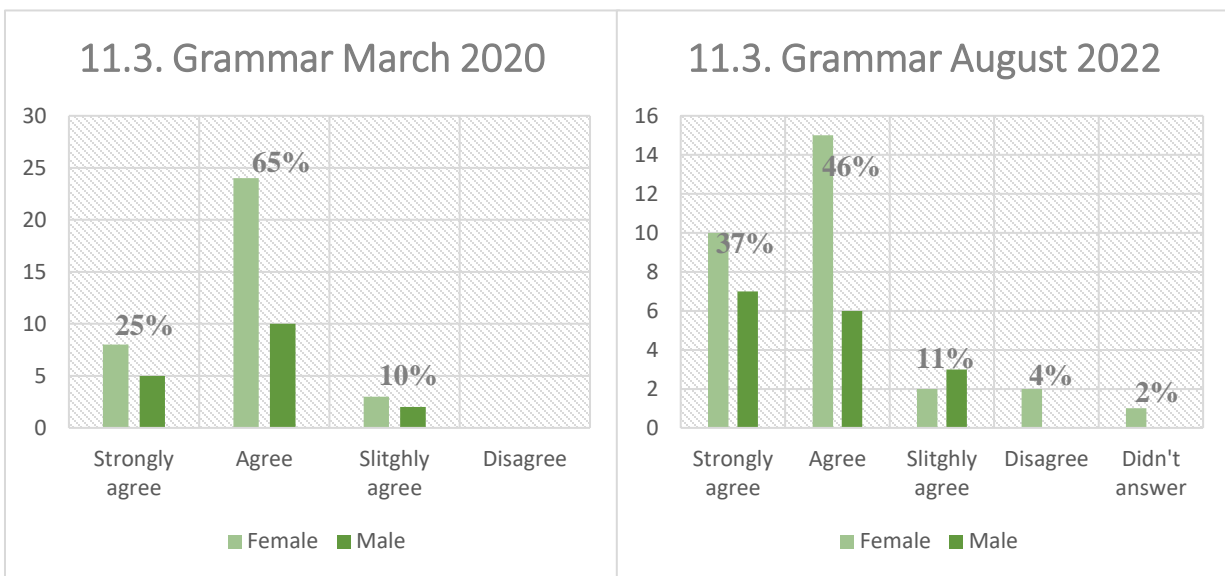


Regarding reading practice, in March 2020, more than half of the participants (67%) consider it was sufficient: 13 (25%) strongly agree and 22 (42%) agree. However, a considerable number (33%) believe this skill was not practiced sufficiently: 15 (29%) slightly agree and 2 (4%) disagree.

For what concerns the August 2022 data collection, the results are similar. 33 participants (72%) consider reading practice was sufficient: 14 (31%) strongly agree, and 19 (41%) agree. Once more, the number of participants (28%) who believe they needed either more or better practice is to consider: 11 (26%) slightly agree, and 2 (4%) disagree.

It can be noticed that, until this point, the reading skill is considered by participants as the least practiced or practiced insufficiently.

Figure 4.15 Question 11.3: *During my Target Language courses I practiced enough: grammar*

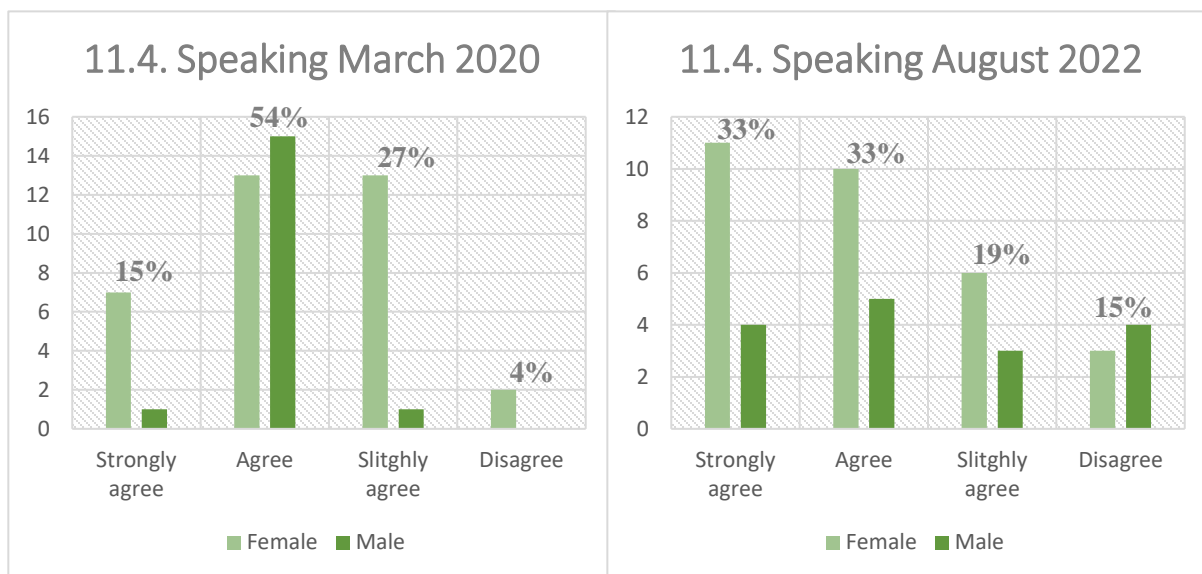


Regarding grammar practice, participants from March 2020 consider it sufficient, for 90% of them accept a level of agreement: 13 (25%) strongly agree, and 34 (65%) agree. Only a less significant number of participants (5, 10%) slightly agree. No one disagrees.

Results from August 2022 are similar: 38 participants (83%) affirm they sufficiently practiced grammar: 17 (37%) strongly agree, and 21 (46%) agree. However, 5 participants (11%) slightly agree, and 2 (4%) disagree. Only one did not answer. In this case, although the agreement rate is slightly lower in respect of March 2020, it is crucial to notice that more participants strongly agreed, which suggests that grammar practice was more efficient.

Until this point, grammar is the “skill” or language aspect that, considered by both March 2020 and August 2022 participants, was most or best practiced during the Target Language subjects.

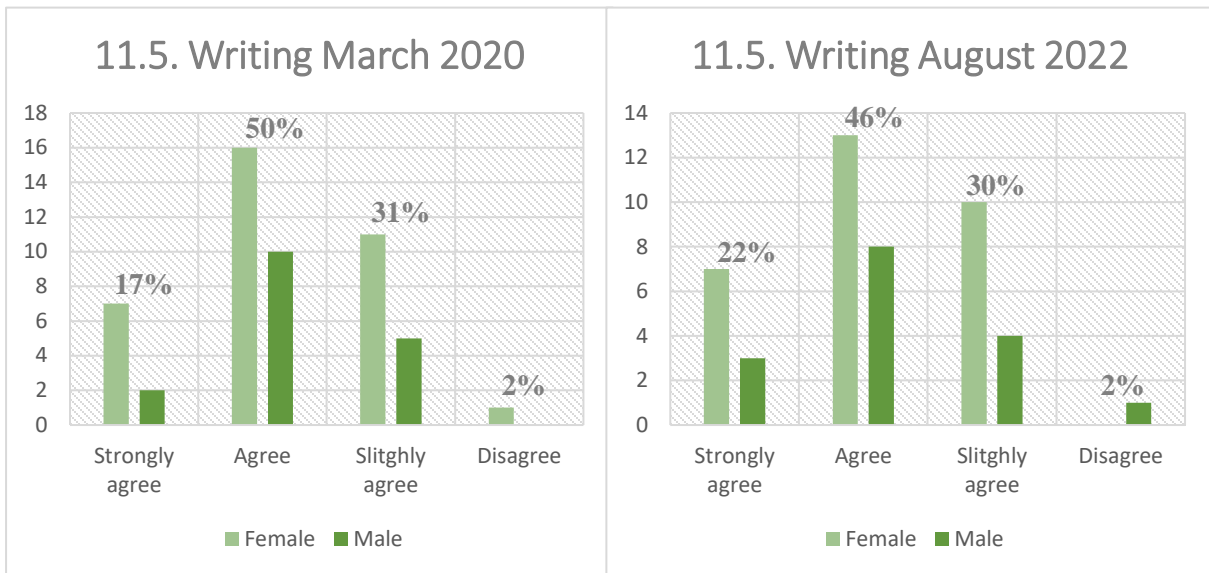
Figure 4.16 Question 11.4: *During my Target Language courses I practiced enough: speaking*



Regarding productive skills, in this case, speaking practice, data from March 2020 indicates that more than half of the participants (69%) consider it was sufficient: 8 (15%) strongly agree, and 28 (54%) agree. Nevertheless, a significant number of participants (14, 27%) slightly agree, and 2 (4%) disagree.

Data from August 2022 is interesting to analyze, since it is slightly different. The significant majority expressed a level of agreement with the statement: 15 participants (33%) strongly agree, and 15 (33%) agree. However, 9 participants (19%) slightly agree, but more important, 7 (15%) disagree. It is worth mentioning that this last number regarding speaking practice disagreement is the highest, compared to the other perceptions about language skills.

Figure 4.17 Question 11.5: *During my Target Language courses I practiced enough: writing*



The last skill to consider and analyze regards to writing practice. Similar to reading practice, the majority of participants from March 2020 (67%) express a significant level of agreement: 9 (17%) strongly agree, and 26 (50%) agree. However, the rest of the participants (17, 31%) slightly agree, whereas 2 of them (4%) disagree.

As for participants from August 2022, 31 of them (68%) express a level of agreement with the statement: 10 (22%) strongly agree, and 21 (46%) agree. Once again, a considerable number of participants (14, 30%) slightly agree, and 2 (4%) disagree.

From this and the precedent data regarding skills practice and development, it can be affirmed that, altogether with reading and speaking, and although it was expressed a good level of agreement on sufficient practice, writing is one skill that presents, according to students' perceptions, a considerable area of improvement.

The data obtained in the precedent questions reveals a similar degree of development and practice of language skills in the Target Language subjects, according to the participants from March 2020 and August 2022.

- Grammar is significantly the most or best practiced skill, since it presents an agreement of 90% and 83% in March 2020 and August 2022, respectively.

- Listening is the second most or best practiced skill, since it presents an agreement of 75% and 80%.
- Reading is in the middle, and presents an agreement of 67% and 72% in March 2020 and August 2022, respectively.
- Speaking practice, however, is the second least practiced skill, since 69% and 66% of participants in March 2020 and August 2022, respectively, claimed to have sufficiently practiced it.
- Writing is the least practiced skill, with an agreement of 67% and 68% in March 2020 and August 2022, respectively.

It is worth noting that receptive skills present a major level of practice during the Target Language subjects. On the other hand, productive skills present areas of improvement, according to participants.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, the results obtained from the questionnaires were presented to illustrate an overall idea of what are the students' perceptions regarding their formative English learning courses. Issues such as skills development, use of materials, teachers' commitment, coherent sequence and general preparation were discussed. Also, the participants' level of awareness regarding the CEFR, along with self-perceptions about language proficiency, was presented and compared to the actual rate of language certification in the CCIA. Finally, a sample of TOEFL results was presented to illustrate a panorama of LEI students' performance in a certification exam.

Chapter V Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the results and procedures followed in the study. Implications are discussed, along with the research limitations. Finally, directions for further research are presented.

5.1 Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of LEI students regarding their Target Language subjects and their efficacy to achieve a B2 level of proficiency in English. To attain this objective, the research method was a survey, and data was collected through questionnaires. Along with the instrument, information about LEI students' performance in a certification exam was requested to the CCIA. Once the data was collected, the results presented an improvement in students' perceptions, contrasting those from 2020 and 2022. Students were more willing to agree that the formative learning courses used materials, teachers were committed to the lessons, and that the general level at the end of the subjects has succeeded in preparing them to deal with the language at the requested level.

On the certification rate at Facultad de Lenguas, there is a considerable improvement as well, for applications by LEI students are increasing throughout time since 2020. The results of these applications, however, present areas of opportunity.

5.2 Implications

The results of this research demonstrate that in the last two and a half years (March 2020 – August 2022), Target language subjects have improved in providing LEI students with more quality learning content, which is reflected in their perceptions. Nevertheless, this does not mean areas of opportunity do not exist anymore. Teachers and the academic body should continue to work on developing and improving the English courses, so that, by the end of the students' learning process, all of them feel comfortable dealing with the language

at a B2 level. Along with it, there should be a change of focus in regard to language skills. The results revealed that, according to students, grammar and the receptive skills (listening and reading) were practiced sufficiently. However, productive skills (speaking and writing) lacked practice.

Finally, about the certification rate, students should be encouraged to apply for a certification exam after completing the Target Language courses to obtain better academic and/or work opportunities in their future careers.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Throughout the study, there were a number of difficulties and limitations that prevented the research from providing better results and conclusions. These are listed below:

- Exams results: although the researcher is thankful to the CCIA and the staff for taking the time to compile and provide the information; it certainly represented a minor part of the LEI population at Facultad de Lenguas. Access to broader information would have opened the possibility to analyze and understand more deeply the performance of learners in a certification exam.
- Generality: as stated before, the aim of the study was to analyze the overall students' perceptions regarding their language courses. However, during the writing process, the researcher noticed that all of the issues discussed (CEFR, materials, efficacy of materials, teachers' commitment, curriculum, language skills, subskills, etc.) deserved a specific study. For this reason, it was not possible to analyze each issue in a more profound form.
- Further investigation in matters of time: by obtaining data regarding the students' perceptions after completing their formative language courses, along with data regarding exam applications, it would have been fascinating to obtain the perceptions of students who applied an exam (how well they have performed, how satisfied they

were with the results, what they attributed the results to, etc.). Unfortunately, for matters of time limitations, it was not possible.

5.4 Directions for further research

Although the results obtained in this research study permit to know and to understand what the students' perceptions are in matters of English learning at Facultad de Lenguas, it only presents that: the students' point of view.

In the first place, it would be helpful to conduct a study that inquires about the teachers' perceptions in regard to English learning in the Target Language subjects (once more, including the CEFR, materials, efficacy of materials, students' commitment, curriculum, language skills, subskills, etc.). This would provide a more complete portrait of the situation; hence, better solutions and improvements might be implemented in the classes, to guarantee better learning for the future English teachers.

Also, as stated before in the limitations, more research should be conducted in the area of English language certifications. Understanding the feelings and needs of LEI students before and after presenting a certification exam could help the academic body at Facultad de Lenguas implement solutions that assure better performance of students, along with a more significant certification rate. This, certainly, would provide students with better opportunities.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. CEFR Levels: global scale

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows

		and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
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Appendix 2. Computer files provided by the CCIA

TOEFL ITP applications presented by LEI students from February 2020 to October 2022.

MATRICULA	FECHA EXAMEN	CARRERA
201206091	28-feb-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201211390	14-feb-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201217354	14-feb-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201239266	15-jun-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201307975	17-jun-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201311917	12-mar-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201313634	26-ago-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201317346	11-may-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201325109	20-abr-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201329408	13-may-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201329555	28-feb-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201329555	27-may-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201330681	11-nov-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201337193	27-may-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201341082	07-sep-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201347720	11-may-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201403614	03-jun-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201411634	12-ago-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201420066	14-feb-20	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201420066	16-mar-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés
201421971	09-sep-21	Lic. Enseñanza del Inglés

Sample of TOEFL ITP results obtained by 2015 LEI students.

MATRICULA	NOMBRE	IDIOMA	NIVEL	FECHA DE EX LICENCIATURA	Student ID
201500718	LOPEZ ORTEGA WENDOLYNE	INGLES	C1	14-feb-20	Student 8
201503587	ESCAMILLA SANCHEZ JOSE HERNAN	INGLES	B2	21-oct-21	Student 20
201507994	MARCIAL MARTINEZ NADIA ITZEL	INGLES	B2	20-sep-19	Student 4
201508487	ENCARNACION CARMONA IVAN	INGLES	B2	20-sep-19	Student 5
201515239	CORONA MORALES RUBEN	INGLES	B2	20-abr-21	Student 13
201515446	JIMENEZ ROSALES PEDRO	INGLES	B1	14-feb-20	Student 9
201516708	CAMACHO LOPEZ KARLA MICHELLE	INGLES	B1	12-mar-20	Student 11
201517046	GOMEZ GARCIA KAREN	INGLES	B2	26-ago-21	Student 17
201517046	GOMEZ GARCIA KAREN	INGLES	B1	25-oct-19	Student 6
201517047	GOMEZ GARCIA KARINA	INGLES	B2	03-jun-21	Student 16
201517047	GOMEZ GARCIA KARINA	INGLES	B1	25-oct-19	Student 7
201541094	JIMENEZ LOPEZ DIANA	INGLES	C1	20-abr-21	Student 14
201545121	PEREZ Y PEREZ MARIA FERNANDA	INGLES	B1	21-sep-21	Student 18
201547780	SERRANO MONROY VIRIDIANA	INGLES	B2	12-mar-20	Student 12
201547874	SORCIA MENDEZ IVONNE PILAR	INGLES	B1	17-may-19	Student 2
201556057	BARRANCO DIAZ FLOR DANELY	INGLES	B2	09-sep-21	Student 19
201556057	BARRANCO DIAZ FLOR DANELY	INGLES	B2	28-jun-19	Student 3
201558175	JIMENEZ JIMENEZ BELEM	INGLES	B2	27-may-21	Student 15
201558175	JIMENEZ JIMENEZ BELEM	INGLES	B1	14-feb-20	Student 10
201559875	MORALES SANCHEZ DIANA	INGLES	B1	19-oct-21	Student 21
201560166	VIEIRA ENCARNACION JOSE ANTONIO	INGLES	C2	19-ene-18	Student 1

Appendix 3. Questionnaire

		Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Disagree	
1. I know what CEFR is and what it is about.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. I am aware of the descriptors for each level (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. The level of the CEFR LEI students must acquire in order to obtain their degree is...	<input type="checkbox"/> A1	<input type="checkbox"/> A2	<input type="checkbox"/> B1	<input type="checkbox"/> B2	<input type="checkbox"/> C1	<input type="checkbox"/> C2
4. I fulfill the requirements of this level descriptors.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. My five Target language courses gave me all the necessary to achieve the required level.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. In every Target Language subject I took, I was aware of the required level (A1, A2...) to pass the subject.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. All my five Target Language courses followed a coherent sequence.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. All five Target Language teachers were committed with the lessons.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. My target Language teachers used different types of materials (audiovisual, texts, ICT).		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. All materials were useful.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. During my Target Language courses I practiced enough:						
Listening:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reading:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Grammar:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Writing:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	