Professors of Foreign Language Degree Programs in Colombia: Review of their Didactic and Technological Competencies

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Abstracts

Considering the transformation of educational scenarios, we recognize the need to train foreign language teachers with high pedagogical, research, and technological skills. This recognition considers the new challenges of education and aligns with the educational discourses and commitments that are shaped by the curricular proposals of foreign language programs in higher education. It is necessary to know the level of competencies of teacher trainers, university lecturers, to identify possible ongoing training needs. This research uses a mixed-methods design with an exploratory-descriptive approach that contributes to the educational instructions to start continuous training plans for their teachers under the policies, global dynamics, and demands of education. The research shows that there are still challenges to confront, as teachers still have opportunities to strengthen their pedagogical, educational, and new technology competencies. This is a challenge that institutions should address in the rigorous implementation of lifelong learning programs.

Keywords: Pedagogical competencies, didactic competencies, technological competencies, higher education teachers.

Introduction

In the current perspective of higher education in Colombia, many people focus on teachers and their pedagogical performance, given that this is a fundamental factor in improving the quality

of education and the innovation of educational practice (Zabalza, 2009). Including new educational policies produces substantial changes that require new institutional, organizational, and functional arrangements (Barnett, 2002). Therefore, the need to link highly qualified teachers with professional, human, and social competences whose willingness and commitment is evidenced in the quality of teaching is increasing.

Thus, the training of higher education teachers is a fundamental factor on which institutions should focus their objectives, given that how they carry out their teaching work, their experience and training profile are fundamental aspects that impact the training of students in the process of professionalization. Therefore, these teachers require a set of competences in line with and coherent with the training profiles proposed in higher education programs.

With the performance of teachers of foreign language degree programs, it has taken on new perspectives in recent years because of the impact that foreign languages have had on society and the education system. For this reason, there is a need for a review of educational practices, teacher training and a critical and reflective look at the profile of the teacher in these programs. Martínez (2006, cited by Fandiño, 2016, p. 124) states that a competent language teacher knows how to articulate appropriately and creatively different disciplinary and professional knowledge when planning, promoting, conducting, and assessing learning processes.

In the same way, Páez (2001) states that among the qualities and characteristics that a language teacher should have, 1) competences from the pedagogical point of view which enable him/her to combine harmoniously the content of his/her discipline with the pedagogical knowledge and mastery of the teaching and learning processes of his/her students which enable him/her to achieve academic success. 2) competences from the methodological point of view, which enable him/her to direct the didactic process of the foreign language in the planning, organisation, and execution according to the particularities of his/her students. 3) Competences from the academic point of view, which imply an advanced linguistic knowledge of the language to be taught. 4) Communicative competences, which refer to accuracy and fluency in communicating in a foreign language and knowledge of its culture. 5) Competences in universal values that allow him/her to practice and promote qualities in his/her students from socio-political contexts. 6) Research competences that lead him/her to apply the basis of reflective teaching so that his/her actions become a process of research-action, i.e. while monitoring his/her teaching, he/she reflects and modifies his/her object.

This article presents the profiles of teachers who work as teachers in degree programs in foreign languages regarding their pedagogical performance, didactic skills and new technologies implemented in the processes of teaching a foreign language. This research stems from the researcher's interest for several years in the training of pre-service teachers, their pedagogical and didactic performance, and the training of teacher educators.

Theoretical Aspects

Competence can be defined as the ability to respond to multiple actions that involve procedural, cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional, affective, and human factors, enabling teachers to develop their work suitably under the socio-cultural contexts in which they carry out their teaching work. The knowledge to apply relevant methodologies, skills or strategies for teaching

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implies permanent updating of knowledge, without ignoring the realities of the students, their feelings, sensitivities, and previous experience, involving their willingness and availability to guide their academic processes in the contexts where they carry out their work.

Based on this proposed definition of competence, we proceed to define each of these competences, which are of great relevance for the development of teaching work, focusing especially on the competences of the foreign language teacher. Among the fundamental competences for the development of teaching work on foreign language degree programs and under the substantive functions of higher education, pedagogical competences, didactic competences, which involve the inclusion of new technologies in the teaching process, and research competences which also involve the social projection of new knowledge.

Pedagogical competences of teacher trainers

Pedagogical competence refers to the ability of teachers to establish relationships between the knowledge they teach and learn, the form and methodologies they use in their teaching in a comprehensive, fruitful, and formative way, with the capabilities of their interlocutors in their field of professional performance. Braslavsky (1999) defines pedagogical competences as:

decision-making, which is so necessary in the teaching-learning process to be able to deal with all the situations that arise. The teacher must have selection criteria among a series of strategies to promote learning in students; be a facilitator of the process, which includes mastering the tools offered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the creation of new means of teaching and learning and the updating of their knowledge (p.19).

Given the current dynamics and the needs of students, it must assume a new role as a guide, orientator, facilitator so that it can accompany the learning processes of students, but above all promote autonomous learning, involve each student, and make them the owner and participant of their own process individually, considering their characteristics. In this sense, it is necessary to implement new ways of teaching, to go beyond tradition and dare to implement unruly proposals, from implementing active and innovative methodologies, and to develop thinking through creative proposals (García et al., 2012).

Regarding the pedagogical competences of university teachers, Serrano (2013) mentions that for optimum performance, it is necessary to promote both individual and group teaching-learning processes; provide tutoring for the student's learning process, favouring actions that allow them greater autonomy; involve new technologies for the methodological development of learning with their students from a critical perspective; permanently evaluate the teaching and learning processes of their students and propose strategies for the analysis, planning, development and evaluation of diverse educational programmes in different educational contexts.

Serrano (2013) mentions the inclusion of technologies in the teaching processes for his students; it is therefore essential to recognise the importance of developing technological competences, bearing in mind that we are facing a new generation characterised by technological development and broad and rapid access to information. Therefore, under current educational conditions, the teacher is not the sole owner of the knowledge of his or her discipline, nor the guarantor of the transformation of knowledge, but a dynamizer of new knowledge (Villarroel & Bruna, 2017).

To achieve this purpose, the development of relevant pedagogical competences is required for the development of their work and to guarantee the academic success of their students.

The Ministry of Education in Colombia, MEN (n.d.) defines a pedagogical practice as:

a process of self-reflection, which becomes a space for conceptualisation, research, and didactic experimentation, where the undergraduate student approaches knowledge in an articulated manner and from different disciplines that enrich the understanding of the educational process and the teaching function within it. This space develops in the undergraduate student the possibility of critically reflecting on their practice based on the recording, analysis, and continuous assessment of their pedagogical actions; the practice promotes the development of the professional competences of future graduates (p.5).

In the development of pedagogical competences, the capacity for reflection and the management of diverse learning situations in the classroom guided by the teacher as tutor and mentor who promotes cooperative and peer learning, which leads to enriching teaching and learning activities, is fundamental. Alegre (2010). Taking all these points of view, pedagogical competences can be defined as the set of pedagogical skills and knowledge that a teacher has in order to solve situations in educational contexts and to foster significant learning in their students through including relevant methodologies and strategies and ICT tools in the teaching-learning processes, which implies a process of ongoing training that enables them to promote the comprehensive development of students, all of which, accompanied by a process of reflection, enables them to improve their teaching practice and performance.

Didactic Competencies

To define the didactic competences, it is necessary to remember the etymological meaning of this word, as well as the definition or concept that we understand when we talk about didactics. Abreu et al. (2017), when referring to the epistemology and definition of didactics, links it to the Greek word didaskein, the meaning of which is to teach, instruct, expose clearly, and show, this of course refers to teaching and learning, even though each of them has different dynamics.

Zabala (2003), cited by Chamorro (2017) mentions that higher education teachers must develop six didactic competences, which are:

- Planning competence: the teacher's ability to plan and design the contents of a program, linking innovative pedagogical processes.

- Didactic treatment of contents: ability to structure and organize the contents to be addressed in a sequential and coherent manner with approaches to the discipline.

- Communicative competence: ability of teachers to transmit information to their students; this competence includes the use of ICT.

- Methodological competence: ability to use different actions to direct learning in different existing scenarios.

- Relational competence: interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the student, as these are a fundamental part of favoring the development of competences in the learner.

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- Tutorial competence: educational attention provided by the teacher to the student through the definition of objectives and teaching strategies in which the teacher assumes the role of learning guide.

As we can see, didactic competences comprise the development of several sub-competencies, ranging from preparation, planning, task selection, the way they are communicated, the definition of objectives, strategies used, and the attention given to the student. Therefore, didactics becomes a theoretical-practical science since it deals with the planning of theory and how to put it into practice, i.e. what, how, when and to whom to teach.

Technological competences

Undoubtedly, technology has achieved significant advances that have permeated educational processes. Currently, we are immersed in the world of new information and communication technologies (ICT), which play a fundamental role in transforming education by energizing teaching and learning processes through the inclusion of innovative tools that promote motivation. Almenara (2016) affirms that including technology in educational processes is fundamental because they promote educational quality offers and provide an alternative way for students to learn. Therefore, teachers are called upon to get a series of digital competences (INTEF, 2022).

However, with foreign language teachers, the use of ICT is especially relevant since using technological tools and the Internet, students have access to authentic material (realia) which allows them to develop more efficiently the communicative competences of the language. Nowadays, technological resources are becoming fundamental elements in the classroom. Jaramillo, Ramírez and Quintero (2017) state that:

Regarding the teaching of English as a foreign language, information, and communication technologies (ICT) have been of great help in mediating the processes. Using blogs, wikis, websites, virtual platforms, among others, has provided both teachers and students with new ways of enhancing communication skills (p. 72).

The European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) proposes twenty-two competences, classified into six areas, and six levels. This framework responds to this need by providing a structure that enables European citizens to better understand what it means to be digitally competent and to assess and further develop their own digital competence (Redecker, 2020, p. 12).

Redecker (2020) mentions that professors are the model for the next generation. In this sense, teachers must be trained in digital competences, as these are essential elements that every citizen requires to actively participate and be part of the digital society. Using technology in their classrooms impacts the improvement of their pedagogical performance and creates much more dynamic and motivating learning environments for their students. Thus, in addition to making use of technology in their academic spaces, teachers must "enable students to actively participate in life and work in a digital age" (Redecker, 2020, p. 17).

As mentioned, the development of digital competences is a fundamental part of the teaching and learning process of today's generations. Cely-Betancourt (2023) mentions that current higher

education curricula include the development of competences in new technologies in all academic areas as they are transversal competences in the curriculum. The teacher's responsibility is to prepare these future generations to enter the digital society with the use of the skills required for them.

Methodological Aspects

To answer the question that guided this investigation: To what extent is the profile of teacher educators congruent with the teacher education profile proposed by foreign language degree programs in Colombia? a sequential exploratory-descriptive mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was followed, consisting of first collecting quantitative data and then qualitative data to develop the quantitative results.

Th instruments used were surveys, interviews and focus groups. The first survey consisted of 28 questions classified into 5 categories used to identify the pedagogical competencies: 1. Language competences; 2. The role of pedagogical knowledge; 3: Teaching skills and linguistic identity. 4: Student-centered teaching. 5: Pedagogical reasoning skills and professionalism. This survey was adapted from Competence and Performance in Language Teaching by Jack C Richards (2011).

To identify the technological competences, it was used a second survey consisting of 19 questions measuring the use and knowledge of ICT. The scale for the perception of digital competencies was adapted from Usher and Pajares (2007). This survey inquired about the teacher's knowledge of the skills in the use of educational technologies; the use of ICT in the classroom; the use of ICT in communication; and the attitude towards the use of ICT.

The participants of the study were forty teachers from foreign language degree programs in the country, 70% are women while 30% are men, between 35 and 40 years old which corresponds to 15 teachers, 10 of them are between 30 and 35, 8 teachers have an age range between 40 and 45, 5 teachers are between 45 and 50 years old and only 2 have an age range of more than 50 years old.

For the treatment of qualitative data, a Word text processor was used as a reference for the process of refining the information (Barreto, 2011). For the analysis of quantitative data, two software tools were used: the R programming language and the graphical interface for R called RStudio. For the analysis methodology, descriptive (bar) graphs are used, which correspond to multiple correspondence analysis graphs to study the association between the questions Spearman correlation matrix for hypothesis tests that judge the association between variables (Montes et al., 2021).

Findings

This first part of the results indicates that the quantitative instrument was answered by forty teachers from foreign language degree programs in the country. The results of the technology courses are presented, followed by the pedagogical and didactic competences.

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1.   Technological competencies

The questions used were analyzed following these categories: Digital competences of undergraduate foreign language teachers; Use of technology by undergraduate foreign language teachers; Knowledge and implementation of technological tools; Attitude towards the use of technological tools; Attitude towards the usefulness of technological tools in education.

Figure 1. Questions applied in the survey on technological competences.
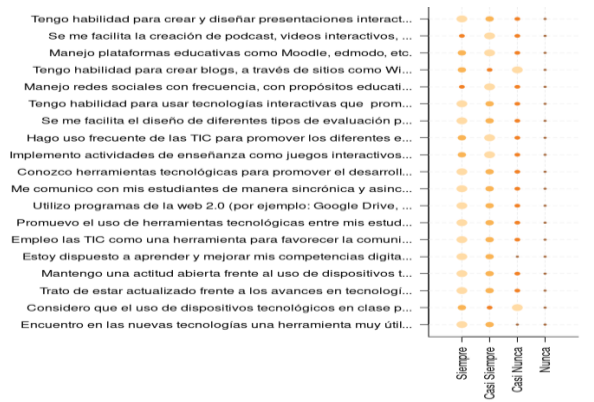
Note: The image shows the results of the questions on teachers' technological competences, the questions were made in Spanish since it is the native languages of the participants.

The answer that usually has the highest number of selections is Always (siempre), the second most selected answer is Almost Always (casi siempre) , and so on. This indicates that, in general, the teachers surveyed are aware of the importance of the use of technologies for their classes, use them and seek to learn more about them. However, it is evident that questions 4 and 18 have a different behavior, since most of them answered Almost never, showing that most of the teachers surveyed do not have experience in creating blogs, and that most of them do not consider that the use of technological devices in class by students distracts them when teaching. In question 18 the response options Almost Never and Never represent openness to different technological tools unlike the other questions. Therefore, the only question that does not reflect affinity or closeness to technology is question 4. However, blogs are not an irreplaceable tool within technology; educational platforms such as Moodle and Edmodo can replace them. Therefore, it is logical that not all teachers are familiar with tools such as Wix.

Table N. 1 Digital competences of undergraduate foreign language teachers.

Statistics				
	I can create and design interactive presentations using programs such as: PowerPoint, Prezi, Emaze, PowToon, geneally, etc.	I can create podcasts, interactive videos, etc. for my classes.	I manage educational platforms such as Moodle, edmodo, etc	I can create blogs, through sites such as Wix.

valid	40	40	40	40
Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean	1,43	2,05	1,65	2,30
Median	1,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Mode	1	2	2	3

Note: The table presents the digital competences of teachers.

About skills in the use of educational technologies, the results show a mean of $\bar{x} = \frac{1,85}{40}$;, a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{2,00}{40}$ and a mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{2}{40}$. Teachers express skills in creating and designing interactive presentations. However, evidence suggests that a significant group of teachers would require support and training in using technologies such as podcasts, interactive videos, educational platforms like Moodle and Edmodo, and creating blogs and websites using Wix, to implement in classes. As is well known, in language teaching and learning processes, technology provide significant benefits, since students have access to authentic online materials, webcasts, podcasts and even videos in the language studied, Quiñonez, (2020).

Table N. 2 Use of technology by undergraduate foreign language teachers.

Statistics		I use social networks frequently, for educational purposes as part of my daily activities	I can use interactive technologies that promote language learning among them, video conferences, chats, etc.	I can design different types of evaluation to assess the communicative skills of my students and the competencies achieved in my classes through online tests, such as Hot potatoes, Quizziz, Google Forms	I make frequent use of ICT to promote the different learning styles of my students.
N	Valid	40	40	40	40
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		2,15	1,63	1,58	1,68
Median		2,00	1,00	1,00	2,00
Mode		2	1	1	2

Note: The table shows the use of technology by teachers.

Regarding the use of technology in education, a Mean of $\bar{x} = \frac{1,70}{40}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,50}{40}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{40}$. Respect to the use of technologies in education, teachers report using social networks for educational purposes as part of their daily activities; skills to use interactive technologies that promote language learning, such as video conferences, forums, chats, etc. Likewise, they state that they have the knowledge to design evaluations as tools to assess the students' communicative skills. However, ICTs are not always used to promote the different learning styles of students, shows that, despite the knowledge and ability to design tools, it is still important to promote their use in the classroom.

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Table N. 3 Knowledge and implementation of technological tools.

Statistics		I implement teaching activities such as interactive games to favor learning in my classes.	I am familiar with technological tools to promote the development of language skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking).	I communicate with my students synchronously and asynchronously through platforms such as forums, chats, wikis, etc.	I use web 2.0 programs (e.g. Google Drive, YouTube, wikis, blogs, etc.) to share academic information with my students.
	Valid	40	40	40	40
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,78	1,65	1,60	1,55
Median		2,00	1,50	1,50	1,00
Mode		2	1	1	1

Note: The table shows the results of the implementation of technological tools by teachers.

The results show a mean of $\bar{x} = \frac{1,64}{40}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,50}{40}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{40}$. Responses denote an opening to including on of ICT competencies as strategies for teaching foreign languages. It is worth mentioning that teachers gained experience in the development of technological competencies in the class because of the demanding dynamics in education that arose during the period of the pandemic because of COVID- 2019.

Table N. 4 Attitude towards the use of technological tools

Statistics		I promote the use of technological tools among my students to share academic information.	I use ICT as a tool to favour communication with my students in tutoring and advising spaces I am willing to learn and improve my digital skills I keep an open attitude towards the use of technological devices by my students in class such as cell phones, tablets, etc.	I promote the use of technological tools among my students to share academic information.	I use ICT as a tool to favour communication with my students in tutoring and advising spaces I am willing to learn and improve my digital skills I keep an open attitude towards the use of technological devices by my students in class such as cell phones, tablets, etc.
N	Valid	40	40	40	40
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,55	1,65	1,08	1,27
Median		1,00	2,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		1	1	1	1

Note: The table shows the results of the teachers' attitude towards the use of technological tools by teachers.

As in the previous questions, teachers show openness to new information technologies, as well as a willingness to learn and deepen their knowledge. Findings show a Mean of $\bar{x} = \frac{1,38}{40}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,00}{40}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{40}$. The level of digital competencies of university teachers is classified as sufficient because these competencies have been forced by the implementation of

non-face-to-face classes since semester 2020-II, due to the confinement by the pandemic, Huerta-Soto (2022).

Table N. 5 Attitude towards the usefulness of technological tools in education.

Statistics		I try to be updated with the advances in technology to implement them in my classes	I consider that the use of technological devices in class by students is a distraction for the development of my classes	I find in new technologies a very useful tool to promote the learning processes of my students and increase their motivation.
N	Valid	40	40	40
	Lost	0	0	0
Mean		1,40	2,45	1,33
Median		1,00	3,00	1,00
Mode		1	3	1

Note: The table shows the results on technologies in education.

The results regarding the perceptions that teachers have of new technologies are positive; the results show a positive perception of the use of new technologies in education. A mean $\bar{x} = \frac{1,29}{40}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,00}{40}$, mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{40}$. Findings regarding teachers' perceptions of new technologies are positive. Teachers are aware of the need to be updated on the use of new technologies and the usefulness of their implementation to promote meaningful learning processes.

2.   Pedagogical competences

The proposed aim was to investigate the pedagogical competences of teachers in foreign language degree programs in Colombia and their implementation in the classroom. To do this, first, we analyze and present the data that allows us to recognize the tendency or behavioral trait regarding the competences mentioned by the surveyed teachers. We inquired the professors for: Language competences; 2. The role of pedagogical knowledge 3: Teaching skills and linguistic identity. 4: Student-centered teaching. 5: Pedagogical reasoning skills and professionalism.

Figure 2. Questions applied in the survey on pedagogical and didactic competences.

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Note: The image shows the results of the questions on teachers' pedagogical and didactic competences, the questions were made in Spanish since it is the native languages of the participants.

There is a clear tendency for individuals to respond positively to these questions. It is important to mention that their answers may be biased since, in general, an individual is not usually a totally reliable source of information about certain aspects of the quality of their profession. Therefore, it is difficult for us to distinguish whether and by how much the strong positive response in all questions is a true reflection of reality or is affected by bias. It is noted that the question: My teaching is teacher-centered is the only one in which the responses Always and Almost Always are not predominant. This is because in this case it is these options that represent a dynamic and inclusive pedagogy with the students as it is understood that if not all the class is teacher-centered, then part of it will revolve around the student. Secondly, a categorization of didactic and pedagogical competences was carried out to recognize the areas where there is most room for improvement.

Data analysis considered the following categories: teacher's knowledge of the skills in the use of educational technologies; the use of ICT in the classroom; the use of ICT in communication; and the attitude towards the use of ICT.

Table N. 6 Communicative competence of undergraduate foreign language teachers.

		I understand texts accurately and provide appropriate models of the language studied in the classroom.	I explain and instruct in the target language accurately, as well as monitor my own speech and writing for relevance.	I provide appropriate feedback on student language according to their level of difficulty and provide language enrichment experiences for them.	I understand students' needs and diagnose learning problems in them.
N	Valid	43	43	42	43
	Lost	0	0	1	0
Mean		1,30	1,14	1,43	1,47
Median		1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		1	1	1	1

Note: The table shows the results of the teachers' communication skills.

The data obtained allow us to observe a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{1.33}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1.00}{43}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. Data allow us to observe the preparation of teachers in the communicative competencies of the language they teach, in this case English. It is important to mention that "For several decades, Colombia has been implementing strategies to promote the strengthening of English-language communication skills to respond to international trends and the globalized world", Betancourt & de Sarmiento (2024, p.1277). From this perspective, we can affirm that the teachers of foreign language programs have the communicative skills required to prepare future teachers of English.

The participants agreed to provide appropriate linguistic models of the language studied, the performance of communicative skills; likewise, there is a tendency to provide spaces for linguistic enrichment to the students through a process of feedback in using the language, as well

as the concern for knowing the needs of the students and diagnosing learning problems, which guarantees success in the language learning processes by the students.

Table N. 7 Pedagogical and didactic preparation of teachers of foreign language degree programs.

		I plan appropriate didactic objectives for classes by selecting and designing learning tasks I evaluate students' learning by designing and adapting tests that assess their progress.	I adapt authentic materials as a teaching and learning resource for my students I use technology appropriately for my classes.	I plan appropriate didactic objectives for classes by selecting and designing learning tasks I evaluate students' learning by designing and adapting tests that assess their progress.	I adapt authentic materials as a teaching and learning resource for my students I use technology appropriately for my classes.
N	Valid	43	43	43	43
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,21	1,21	1,51	1,40
Median		1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		1	1	1	1

Note: The table shows pedagogical and didactic preparation of teachers.

The above-mentioned data show that the mean of $\bar{x} = \frac{1.33}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1.00}{43}$ and a mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. This evidence the pedagogical and didactic preparation of the teachers in the foreign language teaching processes, designing the activities with an adequate planning of the objectives and tasks of learning and evaluation of knowledge of their students: likewise, the importance in the preparation of teaching materials to dynamize the processes with the inclusion of technologies as part of the educational innovation is observed.

Table N. 8 Teaching skills and linguistic identity of teachers.

		I evaluate and reflect on my processes during the classes.	I open the class by presenting its objectives and the tasks to be developed. I establish learning agreements with the students, verifying their thematic comprehension.	I can make transitions from one activity to another.	I evaluate and reflect on my processes during the classes.
N	Valid	43	43	43	43
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,35	1,72	1,49	1,42
Median		1,00	2,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		1	1	1	1

Note: The table shows teachers' teaching skills and linguistic identity.

With respect to teaching skills and linguistic identity, the analyzed results show a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{1.49}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1.00}{43}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. Teachers show the existence of reflective practice as part of their teaching work and teaching habits; likewise, there is evidence of clarity in the class's development using a logical sequence in the presentation of the objectives and the tasks developed with attention to the transitions between one activity and the other. The

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agreements between teacher and students that attend to the needs and interests of the learners mediate all this. This evidences a teaching from the principles of communication and including activities that require communication to foster learning, as pointed out by Fruns (2012).

Table N. 9 Teacher's knowledge and awareness of the context and realities of their students.

		I consider the teaching context and purposes of teaching during the class.	I consider the identity of my students such as their life gender, identity, conditions, age, sex, and classroom culture.	My teaching is teacher-centred; therefore, my interventions are extensive during class My teaching is student-centred, therefore the students' interventions are much larger than those of the teacher.	I consider the teaching context and the purposes of teaching during the class.
N	Valid	43	43	43	43
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,19	1,60	3,35	1,93
Median		1,00	1,00	4,00	2,00
Mode		1	1	4	2

Note: The table shows the results on the teacher's knowledge and awareness of the context and realities of their students.

The results presented correspond to the teacher's knowledge and awareness of the context and realities of their students and their learning interests. The data show a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{2.0}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{2.0}{43}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. A group of teachers aware of their students' realities such as their life history, gender, and cultural identity is evident. Engaging students in the learning process with learner-centered teaching methods provide students with the opportunity to implement a meaningful task and acquire 21st century skills and key competencies through the learning process. Learner-centered teaching invites students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning. Teachers working learner-centered approaches talk to their students about learning, engage them in learning, and make them aware of their learning process (Cukierman, 2018).

Table N. 10 Teachers' knowledge of active pedagogies.

		I consider student participation interaction that occurs during class.	I consider the student and learning outcomes that occur in the class.	I am skilled at presenting my class and materials from the student's perspective.	During a lesson I can connect students' life experiences with new the learning.
N	Valid	43	43	43	42
	Lost	0	0	0	1
Mean		1,33	1,26	1,60	1,69
Median		1,00	1,00	2,00	2,00
Mode		1	1	1ª	2

Note: The table shows the results on teachers' knowledge of the use of active pedagogies.

The data presented above show the tendency of teachers to use active pedagogies in their classes, and the results show an increase in the number of teachers who use active pedagogies. The findings show a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{1.47}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1.5}{43}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. There is evidence of

didactic strengths in the teachers in terms of promoting student participation and interaction, which shows the implementation of active didactics. On the other hand, there is a group of teachers interested in considering the learning outcomes of students and designing materials for their classes considering the students' perspective, that is, they promote learning centered on the tastes and preferences of the learners, as well as taking into account their learning as a basis for connecting with new learning.

Table N. 11 Pedagogical reasoning skills and professionalism of undergraduate foreign language teachers.

		As a language teacher I can respond to my students' difficulties.	I am clear about what kind of teacher I am, what I am trying to achieve for myself and my students. On the other hand, I know how they see me as well as my colleagues.	I am clear about my teaching philosophy and how I influence it. I know the role I play in the institution where I work, and I question whether my role is satisfactory.	As a language teacher I can respond to my students' difficulties.
N	Valid	43	43	43	42
	Lost	0	0	0	1
Mean		1,58	1,47	1,14	1,14
Median		2,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		2	1	1	1

Note: The table shows the skills of pedagogical reasoning and professionalism.

This group of questions has to do with pedagogical reasoning skills and professionalism, according to Richards (2011). These teaching competencies refer to the mental life of teachers, how it is formed, what it consists of, and how teachers' beliefs, thoughts, and thought processes shape their work, their understanding of teaching, and their classroom practices. The results show a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{2.6}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,33}{43}$ a mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. This shows a tendency in teachers to assume their role from a commitment to be part of a global community of professionals with goals, values, discourse and practices, but with a self-critical view of their own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to their own role (Richards, 2011).

Table N. 1 Pedagogical and didactic reasoning skills of teachers.

		I self-evaluate my knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses as a language teacher	I am clear about my role as a trainer of foreign language teachers	I theorize about my educational practice by reflecting on what happens in the classroom, for a better understanding of the nature of teaching and learning, thus, arriving at explanations or hypotheses about them.
N	Valid	43	43	43
	Lost	0	0	0
Mean		1,16	1,12	1,58
Median		1,00	1,00	1,00
Mode		1	1	1

Note: The figure shows the pedagogical and didactic reasoning skills of the teachers.

Again, there is a tendency for teachers to maintain a high level of professionalism. The results show a Mean $\bar{x} = \frac{1,28}{43}$; a median $\overline{Me} = \frac{1,00}{43}$ and mode $\overline{Mo} = \frac{1}{43}$. The principles of professionalism imply, according to Richards (2011), familiarity with the standards that the profession sets for its members and the desire to achieve them. These standards involve acquiring the qualifications that the profession recognizes as proof of professional competence, as well as demonstrating a commitment to achieving high standards in our work, whether as teachers, supervisors, administrators, or teacher educators.

Qualitative data

These quantitative results were complemented with qualitative results got in interviews and focus groups to have a more accurate validity of the data.

Regarding to the technological competencies, it was found that teachers show a management of expanding technologies that enrich and improve the learning experience of students in each of the aspects that are inquired about in the questionnaire. In the interviews conducted, the teachers feel confident in their mastery of specific didactics since all of them have completed their undergraduate studies as bachelor's and subsequently have pursued master's degrees in foreign language teaching, which allows them to be at the forefront of new methodological teaching trends.

Some interviewees coincided with their concern to keep themselves constantly updated autonomously through free virtual courses, participation in webinars, conferences, and academic events. However, they do not have all the certifications that validate the updating of their knowledge.

The only way to keep constantly updated is to take advantage of every course and webinar that is offered for free, nowadays education is very expensive, and the economic remuneration is not enough to do everything one would like to do (Teacher interviewed, Oct 28, 2021).

In terms of technological competencies, teachers show awareness of the importance of the use of technologies in their classrooms, although they reiterate the need to be supported by their institutions. This ratifies the commitment assumed by higher education institutions in the ongoing training of future graduates and, of the teachers in charge of their training. Therefore, it is up to the institutions to restructure their curricula to meet these new training challenges for the new technological culture. Miranda (2015) states that vocational training institutions are called to create programs in the field of bilingual education that include development of new technologies in their curriculum.

During the interviews participants mentioned they have gained experience in the use of applications and new technologies thanks to the virtual teaching experience that occurred during the pandemic period. Teachers have made efforts on their own to be updated in this type of knowledge. The institutions implemented training plans to support teachers in the development of virtual classes. However, after the pandemic period, these processes did not continue. The following graphic shows the Apps that teachers feel more confident in its use:

Figure 3 Apps used by teachers in their classes.
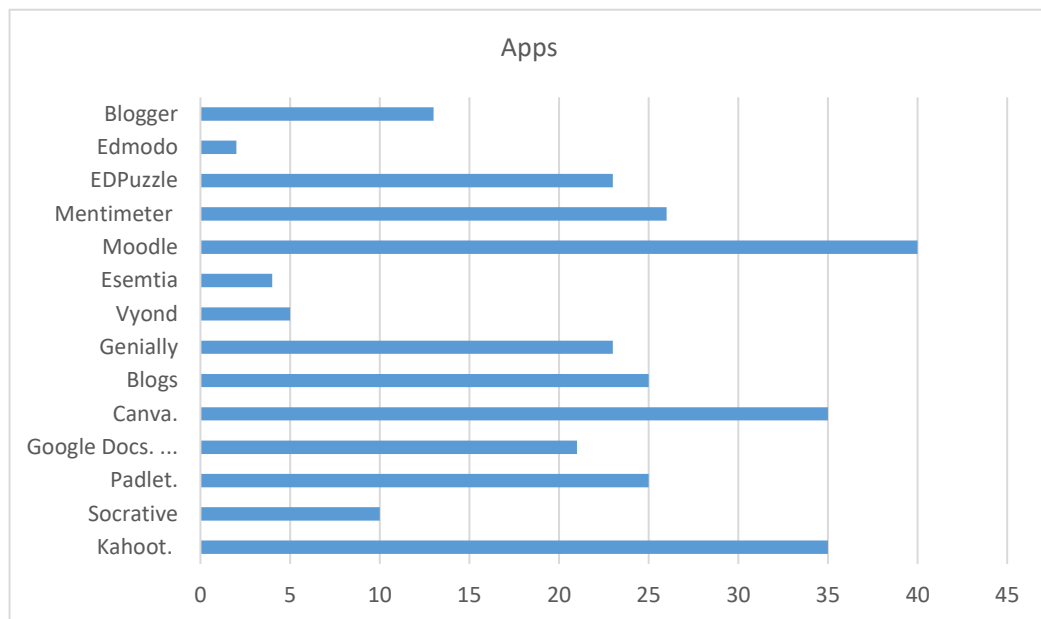
Note: The figure shows the Apps teachers mentioned, they use in their classes.

Although positive results were obtained, there is still room for improvement, according to Gómez et al., (2019) affirm that the variety of technologies used by English teachers is limited and the ones they do use are mainly used for mandatory administrative tasks, and teachers perceive little availability of resources, they do not have the necessary teaching conditions, do not have technical or administrative support, and do not receive training.

Regarding to the pedagogical competencies, participants were inquired about the type of didactics used in the classes and the specialized methodologies for language teaching: active pedagogies and disruptive pedagogies. Some teachers agreed on using the communicative approach for EFL class. Very little is known about the new trends in teaching and the new methodologies implemented in FL teaching. Cely-Betancourt (2023) mentions that it is necessary to review the training process for teachers to strengthen their pedagogical, investigative, technological, and global competences of teacher trainers according to the new challenges of Higher Education.

It was evident that few teachers mentioned new methodologies such as EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction), Flipped Learning, Gamification, learning by challenges. Some showed little knowledge of these methodologies. It has been found that teachers show a management of broad methodologies that enrich and improve the learning experience of students in each of the aspects that the questionnaire inquired about.

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Regarding to the communicative competencies in foreign language, in the interviews we found that 75% stated that they have C1 and 20% B2, 5% are not sure of the level. Seventy-five percent of the teachers have international certifications of English level. When we inquired about the knowledge of the language structures, we found that the teachers have weaknesses in the knowledge of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics; it was mentioned that these are components that should be further strengthened. One teacher stated,

[the fact that we are not an English-speaking country and that opportunities to interact with native speakers are scarce, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence are not my strength].

This means that teachers should not only be trained in didactic knowledge but also in strengthening foreign language skills through permanent immersion activities in English-speaking countries, either face-to-face or virtually. It should not be forgotten that teachers must provide their students with good linguistic models and must be proficient in using language in real contexts.

It was observed that there is no permanent training plan that guarantees the continuous development of their communicative competencies in English, 25% of the teachers do not have international certifications that guarantee their level of English with international standards. The interviews conducted with directors and coordinators showed that only 4 programs, i.e. 10%, stated that they have permanent training plans for teachers that comprise preparation courses for international exams and financial support for the presentation of tests to certify their competences; the other programs show certain weaknesses that the teachers must overcome within the linguistic components manifested in the communicative competence.

In the interviews, the teachers were asked about their opportunities for improvement. The question was: What do you think are your major opportunities for improvement in relation to didactic competencies for teaching? The following figure shows their answers. The difficulties reported by teachers in didactic competencies showed that 1% have difficulties in the relationship with their students, with empathy; 7% have difficulties with the management of time to take refresher courses; 18% have difficulties with implementing research processes in the classroom; 19% show difficulties with time for class preparation; 11% have difficulties with time management within the classroom; 15% show difficulties with the design of resources that support their teaching processes in the classroom; 10% show difficulties with the design of evaluations; 3% have difficulties in promoting students' autonomous work and, finally, 16% have difficulties with implementing new technologies in their classes.

Discussion and conclusions

It is undeniable that education is increasingly facing new challenges given the dynamics of the globalized world. Vargas Hernández et al. (2023) state that current education requires the incorporation of both digital and intercultural competencies because of the globalization phenomena that involve the preparation of future citizens in the world. We are talking about an assumable challenge that requires the global commitment of the actors involved in education. It is important then to reflect on the profile of the foreign language teacher and the challenges that

education demands. Cely (2023) affirms that the teacher must be endowed with competencies and capacities that are coherent with the training fields of the students, given that to train foreign language teachers with a high level of didactic, pedagogical and research competencies, the teacher in charge of this training must have an equal or higher level.

Although education has made great advances in including new technologies and using new methodologies in the teaching of English, there are still challenges to tackle. Institutions need to make a greater commitment to ongoing teacher training. Institutions should prioritize ongoing teacher training in new technologies, focusing on the didactic aspects rather than just the technical ones. Rangel y Peñalosa (2013) cited in Quiñonez et al., (2020) mention that teachers do not feel competent during the pedagogical implementation of ICTs, since they have difficulties integrating them in the design and development of their didactic planning because teachers continuously receive technical training courses and not in the didactic use of ICTs. This is a good point of analysis and opens up the possibilities for a further research.

There are several studies that proclaim the existence of a lack of training in integrating technology by teachers when teaching, mainly in managing the interaction between the knowledge of the discipline, the appropriate pedagogical procedures, and integrating technology (Bernardo-Jiménez & Juan-Lázaro, 2021). Educational institutions should consider the preparation of teachers and implement training programs, without ignoring the fact that some teachers come from previous generations where technology had not yet made such inroads into their field of training. In this sense, we must consider their beliefs and teaching habits to gradually involve them in the field of technology.

Regarding didactic competencies, there is evidence of progress in implementing new methodologies. However, there is no ongoing teacher training program that empowers teachers to stay updated in new educational trends and methodologies. Foreign language degree programs must ensure that their teachers not only understand the use of didactics to teach but also a mastery of communicative skills through permanent certification of their language level and include strategies such as immersions that allow them to be in permanent contact with communicative skills in real contexts. This, of course, requires investment from the educational institutions. So far, educational institutions have not taken responsibility for the lifelong learning of teachers in these aspects.

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