EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS LEARNING LANGUAGES AT ACADEMIES

European Master in Multilingualism and Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the experience of university students who have been learning or currently learn a language in an academy. In order to do so, I will conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants.

The method of qualitative research used throughout this project will be Grounded Theory. Through this method, the theory will be induced from the data once the interviews are conducted. By this, I intended to get to know the current reality regarding this topic, as well as discovering how the university students function when they want to learn a foreign language.

The conclusions from this study are clear: firstly, students do not consider any other options but attending language classes at an academy when they think about learning a language; secondly, academies are important for the students, but they are not the key factor of their language learning process; and finally, the longer students attend classes, the better they feel their competence in that language is.

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Lan honen helburua akademia batean hizkuntzaren bat ikasten ari diren (edota ikasi izan duten) unibertsitate ikasleen esperientziak aztertzea da. Horretarako, parte-hartzaileei aurrez aurreko elkarrizketak egingo dizkiet.

Proiektu honetan zehar erabilitako metodo kualitatiboa laginketa teorikoa delakoa izan da. Metodo honen bitartez, teoria jasotako laginagatik induzituko da, behin elkarrizketak egin eta gero. Honen bitartez, auzi honen inguruko errealitatea eta hizkuntza bat ikasterako orduan unibertsitate ikasleen jokamoldeak ezagutu nahi izan dira.

Ikerketa honetan atera diren ondorioak honakoak izan dira: lehenik, ikasleek akademia batera jotzea besterik ez dute pentsatzen hizkuntza bat ikasi nahi dutenean; bigarrenik, akademiak garrantzitsuak dira ikasleentzat baina ez dira beraien hizkuntza ikaskuntza-prozesuaren gakoa; azkenik, zenbat eta denbora gehiago pasa klaseetara joaten, ordun eta hizkuntza konpetentzia altuagoa dutela diote.

Key words: language learning, academies, private/public language schools, learning process, motivation for language learning

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Introduction:

The process of learning a language starts very early in our lives, in fact, we start acquiring our mother tongue even before we are born. Having the family as our first form of socialization, the language they speak will be the language we acquire first, in some cases, this could also mean acquiring a second language at the same time, whereas in some other cases, the learning of the second language may come later on. For instance, some children may learn a foreign language at school, and some parents may even want to reinforce the language teaching offered by the school and want their children to learn even more than what they do in their classrooms.

Lately, this language learning area has generated plenty of research at an academic level. Articles and research about language learning, bilingualism, multilingualism and such issues have mushroomed last years. For example, it has been scientifically proven that bilingualism would be one of the reasons to delay the appearance of Alzheimer's disease (Bialystok, 2011). At the same time, plenty of other advantages have also been shown and proven during the last decades, such as the fact that being bilingual improves the memory in children (Reza Kormi-Nouri, Sadegheh Moniri and Lars-Göran Nilsson, 2003). Apart from the psychological advantages that knowing more than one language could provide, the thought that learning a foreign language can boost earnings in the future is also very widespread.

Even if learning a new language is a challenge that many people decide to face at some point in their lives, the reasons for taking such a decision can vary a lot. Someone may decide to learn a new language due to work reasons, as knowing more languages helps to reach a bigger amount of clients from all over the world and this would definitively help business. Travelling can also be a reason to start learning a new language; many people will learn the basis of the language where they're going to spend their summer holidays. Also, someone could decide learning a specific language because of the interest that lies behind that particular culture. Some others may start learning a language just for the sake of it, as a way of challenging themselves.

There are several aspects to take into consideration within the language learning process. For instance, the motivations of each student can be intrinsic or extrinsic, motivation coming from the student him/herself will most probably lead to success in learning a language; on the contrary, learning a language just because you are told to do so, or because of passing an exam and getting the certification may not be enough to ensure the acquisition of the target language. The learning style, along with the personality plays a leading role in the language

learning process, being a curious and active person helps in any learning process and also, the more languages you know the easier it is for you to learn another language. All of these factors referring to the student's background will have an impact on the student's learning process.

It is also worth mentioning that not everyone take the same path when learning a foreign language. Some people join a language academy, some prefer taking private language classes, others may travel to a country where the target language is spoken and practice there, online courses are available as well as YouTube channels of teachers, mobile phone apps have been developed in order to practice vocabulary... In conclusion, there is a wide range of possibilities to learn a foreign language. Anyways, assuming that one of the most popular ways of learning a language is attending language classes at an academy, this master thesis will focus on it and take that as study object.

General purpose

The general purpose of the study would be to analyse the experience of 17 university students who have been learning or currently learn a language in an academy.

Specific purposes

- Getting to know the student's motivation for learning a foreign language.
- Knowing the reasons why they decided to learn a foreign language in an academy.
- Knowing whether the students achieved the personal goals they had.
- Determining how positive the experience of the students has been.

The interest for this topic is due to the fact that I have attended myself an academy for several years in order to learn English. When reflecting on that, I wanted to research in dept why other people do the same, why so many people decide attending language classes in order to improve their proficiency in a foreign language. Therefore, the methodology followed will go along with a qualitative research of 10 case studies and will consist in interviews with learners of a foreign language that attend universities from Donostia-San Sebastian.

This master thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, which is the introduction, describes the topic and purpose of the study and explains the structure of the master's thesis. The second chapter, will focus on the review of the literature summarizing different views on the topic, showing recent trends of the topic and explaining the possible contribution to the topic. The third chapter, regards to the methodology, the design of the study will be explained along with the information about participants, instruments and procedure for data collection. The fourth chapter, relates to the results of the master thesis and analyses the data according

to the interview questions. The fifth and last chapter, draws the conclusions according to the research questions and summarizes the whole study, as well as mentioning the limitations of the study and suggesting further research about this topic.

Review of the literature

This chapter will focus on reviewing the literature available for the topic mentioned. As there is no specific research analysing the experience of language learners at academies, the literature specified here will cover aspects such as different aspects related to language learning. First of all, the most important approaches or language teaching methods used until now will be covered, and then, the issue of motivations for learning language will be addressed.

In this first part of the chapter, I will mainly focus on explaining the approaches developed until now in what regards to language learning, they will be the following: Grammar-Translation, Audiolingual method, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, the Communicative Approach, Natural Way and Task-Based Learning.

The first one to be mentioned is **Grammar Translation** method, which was developed in the nineteenth century, and according to Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers it is an "approach based on the study of Latin: standard way of studying foreign languages at school" (1986). The four skills are not developed with this method as there is no listening comprehension, nor spoken communication. Teacher is seen as an authority and students take a passive role. This method focuses on vocabulary by long wordlists and explicit grammar explanations in the native language of the students. Typical exercises include: Fill in the gaps activities and translations of literary passages.

Secondly, **Audiolingual** method was created, whose main goal was to use language communicatively, but it was learnt in an automatic way. Teacher was a good model and a leader whose task was to control the students, who were imitators and should follow and respond the teacher. Dialogs were presented through new vocabulary and structured patterns that were learned through imitation and repetition. According to Richards J. and Rodgers T. (1986), "the emerge of the audiolingual method resulted from the increased attention given to foreign language teaching in the united states towards the end of the 1950s" (p. 47) and it is based in the behaviourism theories that were being developed at that time.

Thirdly, along with the founding of the constructivism, **Silent Way** approach became popular as it was based on discovery learning. It was developed by Caleb Gattegno. The objectives were making the student being able to communicate in the target language by getting the basic vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. The main feature of this method is that the teacher is in silence, he/she will be a guide of the learning process only helping the students using what they already know and letting them build up their knowledge. According to

Richards J. and Rodgers T. (1986), they state that Gattegno, C. (1972) "views language itself 'as a substitute for experience, so experience is what gives meaning to language' (p. 8, quoted in p. 101). With this method, students will be able to develop their inner criteria.

Later on, affective factors also started to be taken into consideration when it came to language learning, that is why **Suggestopedia** was developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozanov. Its purpose is to enhance learning by lowering the affective filter of learner. According to Lozanov, G. (1979) it could be defined as "a system for liberation from preliminary negative concept regarding the difficulties in the process of learning". It consists in doing whatever to break student's psychological barrier and making them feel comfortable. As Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) explain "a most conspicuous feature of Suggestopedia is the centrality of music and musical rhythm to learning. Suggestopedia thus has a kinship with other functional uses of music, particularly therapy." (p. 143) In Lozanov, G. (1978) words, suggestopedia directs "the student not to vocabulary memorization and acquiring habits of speech, but to acts of communication" (p. 109).

In the next years, Charles A. Curran and his associates developed **Community Language teaching**, which encourages the student's initiative and independence. Learning is dynamic and creative and it is encouraged through cooperation as working in groups make students think that they can learn from each other. Students reflect on what they have experienced and need to feel secure and member of a community, they also create their own material, which makes them to be more enthusiastic and active. Native language is used to make the meaning clear and feel more secure when they understand everything. Curran, C (1983) himself mentions that the foreign language learners' tasks are "to apprehend the sound system, assign fundamental meanings, and to construct a basic grammar of the foreign language" (p. 47 quoted by Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) in p. 115) At the same time, this method is the most sensitive one, so there are some positive benefits for learners (humanistic side) but there are some unusual demands on the teacher (high level in both, the native and target languages) and the teacher must be very sensitive with his students.

James Asher developed the method known as **Total Physical Response**, which is defined by Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) as a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity (p. 87). Students learn by doing what we are learning physically, and they are taught by repeating. It is very effective even though it is limited as the four skills are not developed, it

could better be considered as a technique because a language cannot be learnt through this. A clear example would be the song "head, shoulders, knees and toes".

The Communicative Approach derived from dissatisfaction of previous language teaching methods (such as audio lingual and grammar translation methods). The aim of the communicative approach would be to get learners to interact (to speak), putting into practice the fundamental function of language, which is: communication. Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) state that "the goal of language teaching is what Hymes (1972) referred to as 'communicative competence'. Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence" (p. 69) The role of the teacher: lays in getting students to communicate using real-language and to give them instructions, practice and opportunities to produce; whereas, students have to interact with each other and communicate as much as possible. The notion/function syllabus was seen as a way of organising a language learning curriculum. Communicative function is used for real life situations, the notion refers to the context (which can be a party, going shopping...) and the function refers to the purpose (for instance, asking for change, ordering drinks...)

In 1983, Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell created the **Natural way**. It is based on acquiring a second language the way a mother tongue is acquired and the main goal is that children acquire the communication skills not by learning grammatical rules, but listening and understanding step by step. This method is focused on instinct, exposure and input. Special attention is given to vocabulary and pronunciation and no native language will be used. Students need to be as relaxed as possible when they are being exposed to the language and to be able to give answers to the teacher later on. The material used covers aspects from the real world and a wide range of activities. Krashen S. And Terrel T. (1983) note that the Natural Approach is "designed to develop basic communication skills – both oral and written (p. 67, quoted by Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) in p. 135). They also point out that "the purpose of a language course will vary according to the needs of the students and their particular interests" (p. 65, quoted by Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (1986) in p. 135).

Finally, **Task-Based Learning** concept was coined in the 1980s, as Van der Branden, K., Bygate M. and Norris, J. (2009) state, "by SLA researchers and language pedagogues, largely in a reaction to a broad consensus that had emerged around what were seen as shortcomings in teacher-centered, form-oriented second language classroom practice" (p. 1). It is a method which is mainly based on learners' previous knowledge and participation. It consists in 3 parts: the first part, is a pre-task where the teacher explains the topic with useful words and phrases,

ensures that students understand the task, suggests key vocabulary/grammar and also encourages to use their own language. In this stage, students get exposure to the language and have a chance to remember things they know (they start learning in a constructive way), as well as reflect about the tasks and get prepared to start doing it. The second part is the task itself, which is also subdivided into three moments: Firstly, students doing the task; secondly, students preparing to report how they did the task and what they discovered; finally, some groups presenting their reports to the class and comparing results, the teacher's role here would be making some comments on the contents of the reports. The final part consists on the language focus. At this moment, students examine specific feature of the text. Then, the teacher gives them new words (phrases and patterns) during or after the analysis made by students. Within this method, the focus is on the task, and not in language. Tasks are used to create natural situations where the language is involved, so that students' role can be active and being the owners of their own learning process. The teacher will only be there to correct, be asked doubts or give vocabulary.

In this second part of the chapter, once all the methods have been presented, I will proceed to relate motivation and language learning through several readings. As we will be able to see, learning a language is a very complex process where many factors have to be taken into consideration in order to analyse that experience.

First of all, there is the need to underline the fact that motivation in language learning is a necessary component, as Wlosowicz (2013) quotes "a strongly motivated student will learn a language by any method, whereas an unmotivated one may fail despite the best method" (Signan, 1983, in Szalek, 2004: 51). Wlosowicz (2013) also mentions the division of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2003: 8), as well as the important role played by learners' attitudes towards the language and its users (like Gardner and Lambert in Ushioda & Dörney), Weiner's (2000) Attribution Theory will also have importance in this issue, because learners attribute their success or failure to internal factors, such as aptitude or learning strategies, or external ones, for example, bad luck or an unfair teacher. If one attributes one's failure to lack of aptitude, one will expect further failure in the future. As Klimas, A. (2013) reminds us, "achieving a goal is a long-lasting and effortful experience. Hence there are many factors which may either enhance or inhibit the process." (p. 113)

Many researchers have related foreign language learning to self and identity, in this sense, it is worth mentioning integrative orientation, which is a term defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Dörney, Z and Ushioda, E. (2009) explain that:

They reason that a process similar to social identification 'extended to a whole ethnolinguistic community' may sustain the long-term motivation needed to master a second language. In short, notions of social identification and ethnolinguistic identity have always been implicit in the integrative concept. (p. 2)

This makes sense as being attached to a language will be related to intrinsic motivation, which makes the chances of success in the language learning process much higher, Wlosowicz (2009) also mentions that "learners should be encouraged to develop curiosity to discover foreign languages and cultures." (p. 82) but this may not be useful in all language learning cases, for instance, the teaching of a lingua franca is an exception; as Dörney and Ushioda point out: "Does it make sense to talk about integrative attitudes when ownership of English does not necessarily rest with a specific community of speakers?" (p.3). In order to answer this, in this same book they mention Yashima's (2002) argument of the rethinking of the integrative concept:

> Yashima expands the notion of integrativeness to refer to a generalised international outlook or 'international posture' which she defines with reference to Japanese learners of English as 'interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and [...] openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures (p. 57, quoted by Dörney, Z and Ushioda, E. in p. 3)

Anyways, motivation for learning a language is a very subjective factor, which depends mainly on the person and context of each student. In the study carried out by Ferreira, A. (2006) one of her subjects claims that the motivation lays in the interest of each person, "Ela termina reconhecendo que, na verdade, apesar de mencionar todos esses aspectos, o que conta é o interesse de cada pessoa". As we can see, many researchers believe so. Ushioda, E. (2009) also underlines the importance of the individual and the context where language learning happens:

> Ushioda labelled this approach the 'person-in-context relational view' of motivation to outline a perspective that focuses on the intentional agency of real people embedded in an intricate and fluid web of social relations and multiple micro- and macro-contexts. She highlighted the complexity of the system and the non-linear relationships of the multiple contextual elements from which motivation emerges organically. (p. 354)

In the article by Ferreira, A. (2006), it is mentioned that attending a language private academy can cause motivation to students. In her words, "O curso de línguas é visto pela maioria dos alunos como um investimento (...) Esse investimento é visto como necessário e bom, porque traz um retorno em termos de motivação para os alunos." This will be straightforwardly directed to this Master Thesis, as the topic that will be covered will be language learning process in academies, and we will be able to actually see if, in this case, students are motivated because they attend classes at academies or not.

Another factor to take into account when learning a language, is if it is the second language or more. According to Wlosowicz T. (2013), in the chapter The Role of Motivation in Third or Additional Language Acquisition and in Multilingualism Research, published in the book The Affective Dimension in Second Language Acquisition:

> It must be assumed that, given the complexity and dynamic nature of multilingual systems, the role of motivation in third or additional language acquisition is more complex than in second language acquisition (SLA). It is also more important, as learning several foreign languages requires more effort than learning one language. In fact, English being the world language, motives for learning other languages can be even more difficult to find. (p. 77)

Wlosowicz (2009) states "Undoubtedly, learning more than one foreign language constitutes a long-term process which requires sustained motivation" (p. 80) therefore, when trying to maintain students motivation, it is crystal clear that it will become also more complex. One of her suggestions is that "definitely, taking learners' needs and interests into account can contribute to the creation of a more motivating syllabus" (p. 82) This could also be backed up by Klimas, A. (2013) who points out the importance of the design of the tasks themselves for enhancing students' motivation:

> Indeed, as it is represented by the concept of task motivation (Dörney, 2003), tasks are essential elements of motivated behaviour as they not only form students' immediate interest and commitment, but they also shape attitudes towards learning in general. Language learning tasks depict the connection between educational goals, teacher and students, so in fact they are possible means to achieve the goals. (p. 122)

Klimas, A. (2013), in her chapter Goals Pursuit in a Foreign Language Classroom, states that "Goals play a significant role in general motivation theories as well as in L2-oriented theories

(...) it can be stated that setting goals is indispensable if we want to improve the quality of the learning experience. (p. 112)

Taking all of this into account and considering the current reality of the city to be studied, there have been three main issues to be addressed in the following research. I will proceed to number the three main research questions have been identified to work later on with the subjects.

Research Questions

RQ1.- What role do the academies play in the language learning process of the interviewed students?

RQ2.- Why do university students decide to attend language classes at academies?

RQ3.- Have the students achieved the goals as they expected to?

Methodology

Along this chapter, I will proceed to explain the design of this study, the strategies that I have used both for data collection, as well as for analysing the data and drawing the correspondent conclusions. I will also give general information about the interviewed participants at the end of this chapter.

I will carry out this project based on a qualitative investigation, trying to analyze the study subjects in the most scientific way as possible. In order to do so, I will base it in the use of techniques to get to know the interests of the studied city, which in this case will be the university students from Donostia-San Sebastian. To measure or observe the variables and collect the information I will use an interview as a tool, observing a segment or sample of the mentioned population.

I will try to answer the research questions posed, as well as getting to know the current reality regarding this topic, according to this qualitative methodology and the interview as the used tool. The method for qualitative research used in this project has been Grounded Theory. Therefore, that means that the first step of the project has been related to data collection and data analysis.

As I have said before, I have attended an academy myself for several years (more than 10), and I have plenty of friends, acquaintances and friends of friends who have done the same. Along with that, the business of language industry is growing, specially the demand for language teaching. In fact, LANGUNE, the Language Industry Association of the Basque Country (2011) points out in one of their studies that "Los/las alumnos/as vinculan mayoritariamente (52,4%) la formación (en idiomas) desarrollada con un impacto positivo en su carrera profesional; especialmente porque perciben con rotundidad el crecimiento de los requerimientos en este ámbito."

This made me wanted to know why so many people decide to attend language classes at an academy and if this form of learning outside-the-school is valid and profitable for language learners who decide to do so.

First of all, I reflected about my own experience in a language academy writing down everything that came to my mind. This **brainstorming** process helped me getting all the ideas related to language learning outside school based on my own experience, which I could later transfer to create an interview schedule.

Then, I proceeded to organize all my ideas into three big blocks (or **categorize** into three categories): one relating to the student, another relating to the teacher, and a last one referring to the academy itself. I decided to add the teacher column as an asset apart because, although it belongs to the academy as he/she is recruited to work there hopefully because his personality corresponds to the academy's mission statement, vision and values of the organization; a teacher is a person. Therefore, within the same academy we may find very different ways of teaching depending teachers' personality, values, thoughts or ideas, that may or may not be shared with the company he / she belongs to. Later, what I did was **prioritizing** the most important ones and **deleting** the non-relevant ones.

After that, I conducted a quick desk-research to get to know how the academies would somehow "sell" themselves. Observing a few websites, it was crystal clear that all of them provided the main messages in big letters and mostly in the "home" page. I could collect all of them and count which had been the most mentioned terms.

In this moment I already had two different points of view of the same topic: I had compiled the experience of a student, as well as some properties of the academies, referring to themselves. With this information I was already able to define the **purpose of the study**, as well as proposing the main **research questions** of the investigations.

Having in mind what I wanted to research and knowing the questions I wanted to answer, I developed an **interview schedule**, taking in mind both the research questions and my experience as a language learner. Each question of the interview can be related to one research question and at the same time, is a consequence of the categories I have previously determined from my experience as a language learner at an academy.

In order to conduct the interviews, I decided that participants should be able to express themselves in their mother tongue so that the interview wasn't conditioned by the language and they would be able to express themselves freely. The choice of the used language tried to be as natural as possible, that is why some people may have Basque as a native language but if their communication language normally is Spanish, that is going to be the language used at the interviews; the same thing happens the other way round, although some people's native language was Spanish, the interview was carried out in Basque in order to be more natural.

The interviews were carried out within the different University buildings: in Deusto in the Matteo Ricci building exactly and in the Basque Country University in the library Centro Carlos

Santa Maria building, the Donostiako Irakasleen Unibertsitate Eskola building and the Escuela Politécnica de Donostia building.

The procedure to get the interviews was just calling or texting my contact network. All the interviews were conducted in a more or less informal way, as most of the interviewed where friends or acquaintances of the researchers. After conducting the interviews I proceeded to **transcribe** them, always having in mind the research questions and the purpose of the study in order to only transcribe the aspect that I wanted to research, that is to say, only extracting the meaningful sentences.

The strategies used to **analyse the data** and come up with the results have been Grounded Theory and reading and looking in the transcripts for answers to the research questions, dealing with them systematically.

According to Creswell, J.W. (2012), **Grounded Theory** is "a systematic research process that works to develop "a process, and action or an interaction about a substantive topic". It was developed by Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). Through this method of qualitative research where we induce the theory from the data, and having the conducted interviews, I intended to discover how the university students from Donostia-San Sebastian function when they want to learn a foreign language. That is to say, the theory will already be in the data to be discovered.

First of all, after having sorted all the data out, I had to open code it for major categories, which would basically mean applying a label to it in order to look at it in a more holistic way. I would go to the process of looking for similar concepts, group them into categories and labelling that category. When interviewees were asked questions, they very often digressed, answered forthcoming questions or a previously commented question; that is why, after transcribing the interviews I had to come back to the interview schedule and arrange the answers back into a determined way.

At the same time, I would be writing memos throughout the entire process, trying to relate some codes with other codes and relating the categories; as many participants would be giving similar answers that could be related to each other.

Later on, I would proceed to interview more people as I was collecting data and relating the codes and categories at the same time. In the beginning, I only had people learning English as a foreign language, so I would try to fill it in adding people who had studied more languages such as German, French or Chinese. I specifically targeted that people going to Tourism students, who already study more languages at the university as part of their degree, so that I

could use this data to saturate the categories. Once that happened, and the category analysis offered no new content I proceeded to sort everything out and proving theoretical relevant, that is to say, I started to look for the most frequent concepts getting in relation to the different categories.

Finally, I read the literature related to language learning outside the scholar classroom and summarise them pointing out the aspects that would be relevant to validate my theory grounded in the data I had previously collected. Even though it is not the case that the data set can be generalised to all the population, to some extent, the theoretical framework created from the data will apply specifically to the data set.

Information about the participants:

The 17 subjects who agreed to participate in the study were aged between 19-24 years old. 13 were female and 4 of them were male. All of them were university students at Donostia-San Sebastian, either they attended the University of the Basque Country or Deusto University.

Specifically, seven of them were attending Deusto University and ten of them were students from the University of the Basque Country, the studies they were coursing are the following ones:

- Teaching degree: Nursery school (4 participants)
- Industrial Electronic Engineering (2 participants)
- Mechanical Engineering (1 participant)
- Social Work (1 participant)
- Social Education (1 participant)
- Tourism (6 participants)
- Business Administration and Management (1 participant)
- European Master in Multilingualism and Education (1 participant)

In order to have a better overview of the general characteristics of the participants involved in this research project, I will present the general information taken from the interviews in the following table:

Subject number	Age	Gender	Studies	University	Languages/Level	Learned at…
1	20	Fem	Teaching	UPV / EHU	Basque / Native	Home
					Spanish / Native	Home

					English / B2	School and academy
2	19	Fem	Teaching	UPV / EHU	Basque / Native	Home
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School and academy
3	20	Fem	Teaching	UPV / EHU	Basque / C1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School and academy
					French / A1	School
4	20	Masc	Engineering	UPV /EHU	Basque / B1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B1	School and Official Language School
5	20	Masc	Engineering	UPV / EHU	Basque / B2	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School and academy
					French / A1	School
6	20	Masc	Engineering	UPV / EHU	Basque / B1-B2	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School and academy
					French / A1	School
7	19	Fem	Social work	Deusto	Basque / B2	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / A2	School and academy
8	20	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / B2	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C1	School and academy
					German / A2	University and academy
					French / A1	University
					Catalan / B1	Summers in Catalunia
9	22	Fem	Business	UPV /EHU	Basque / C1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C1	School, University

						and academy
					German / A1	University
					French / A1	School
10	21	Fem	Teaching	UPV / EHU	Basque / Native	Home
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School, university and academy
11	20	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / Native	Home
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B1	School and University
					German / A1	University
					French / A2	Official Language School
12	19	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / B1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C1	School, University and academy
					German / A1	University
13	19	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / C1	School and academy
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C1	School, university and academy
					German / A1	University
14	19	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / C1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C1	School, University and Academy
					German / A1	University
					Chinese / HSK 2	Academy
15	22	Fem	Tourism	Deusto	Basque / C1	School
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B2	School, University

						and academy
					French / A1	University
					German / B2	Official Language School
16	24	Masc	Social education	UPV / EHU	Spanish / Native	Home
					English / B1	School
					Basque / A1	Euskaltegi
17	23	Fem	European Master in Multilingualism and Education	UPV / EHU	Basque / Native	Home
					Spanish / Native	Home
					English / C2	School and academy
					French / B1	School and academy

Figure 1. General information about the participants

Results

The following chapter is going to analyse question by question the answers provided by the participants in the conducted interviews. Three categories have been identified when conducting the interviews: The first one relating to the academy itself, the second one specifically talking about the methodology followed by the academy (or the teacher/s) and the last one which would be more general in order to get a more holistic view of the whole point of view of the interviewed and to be able to tie everything up.

The academy */ Akademia / La academia:*

1.- Why did you decide to learn XXXXX as a foreign language? */ Zergatik erabaki zenuen XXXXX atzerriko hizkuntza bezala ikastea? / ¿Por qué elegiste aprender XXXXX como lengua extranjera?*

The main reason for learning English as a foreign language is the fact that it is already in the school curriculum. Most of the interviewees mentioned that as they already have it at school, they already feel that they have the basic skills in English, therefore, in order to take advantage of that they decide to reinforce it out of school as well. Some mention that what they learn at school is not much and that they do not learn a lot there, that is why they decide to take classes outside school.

Some other arguments such as the value of English in the society, the possible use of the language when travelling internationally or for future job/career development are also mentioned, but those are seen more as a positive effect that their learning of English may have, rather than a reason for studying English out of school. Also, those who started at a very young age claim that it was not their choice, but their parents.

Regarding the rest of the languages, which are French, German, Chinese and Basque, interviewees mention mostly cultural aspects, curiosity, interests, likings... As well as having it as an optional language at high school or at university, which is also one of the factors for choosing that language being reinforced out of school as well, like it happens with English.

In general, most of the interviewed students have tried a language at school first (or even at the university) before joining classes of that language at a private language school.

2.- When did you start learning the language at the academy? */ Noiz hasi zinen akademian? / ¿Cuándo empezaste en la academia?*

The answers to this question are presented in the form of a table so that results can be seen more clearly:

When	Number of participants
In Primary School	3
In Secondary School	3
This or last academic year	4
2 or more years ago	7

Figure 2. Answers to the question "When did you start learning the language at the academy?

3.- Why did you decide to attend language classes at an academy? Did you think of any other possibility like private classes, online learning...? Why didn't you choose them and decide to go to an academy? *Zergatik erabaki zenuen akademia batera joatea? Beste aukeraren bat kontuan hartu zenuen: partikularrak, online ikastaroak…? Zergatik baztertu zenituen beste aukera guztiak?/ ¿Por qué decidiste ir a una academia? ¿Te planteaste algún otro tipo de opción, clases particulares, cursos online…? ¿Por qué descartaste esas opciones?*

The vast majority of answers suggest that people do not take into account any other options when they want to learn a language. The first choice that comes to their minds is attending language classes at an academy and that is what they do.

Mentioned reasons for attending classes at an academy out of school have been: good experiences of friends or relatives, thinking that other options are not going to work (because they have also tried it themselves or because friends/relatives have told them so), or just their parents choice. Other aspects mentioned in favour of language classes at academies are that they are very easy to reach, as well as they provide you seriousness about learning a language, also attending to classes can be seen as an obligation, which forces students to continue with their learning process.

4.- Do you think that the academy has played an important role in your language learning process? Was it useful? *Zure ikasketa prozesuan akademiak rol garrantzitsu bat duela uste duzu? Lagungarria ikusten duzu? / ¿Piensas que la academia ha tenido un papel importante en tu proceso de aprendizaje del idioma? ¿Te fue útil?*

We have a variety of answers for this question, while some participants think that the academy has been the foundation of their learning, some others only see it as a help or support. Apart from that, some participants have had negative experiences at their private language schools and believe that they have not helped at all in their learning processes.

On the one hand, nine of the participants agreed on the fact that the academy has had an important role in their language learning process, which means that those classes form the most part of their learning, as the following subject states:

"La academia ha formado la mayor parte de mi aprendizaje de inglés" Subject 06.

On the other hand, five of the interviewees have answered that the role the academy has played has been more of a help or supportive role rather than being the base and funding of their language learning process. They mention that their effort has been at least as important as attending to classes in their learning. Some of the following quotes are a reference of this:

"Azkenean akademia batera jutea… osea, horrek laguntzeizu baina azkenean zuk ez badezu gogoa jartzen eta inplikazioa ez baldin badakazu, gauza gutxi lor ditzakezu." Subject 02

"Está claro que si hubiera ido por ir no hubiera sido lo mismo, tú tienes también que pasar unas horas aprendiendo porque si no, no aprendes… está claro. Pero sí, veo un avance gracias a las clases." Subject 04

These examples underline the need of making an effort by yourself as well. Some of them also pointed out that the school provides a strong foundation of English language.

Finally, there a couple of subjects who have mentioned that they do not believe that the academy has played an important role in their language learning process. To analyse this answers we have to take into account that those who have said so have been in an academy for a really short period of time. The first of them had only been for half of this academic course. She claims getting lost in the grammatical explanations although she could manage better than others in listening, reading, writing and speaking. The other one went to the academy to pass an exam for a year, so she feels that her language competence still is the same, the only difference is that she has got a title now.

5.- Did you manage to achieve your personal goals thanks to the academy? */ Zuk zenituen helburu pertsonalak akademiari esker lortu dituzula iruditzen zaizu? / ¿Conseguiste lograr los objetivos que te habías marcado gracias a la academia?*

When participants were asked about their goals and whether they had achieved them or not, the vast majority mentioned having fulfilled their expectations regarding the academy. Everyone (except from two people) thought that the academy was what they were expecting it to be and that it had helped them to the extent they thought they would. Also, they mention being able to see that their level of language has improved since they started until now, and

even though some of them have not obtained any certification yet, most interviewees claim having managed to have already achieved their goals. One of them, has mentioned that she is not really sure until what extent her objective of "being able to speak English" has been achieved. This could be due to the fact that she has reached B2 level, which is a high level, but does not give you full Proficiency level of dominance of the language. This level is enough for communication, but once you are here, you realize how much is yet to be learnt within your language learning.

Additionally, four of the participants did not manage to get their objectives. Two of them, mentioned internal reasons such as, skipping too many classes because of lack of time. This participant, for example, understands that her language learning failure is due to herself and not because of the private language school she attended:

> *Interviewer: ¿Conseguiste lograr los objetivos que te habías marcado?*

> *Interviewee: No, pero porque fallé yo. (Subject 16)*

At the same time, other two participants claimed that the reasons for not having succeeded in accomplishing their goals lay in the academies they have attended. One participant states, as mentioned before in the previous question as well, that she would easily get lost in the grammatical explanations because her grammar was "bad" while she was confident in the four language skills; this lack of confidence in her grammar ability made her feel lost and blocked, that is the reason why she finally dropped out. Another participant, who also attended language classes at the university while attending classes at the academy, tells us that what they were teaching at the university and the academy was practically the same. She expected to be learning more thanks to the academy but she found herself repeating the same lessons twice.

6.- How much has your competence in the language improved since you are in the academy? / *Zenbat hobetu da zure hizkuntza gaitasuna akademiara joaten zarenetik? / ¿Cuánto ha mejorado tu competencia lingüística desde que vas a la academia?*

As we are able to see in the following chart, the participants have had different improvement processes, which are later represented in red bars. Some of them have had longer learning processes, and therefore bigger improvement and some have been learning the language for a shorter period of time.
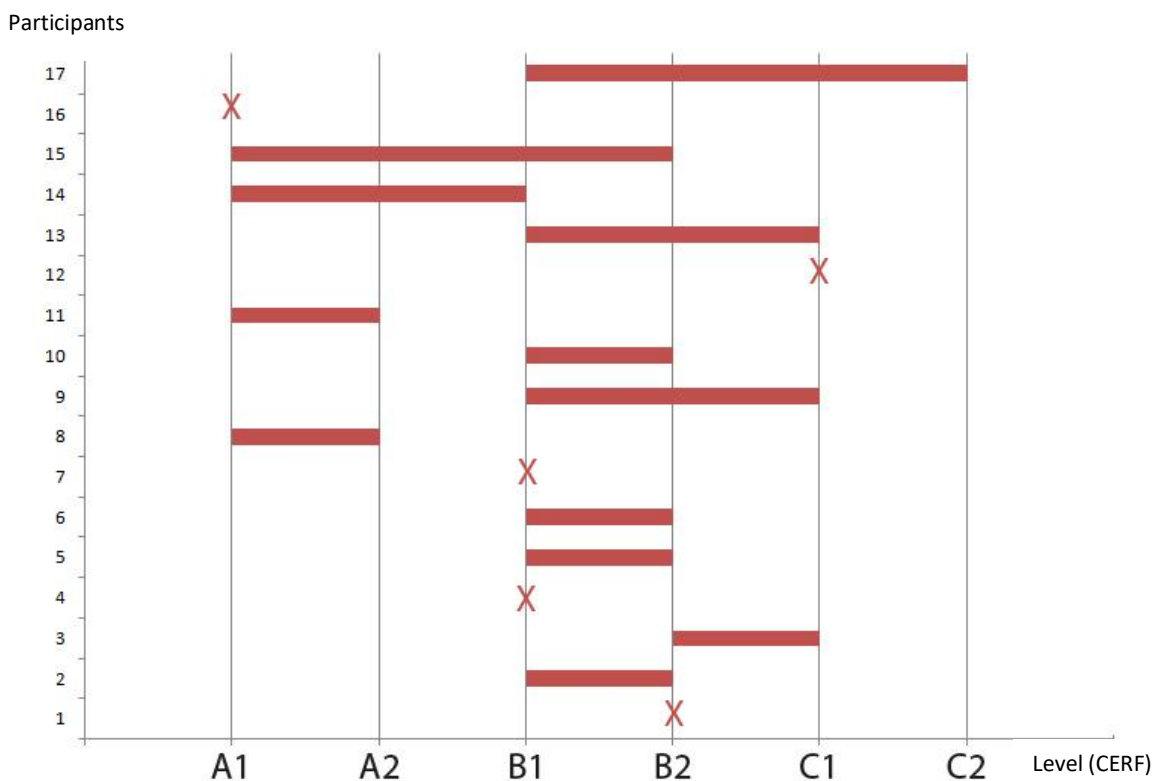
Participants

Figure 3. Answers to the question "How much has your competence in the language improved since you are in the academy?

Seven participants did not know which their starting point was in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages when they were asked about their language competence improvement.

According to the objectives of the curriculum of the BAC, 23/2009 decree, the students are supposed to end their Batxiler studies with a level of "independent user": *"Horrela, elebitasuna bermatzeko erronkari, gehitu egin behar zaio atzerriko hizkuntza batean, gutxienez, "erabiltzaile independente" mailako pertsona eleaniztunak lortzeko helburua".* Therefore, the starting point for them has been determined as B1 level for those learning English as a foreign language.

I need to point out that as we are able to see in the chart, no progress has been recorded at all for five of the participants. I will explain participant by participant the reasons why this has happened. Subject number 1 is not very happy with her experience at the academy, according to her, the academy needs to be more personalised and she felt that the one she was attending was not suited for her needs; that's what made her stay in the same level for the year she attended. The case of Subject number 4 is different, as she attends the Official Language School, two years are needed there to finish the B1 level (as it is divided in B1.1 and B1.2), that is why no progress can be shown in this graphic, even though the participant has

actually achieved to make progress. Regarding Subject 7, she only attended the academy when she was a child, later on she stopped attending classes outside school and that is why the level she has before and after attending the academy is the same. On the contrary, Subject 12 states that she only attended language classes outside school with the intention of preparing an exam, because she already had the level but did not know how the Cambridge Exams would be like. Finally, Subject 16 admits that the fault of making no progress is hers, as she stopped attending classes in the middle of the academic year.

There is still a detail to comment about the progress of Subject 14. She is the one studying Chinese, this language being a language spoken outside of the European Union has no equivalence in the Common European Framework of References. The real progress for this participant has been from 0 to HSK2, but in order to be able to represent it along with the others, the participant was asked to clarify which level would that be equivalent to, which would be more or less a B1 according to the CEFR.

7.- *Do you have any certification in the languages you speak?* */ Agiriren bat lortu izan duzu? / ¿Has conseguido algún título?*

As it is clearly specified in the graph bellow, 59% of the participants have an official certification in the languages they speak (Cambridge certifications, HSK, Official Language Schools certifications, etc.) whereas 41% of them do not have any certification.

Figure 4. Participants' answers to "Do you have any certification in the languages you speak?"
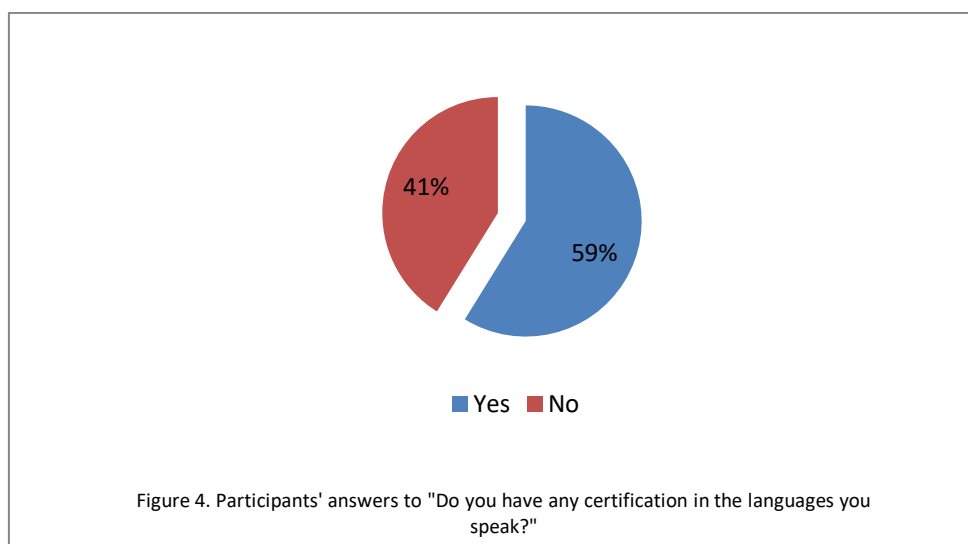
8.- *Do you think that the academy only wanted you to succeed in exams? Or do you feel that they wanted you to progress in your learning process?* */ Uste al duzu akademiak bakarrik azterketak gainditzea nahi zuela? Edota zure ikaskuntza prozesuan aurreratzea nahi zuten?/*

¿Crees que la academia sólo quería que aprobaras los exámenes o se preocupaban más porque aprendieras el idioma?

A wide range of answers has been given to this question, as the experiences of the participants have been varied and differ very much depending on the perception of each subject. The first group of participants feel that their language teaching was directed specifically in order to pass an exam, whereas a second group of students feels the teaching was just oriented to learn a language. A final group mentions a mixture of both intention of passing an exam and will to learn the language.

When recording the answers, five of the participants clearly see that their learning process has been oriented towards passing an exam. Some of them even mention having to pass an exam to go up a level in the academy which requires a high level of implication and responsibility in the language learning process in order to be able to go "up". Anyways, they do not seem to find this a negative point as they also pursue the certification of their language level, therefore, having both at the same time (going up a level and getting a certification of their language level) suits perfectly them.

On the contrary, five of the participants feel their language learning process has been oriented towards just learning the language. The common characteristic of the ones that have said this is that they all are referring to low levels (A1-A2) of the target language. The reason of this could be that in low levels certification is not as important as in higher levels. In my opinion, academies are not as interested in getting students passing a B1 level certificate or a C1 level certificate, it gives both the academy and the student much more credit to get a high level certification rather than a low one. Therefore, both academies and teachers are much more interested in giving the bases of the language and giving the students enough resources and motivating them enough to continue their language learning process and develop their skills further.

Finally, seven participants feel that their learning process has been a mixture of both directed towards passing an exam and encouraging language learning just for the sake of it. One of them mentions that this would be depending on the teacher, when she first started attending language classes she did not feel like being prepared for an exam, but they changed the teacher for the following year and that is when she started getting that feeling. Some mention that they feel that "exam preparation" more towards the end of the academic year, when the day of the exam is approaching. They see this as "inevitable", one of them mentions:

"El resultado es que vas a tener un examen así que... tienen que enseñarte a aprobar también ese examen". (Subject 04)

When they were asked about their opinion about this and if they felt comfortable with the approaches, these are the most representative answers:

"Sin más, yo prefiero que me preparen para cosas que no sean el examen. Porque los exámenes no te preparan para la vida real." (Subject 11)

"Me gusta que sólo se enfoque al título el último mes o así, porque al final si te enfocan sólo siempre al título sales y no sabes vivir la vida en Chino" (Subject 14)

As we have mentioned before, they do find positive the fact of being prepared to pass an exam, because they feel that they have the need of the so desired titles of certification, as well as feeling the need of just learning for living the real life in their target language.

Methodology */ Metologia / Metodología:*

9.- Did you always have the same teacher in the academy? */ Irakasle bera izan al duzu beti? Positibotzat jotzen al duzu hori? / ¿Siempre has tenido el mismo profesor/a? ¿Lo ves como algo positivo?*

When participants were asked about having the same teacher, the answer was straightforward: "no", terms such as "muchos", "bastantes", "mogollón", etc. have been frequently used. In fact, six of the participants have had a different teacher every year. The only three participants who have had always the same teacher claim that being that way because they have only been attending classes for one academic year or less.

In some cases, participants showed their opinion about having different teachers and they found it positive. This subject mentions that the advantage of having different teachers would be having the possibility to try different methodological approaches.

"Van turnando porque la manera de enseñar de uno no es igual que la del otro y me parece enriquecedor, que lo que aprendes con uno luego lo aprendes con otro desde otra perspectiva. Porque inconscientemente cada uno le da importancia a unas cosas que otro entonces el haber cambiado me ha dado para ver las dos formas." (Subject 10)

This has also been seen as something negative by some participants, they do not seem to find the "perfect" teacher, as one lacks what other teacher may have and the other way round.

Besides, other subject mentioned that the academy itself promoted having different teachers along the years to get used to different pronunciations.

"Akademiak esan zuen maila altuetan gomendatzen dela irakasle desberdinak edukitzea, ahoskera desberdinei ohitzen juteko" (Subject 17)

Some participants attend academies with some particularities regarding teachers. The ones attending the Official School of Languages, apart from changing the teacher each year, they have a native speaker too, who also changes every year, one hour per week. He/she will help students with their speaking practice and work with them in cultural aspects from his/her country of origin. In addition, the participant who is learning Chinese mentions the special methodology from her academy. She only attends language classes two hours a week, which are divided as follows: the first hour is dedicated to grammatical aspects as well as vocabulary, whereas the second hour is dedicated to speaking and listening (pronunciation specially). The curiosity or special methodology here is that they have one teacher for the first hour and a different teacher for the second hour.

10.- Which skill was the emphasis on? (understanding / reading = passive, or speaking/writing=active) Do you think this was positive for your learning process? */ Zein trebetasun lantzen zenituzten (Pasiboak: irakurmena/entzumena, edota aktiboak: mintzamena/idazmena)? Lau trebetasunak era orekatuan landu dituzula iruditzen al zaizu? Horrela landu izana positibotzat jotzen al duzu?/ Las habilidades que se trabajan en el aprendizaje de una lengua son el Speaking, Listening, Writing y Reading. ¿Trabajabais todas de manera equilibrada, o había alguna que se trabajaba más que otra? ¿Esto lo ves como algo positivo?*

Two aspects have been analysed here, firstly, the most worked skill and secondly, the less worked skill.

On the one hand, the most emphasised skill is undoubtedly the speaking. Exactly ten participants agreed that is the skill they mostly work on in language classes, as evidence of this, some of them mention the fact that they always talk around 15 minutes before every class starts, they find this profitable as it helps them to "come out of their shell" and start communicating in their target language straight on.

"Nos animan más a hablar, a tratar de hablar aunque no sepas" (Subject 11)

Specially, those in low levels find this really useful. As they are getting used to a new language, they like the fact that it is first everything orally, and then they can move later on to writing. That may probably remind them of the acquisition of their mother tongue and that could be why it feels so good for them, as we are able to see in the example bellow.

"Al principio desde septiembre hasta navidades trabajábamos mucho más la escucha y la expresión oral o sea era casi todo hablado. Después de navidades sí que cambio y hacíamos mas de gramática y de expresión escrita y de leer textos y todo eso. Yo creo que es mejor así" *(Subject 16)*

Regarding low levels, especially it is worth mentioning that the writing skill is almost completely left aside at the beginning, because they are more focused in the oral aspect of the language; whereas in higher levels what happens is that these writing tasks are left for homework. In the next example we can see how a student in her third year of Chinese has not started doing writing tasks:

"Hacen hincapié en la pronunciación y escuchar a ver cómo lo oyes tú y en ordenar las palabras y demás pero escribir todavía, lo de redacciones y eso todavía no" *(Subject 14)*

On the contrary, a couple of subjects have mentioned that their learning process has been the other way round, that they have been much more passive at the beginning and have started to work on active skills such as speaking later on. This could be due to the fact that the ones who mention so, have attended academies for a much longer time, which would mean that they started learning the language 5 years ago or so. What may have happened there is that the way of teaching has also changed and new approaches towards language teaching are still to be developed.

On the other hand, the skill mentioned as the less emphasised one is the listening. It is worth mentioning that these participants understand listening strictly only as listening to audios, which is mainly focused to the exam. In lower levels, as mentioned before, the writing task would be the less emphasised one.

Anyways, most participants agree on wanting to take advantage of the time they spend at the classes, they want to do what they are not able to do by themselves. For example, they find it a waste of time doing writing or reading tasks at class when they can do it at home and then have it corrected and revised by the teacher later at class, which would be the important part for them.

11.- Did you receive grammatical explanations? Did this help you in your learning process? / *Azalpen gramatikalak ematen zizkizuten? Azalpen horiek zure ikaskuntza prozesuan aurreratzen lagundu zizuten?/ ¿Recibíais explicaciones gramaticales? ¿Te ayudaba en tu proceso de aprendizaje?*

All participants have received explicit grammatical explanations, and most of them find them boring, what this participant explains summaries perfectly the common thinking of them:

"A mí me aburren obviamente las explicaciones gramaticales pero son necesarias entonces, me aburren, sí, pero como las necesito pues tengo que prestar atención a ellas." (Subject 13)

Therefore, all of them also find them useful for their learning process, especially those who explain their specific methodology:

"Te dicen cómo se dice 'cantar' te dicen cómo se utiliza 'cantar', tú tienes que decir 'cantar canción', porque si no dices 'canción' no se entiende, gramática y vocabulario al mismo tiempo" (Subject 14)

This quote, from the participant studying Chinese, explains how the grammatical explanations she received were useful as they were related to vocabulary, which is basically one of the key factors to learning Chinese.

Other participants, finds it especially useful when the logical explanation is given as well:

"Explicaba la gramática pero también la lógica, o sea entenderlo mucho desde la lógica, me gustaba mucho como lo hacía. Yo prefiero así, entendiendo el porqué." (Subject 16)

In general, grammar is an essential language aspect to be taught both for the teachers and the students find it important and required to be learnt, but it is always qualified as boring. Therefore, this could be an aspect to be improved or changed, teaching grammar in a lighter manner.

12.- What kind of learning materials did you use? Where this materials enough for you? / *Ze material erabiltzen zenituzten? Material horiek nahikoa lagundu zizuten zure ikaskuntza prozesuan?/ ¿Qué materiales utilizabais? ¿Te ayudaron lo suficiente en tu proceso de aprendizaje?*

The most used materials are by far the student's book and the work book, these are used by almost all the participants and are followed closely by the photocopies. Those are the most common materials used for learning a language but not the only ones. Participants have

mentioned several different materials that they use regularly or have used in their language learning process, such as, CDs or any other form of audio, films, games, songs, posters in the classroom with vocabulary… Also, those preparing specifically an exam, mention having books focused to the exams just with those kinds of activities.

In this sense, most of the participants explain that they think they had nothing missing as what materials refers, except from one, who finds that it was not enough for her and she complemented them herself listening to music and watching films in the target language. In addition, one participant mentioned that she would add some materials to hang out online and do it at home. This thought reinforces the thought mentioned before in previous questions, about the fact that students want to take advantage of the time spend in class as much as possible.

Overall, participants value the wide range of materials that their academies offer to them, and also appreciate the flexibility at the time of following the course book. On the one hand, some of them confess not feeling alright when they feel pressured to finish the book, they like knowing that if they do not finish it, nothing happens. On the other hand, they also like to use them because if not, as they have paid for them, they feel as if they were wasting their money.

13.- Is there anything missing or anything that you think could be improved in your academy? / *Faltan botatzen duzun zeozer dagoela iruditzen zaizu edota akademian zerbait hobetu daitekeela uste duzu? / ¿Hay algo que echaras en falta o algo para mejorar en la academia?*

First of all, there is the need to underline the fact that six of the asked participants are completely satisfied with their academies and would not say that there is anything missing in their academy.

The rest of them have mentioned something, therefore I will proceed to bring the list of aspects to be improved in some of the academies the participants have attended:

- More personalized treatment (mentioned by two of the participants)
- Need of taking in mind more the learning process as a whole and not only the fact of having passed the exam or not.
- Need to work more on cultural aspects of the target language.
- More flexibility regarding to the timetable, they mention it would be nice to have the possibility of attending some other day if they need reinforcement or if they skip the class.

- Need to make it economically more accessible to everyone (in the case of private academies).
- Need to make it easier the process to get in, because a lot of people cannot access (in the case of public language schools)
- Especially in higher levels, showing students ways to work on their language skills outside the academy as well, for example, showing them valuable online tools such as TED Talks.
- Sending less homework.

14.- In general, do you feel that the teaching you have received has been focused on your interests? / *Orokorrean, zure interesetan oinarritutako irakaskuntza jaso duzula iruditzen al zaizu?/ En general, ¿crees que has recibido un aprendizaje que iba acorde con tus intereses?*

Thirteen participants find that they have received a teaching focused on their interest. Three of them mention that their interest was mainly passing the exam to get a certification of their language level, therefore, as the academy was focused on exam preparation, their interests were in accordance with the teaching.

Figure 5. Participants' answers to "Do you feel that the teaching you have received has been focused on your interests?"
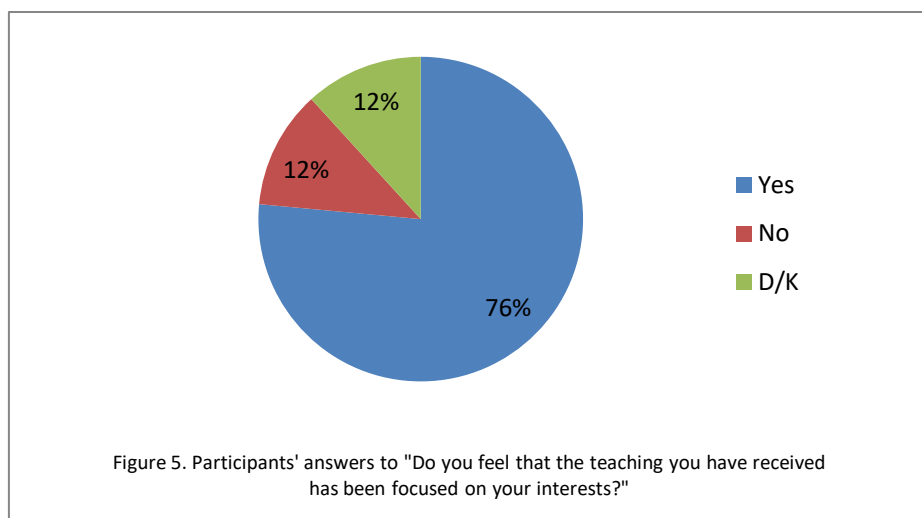
15.- Do you still go to the academy? Why / why not? / *Oraindik akademiara zoaz? Zergatik?/ ¿Todavía vas a la academia? ¿Por qué?*

As we are able to see in the following chart, nine participants still go to the academy, whereas eight of them no longer attend language classes outside school. The reasons for still going to the academy, or not, are very different.

Figure 6. Participants' answers to "Do you still go to the academy?
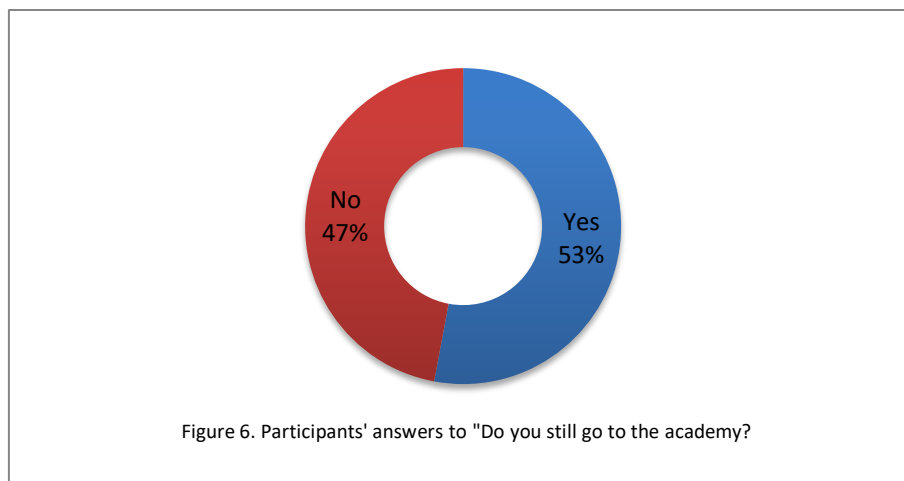
The main reason for still attending language classes at an academy is passing the exam to achieve a certification of their language level, as six of them mentioned. From those, two of them also mentioned that they also had the intention of learning more, while pursuing the title. In addition, one of them mentioned that she is really motivated with her language learning process and that is why she is still going and she definitely will keep on studying that language.

Reasons for no longer attending the academy are mostly either because they have already achieved their goal of getting the certification or because they feel they are very busy with the university classes and other jobs they may have.

Conclusion */ Konklusioa / Conclusión:*

16.- *Could you give a figure to your overall experience with the Academy (scale 1-10*)? / *Akademian izandako esperientzia 1etik 10era baloratu dezakezu? / Si tuvieras que valorar tu experiencia en la academia del 1 al 10 ¿qué puntuación le darías?*

The average punctuation given has been of 7.48, which is really positive. They mention that it has been very useful for them, both for learning the language and to achieve the certifications they wanted to. Also, those who have been there since they were children mention that they more or less had fun when they went to classes and made friends. As a drawback, it has been mention that the learning process has been too slow.

17.- *How likely is it that you would recommend the academy to others? (scale 1-10)* */ 1etik 10ea zenbateraino gomendatuko zenuke akademia beste pertsona bati?/ Utilizando la misma escala del 1 al 10, ¿cuánto recomendarías la academia a otra persona?*

The average punctuation given to the likelihood of recommending the academy to others is of 7.83, this is slightly higher than the average punctuation given to the experiences in the academies.

All of them would recommend their academy to other but some mention slight nuances, for example, underlining that it is a choice depending on the person:

"Cada uno tiene que ver qué es lo que prefiere si estar en una clase o igual hay alguien que le interese mas clases particulares" (Subject 9)

Some participants also mention the effort to be made, this could be because of the money they are paying for:

"Si te ves serio que vas a ir y que haces los deberes y eso yo creo que sí que te beneficia ir, aunque tengas que pagar un poco más." (Subject 12)

"A quien quiera, tiene que ir a clase y esforzarse" (Subject 14)

"Explicaría que tienes que tener muchas ganas y mucha disponibilidad para ir" (Subject 16)

This quotes from above take into consideration the effort in payment, doing the homework, etc. that involves learning a language. Therefore, attending language classes is not enough.

18.- What do you think about language academies, in general? / *Zein da zure iritzia akademiei buruz orokorrean?/ En general, ¿qué opinas de las academias?*

All the participants think positively about language academies in general, even though some of them (especially those who have been abroad) find more effective going to the country where the language is spoken and learning how it is spoken there, otherwise, the process of learning a language is very slow, in their opinion. They agree that the academies are for helping, and underline their supportive role but, apart from mentioning this, eight of them have also mentioned the economical aspect, mostly because they find that most of the academies are very expensive.

A veces creo que quieren tenerte lo máximo posible y recaudar. Te van a hacer sacarte el certificado, pero si pueden tenerte un año más ¿por qué no? (Subject 05)

"Oso efikazak dira baino azkenean luxu bat da eta kuotak bai direla garestiak." (Subject 17)

Another aspect that has been mentioned when this question was asked is the difference between attending language classes as an adult and when you are a child:

"A veces pienso que para los niños es mucha presión y tampoco tiene que ser así." (Subject 09)

The subjects who have mentioned this think that these academies focused on teaching children are business of nowadays society, as most of them, have been able to "survive" with the English they were taught at school until later on.

In general, most participants feel that the academies are the very first resource when learning a language and that is why they value it:

En general, las academias me parecen algo primordial, me parece que no deberían de faltar porque en realidad los idiomas son lo que más necesitan hoy en día y las personas que no tienen opción de estudiar los idiomas en universidad es al primer recurso que tiran. (Subject 08)

Conclusion

In these following lines I will try to present the main conclusions to be drawn both from the data gathered from the interviews and the literature analysed.

In conclusion, we could point out the fact that the motivations for our participants seem not to be very clear, especially as what regards to English, as they study it because it is already there in school education. This also even happened with more languages as students have the chance to study a second foreign language at schools, and when they decide to study another language out of school, they will most probably go on with the one they have already started studying formally. Additionally, the learning styles regarding to the academies of our participants seem to be suited to students' needs, as the experiences are positive and the more years they spend there, the better.

In the next few lines, I will proceed to answer the three research questions proposed at the beginning of this paper.

Research Questions

RQ1.- What role do the academies play in the language learning process of the interviewed students?

The main conclusion to be drawn from the research relating to the role of the academies in the language learning process of the students is that they find it important, but it is not the key factor of their learning process.

"En el curso 2011-2012, el 74,1% de alumnado del Segundo ciclo de E. Infantil tiene contacto con una lengua extranjera, generalizándose el estudio de una lengua extranjera en la E. Primaria, 99,4%. La lengua inglesa es estudiada prácticamente por todo el alumnado como primera lengua."

In general, the academy is seen as an aid that they use to learn better the language. Students find the academies as a support for their language learning process, whereas the school is the place where they get the main base of their language learning. The academies help them to develop further those skills acquired at school, and also, to prepare for the exams that they will later give them the qualification of knowing the language.

RQ2.- Why do university students decide to attend language classes at academies?

Students actually do not consider any other options when they think about learning a language. Going to the academy seems to be the most obvious choice as the rest of the options such as doing it online, or on their own are not as attractive and tend to be less successful.

Anyways, they do not go straight on to the academies in a conscious way, they just do what everyone else does, taking for granting that this option is also going to work for them.

RQ3.- Have the students achieved the goals as they expected to?

To analyse this research question we need to divide the whole group of participants in two parts: the ones studying English and the ones studying other languages.

On the one hand, those who have been studying English for years (4 or more) see their objectives achieved, they can speak English fluently and besides have managed to get a title that certifies their English knowledge. Contrary, those who have been studying English for a shorter period, have not managed to see their goals fulfilled. Maybe they have the title but they feel like they still need to know more English to be able to communicate better, or they have not got their title yet.

On the other hand, those who are studying another language do feel like they have managed to achieve their goals, both those who have been for a long period (4-5 years) and those who have been for a shorter period (1-2 years). Even though, not all of them agree that the reason for having achieved their objectives is the academy, as they also give importance to their personal effort.

Finally, I would like to point out the fact that a teacher of mine always used to say that the three indispensable conditions in order to learn a new language are: motivation, exposure and opportunity to use the language, therefore the fact of going or not to an academy might be irrelevant as long as those conditions are fulfilled. Always taking into consideration that learning a language is a lifelong process, and that you never stop learning a language.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study were several as the researcher is not very experimented and this is only a "pilot" research that could be later developed into a bigger research project and into a Thesis. In the following lines, I would suggest how this study could have been done better, or what was lacking for me during the process.

Having this in mind, on the one hand, there is the need to underline that the weakest point of this paper is that more people is needed in order to generalise. With this being the first research project I have conducted on my own I have only been able to find 17 subjects to interview, which has been enough to have saturation in some categories, or at least to give the researcher that feeling while conducting the interviews; but as we already know, the more data we are able to collect, the more grounded the theory would be and the generalisations could become stronger. If more subjects could have taken part in the study, the conclusions would have been stronger and easier to support. Anyways, with this little sample of data, the conclusions cannot be generalised.

On the other hand, also due to the little researcher experience that I have, I have found myself in trouble several times, because of my own limitations. To mention one of them, when conducting the interviews I found myself several times that I had some "lost" answers, during the interviews people may have talked a lot but not answered the question I had asked at all. At that moment, I would not even realized about that happening and it was not only until after transcribing the interviews and putting all the answers together, that I realised about that missing information. It is also true that it was no big deal, as I could always later ask the participants about the missing questions later on because they were either friend of mine or acquaintances and I had enough confidence to ask them. Also, in this sense, I have learnt by doing. I have been learning how to conduct the interview properly while I was conducting the interviews themselves, and I have finally managed to do them the way I really wanted to after several attempts (which already were the real data collection). This would mean that I have learnt to do proper interviews almost basically by the end of the data collection.

Suggestions for further study

I would also like to mention some suggestions for further study by explaining all the possible separate studies that have come to my mind while working on this project.

Firstly, as this is a "pilot" project, as mentioned before, the sample is not big enough in order to generalize the conclusions of this study. Therefore, the same study could have been done but having a bigger sample, or this same study can be enriched with more study subjects. When making the sample bigger, the subjects can be organised and divided into groups by degrees to see if students from one degree attend more language classes outside school than students from other degrees. Also, they can be divided into private university students (Deusto, Tecnun in Donostia) and public university students (Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea in Donostia) to see if that is a variable that makes a difference or not.

Another thought that came to my mind while I was conducting the interviews has been the option of making a comparative research. Many of the participants mentioned the names of the academies they attended and some of them were attending the same academies but having very different opinions about it. Therefore, this study could have been done with students of different levels within the same academy or even comparing different academies (maybe some "big" ones compared to "little" ones).

In addition to this, having the opinion of the academies as well could be very enriching in this kind of project. In this research presented, we lack the point of view from "the other side". Unluckily, even though the initial idea was also taking into account teachers' opinions that was not possible; but also having the directors' opinions and having the chance to interview them can be a very good way of following up this "baby" project into a more ambitious research paper.

Finally, a longitudinal study can be done with the same subjects. As a language learning process is a life-long-learning process we could analyse the evolution of the subjects as the time goes by, having a complete overview of a learning process at a language academy.

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