

# Shaping the ESP curriculum of an english for PhD students program: a colombian case study of questionnaire research \*

Diseño de un currículo de ingles para propósitos específicos dirigido a un programa de inglés para doctorados: estudio de caso utilizando encuestas

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## **Abstract**

This report presents the findings from an EAP curriculum development project directed towards PhD students at Colombian university. An analysis of this stakeholder group's learning needs was conducted through questionnaire research, focusing on (a) describing students' situated contexts and interests and (b) obtaining data contributing towards future program development. Measures of central tendency, dispersion, and internal consistency for each section of the questionnaire are reported. Key results include these students' strong interest in EAP programming, their language needs and experience regarding their intellectual production, and their perceived importance of different language sub-skills in both the local and international contexts. The results highlight the importance of continued evaluation cycles and the important role EAP coursework has for PhD students today.

**Key words:** questionnaire research, curriculum development, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), needs analysis, Ph D students, statistical analysis.

## **Resumen**

Este informe presenta los resultados de un proyecto curricular encaminado a la creación de un programa de EAP para los estudiantes doctorandos de una universidad colombiana. Un nuevo análisis de necesidades de aprendizaje de estos estudiantes se llevó a cabo, que se centró en (a) el contexto situacional e intereses lingüísticos de estos estudiantes y (b) los datos que contribuyeran al desarrollo futuro del programa. Se llevaron a cabo los indicadores de tendencia central, medidas de dispersión y la consistencia interna para cada sección del cuestionario. Los resultados le brindaron al programa universitaria información acerca del interés de los estudiantes en el EAP, sus necesidades lingüísticas y su experiencia con respecto a la divulgación de la producción intelectual, su experiencia y tiempo dedicado como usuarios de lengua, y la importancia percibida de las sub-destrezas lingüísticas en los contextos locales e internacionales. Los resultados del estudio resaltaron la importancia de ciclos continuos de realimentación y la importancia de las habilidades de EAP para los estudiantes de doctorado hoy en día.



**Palabras claves:** investigación con encuestas, desarrollo curricular, inglés para propósitos académicos, análisis de necesidades, estudiantes de doctorado, análisis estadísticos

#### Résumé

Ce rapport présente les résultats d'un projet d'études orienté à la création d'un programme d'EAP pour les étudiants de doctorat d'une université colombienne. Une nouvelle analyse des besoins d'apprentissage de ces étudiants a été effectuée. Cette analyse s'est centrée : a) dans le contexte de la situation et des intérêts linguistiques de ces étudiants ; b) les données qui pouvaient contribuer au développement future du programme. Pour chaque section du questionnaire, les indicateurs de tendance centrale et de dispersion et la cohérence interne ont été établis. Ses résultats ont fourni au programme universitaire des informations sur l'intérêt des étudiants dans l'EAP, leurs besoins linguistiques et leur expérience concernant la diffusion de la production intellectuelle, leur expérience et le temps investi comme des usagers de langage, ainsi que la perception de l'importance des sous-compétences linguistiques dans les contextes nationaux et internationaux. Les résultats de l'enquête ont mis en relief l'importance des cycles permanents de réalimentation et des compétences d'EAP pour les étudiants de doctorat aujourd'hui.

**Mots clés:** recherche au moyen d'enquêtes, développement curriculaire, anglais pour buts académiques, analyse de besoins, étudiants de doctorat, analyse statistique.

#### Resumo

Este relatório apresenta os resultados de um projeto curricular encaminhado à criação de um programa de EAP para os estudantes doutorandos de uma universidade colombiana. Uma nova análise de necessidades de aprendizagem destes estudantes realizou-se, que se enfocou no (a) contexto situacional e interesses linguísticos destes estudantes e (b) os dados que contribuiriam ao desenvolvimento futuro do programa. Realizaram-se os indicadores de tendência central, medidas de dispersão e a consistência interna para cada seção do questionário. Os resultados ofereceram ao programa universitário informação sobre o interesse dos estudantes no EAP, suas necessidades linguísticas e sua experiência com relação à divulgação da produção intelectual, sua experiência e tempo dedicado como usuários de língua, e a importância percebida das subdestrezas linguísticas nos contextos locais e internacionais. Os resultados do estudo ressaltaram a importância de ciclos contínuos de realimentação e a importância das habilidades de EAP para os estudantes de doutorado hoje em dia.

**Palavras chaves:** pesquisa com enquetes, desenvolvimento curricular, inglês para propósitos acadêmicos, análise de necessidades, estudantes de doutorado, análise estatísticas.

\* This article reports some findings of the Project: Programa de Inglés Para Doctorados (IPD), Universidad de los Andes. Carried out between January 2009 and January 2012.



## Introduction

### *A Colombian EAP Program*

In the past two decades, the discussion of bilingualism in Colombia has gained an important, yet contested, ground. Growing interest in second language use is widely attributed to the forces of globalization, market economies, and the all-pervasive Hollywood entertainment industry; evidence of diverse and dynamic linguistic landscapes can be seen in many aspects of daily life in Colombia (cf. Cubides, Florez, Guarín, Murcia, & Janssen, 2011; Fernández & Janssen, 2011). In the legislative arena, two important governmental decrees concerning Spanish-English bilingualism have been passed, (i.e., the National Education Law, Law 115 of 1994, and *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo 2004–2019* [the National Program for Bilingualism 2004–2019, popularly known as *Colombia Bilingüe*]). Contributions to the discussion of this situation and results of these laws within the Colombian educational context have been made by many (cf. Cárdenas, 2006; Clavijo, 2004; González, 2008; González, 2009; López & Janssen, 2010; Ordóñez, 2011; Truscott de Mejía, 2006; Truscott de Mejía, Ordóñez, & Fonseca, 2006; Truscott de Mejía, López Mendoza, & Peña Dix, 2011; Usme, 2009).

Situated within this textured context is the Universidad de los Andes, a private research university, whose development goals include many specific foci concerning the university's presence within the international sector:

“1.6 Facilitate the internationalization of its programs”<sup>1</sup> (Universidad de los Andes, 2011, p. 8); “2.7 Promote the effective movement of its professors in regional and international spheres”<sup>2</sup> (p. 9); “4.3 Promote the development of research in conjunction with internationally recognized partner universities”<sup>3</sup> (p. 11); “9.3 Maintain an active national and international

presence through publications, seminars, and events that promote the critique and debate of themes of public interest”<sup>4</sup> (p. 12).

At this university, many departments—especially at the PhD level of programming—include international exchanges as a requirement for graduation. While these authors are wary of concluding that “international” is synonymous with “English,” nevertheless, several high-enrollment, high-visibility departments at this university approached the researchers’ department petitioning the development of the research project *Proyecto IPD* (*IPD: Inglés Para Doctorados*<sup>5</sup>). This research project would result in the creation of an English-language program—*Programa IPD*<sup>6</sup>—a program designed for a PhD student population, whose coursework would be centered on developing student strategies for success in the English language domains of writing for publication and speaking for professional presentations. (N.B. Henceforth, specific references related to the research project will be called *Proyecto IPD*, while those concerning the curricular programming that resulted from the project are called *Programa IPD*). *Proyecto IPD* was developed following Brown (1995), Dubin & Olshtain (1986), Nunan (1988), and Richards (2001); the basic workflow inspired by these authors for this initial investigation—and the tools used to develop each stage—are listed below:

- (1) a. Analysis of perceived needs: language and situational needs
  - b. Interviews with department directors throughout the university
- (2) Questionnaire research, using surveymonkey.com
- (3) Analysis of linguistic proficiencies, using an in-house proficiency exam
- (4) Analysis of the context of the students, and



- of the departments in the university
- (5) Definition of broad program goals
  - (6) Definition of the program philosophy, ideologies, methodologies, foci
  - (7) Determination of general and specific course goals throughout the four levels of the program
  - (8) Selection and organization of program content and order
  - (9) Implementation of the program
  - (10) Evaluation of the program by peers, students, and other stakeholders, such that adjustments can be made

The needs analysis component of this program development process—steps 1a and 1b—included survey data collected in interviews with different PhD program directors and questionnaires directed towards PhD candidates and current PhD students. Data from the questionnaire instrument ( $n = 80$ ) administered in 2009 were used to guide program development and inform the *Proyecto IPD* final report (Janssen, Ángel, & Nausa, 2011), and there were three pivotal findings. First, the concept of *noticeable decreases in English language studies as informants advanced in their educational development*<sup>7</sup> was used to predict that there would be gaps in the questionnaire informants' academic English formation, justifying an English for Academic Purposes (EAP)-style class framework. Next, inconformity between university program directors and PhD students in terms of the concept of *which general language abilities are viewed as being most important* was used to justify a holistic syllabus framework instead of separate classes for different language skills. Finally, wide consensus on the concept of *the importance of different academic sub-skills* was used to further justify the holistic EAP academic framework of *Programa IPD*. As a conclusion, the 2009 questionnaire succeeded in gathering important data that meaningfully shaped the way *Programa*

*IPD* developed; nevertheless, coordinators and directors within Dpto-LESC and *Programa IPD* knew that the program must continue to gather survey research data to ensure the good fit of its newly created curricular programming with the emerging needs of its student population.

### Programa IPD Program Feedback Mechanisms

Again following Brown (1995), Dubin & Olshtain (1986), Nunan (1988), and Richards (2001), *Proyecto IPD* strove to include in its long-term implementation of its initial curriculum development process different evaluation procedures (see step 9 in the above list). These procedures were centered on the three following recommendations:

- The collection of external and internal validity evidence. This is to support the construction of a placement exam validity argument (Messick, 1995).
- The development of detailed student grade reports (per class), a tracking system maintained by the IPD coordinator to monitor student progress. This is to check for placement exam accuracy, to assure program function, and to monitor student development.
- The solicitation of student feedback about the program on pre-placement questionnaires (part of the curriculum development process), on post-semester questionnaires, and in post-semester focus groups considering the success of each course's student learning outcomes (SLOs). These feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure that *Programa IPD* perceives student needs clearly and responds to them appropriately.

This survey research project, then, contributes towards developing the above agenda by considering the last of these processes—the continuous solicitation of student feedback on pre-program questionnaires as part of a



larger feedback cycle—and poses the following questions:

- What do survey research data reveal about PhD students' situated contexts and their English language learning interests?
- How do these survey research data contribute to future program development?<sup>8</sup>

By responding to these questions, *Programa IPD* stakeholders will continue to gather both quantitative and qualitative data documenting incoming PhD students' perceptions of their academic environment. This can be used to inform director-level personnel of these situations. Furthermore, the questionnaire data analysis will hopefully and newly affirm for program and other university stakeholders the perceived importance of the different academic sub-skills that this program develops, in addition to the findings from new question prompts. This current information may be useful when negotiating still undecided details of this new program within its high-stakes environment, when developing similar-type programs or survey research projects in the future, and above all else while monitoring the state of *Programa IPD* through the systematic and focused gathering of stakeholder opinion.

## Methods

This survey research project used a questionnaire first used in 2009, a 12-page, 173-item<sup>9</sup> Spanish-language instrument developed on the surveymonkey.com platform. This first questionnaire—henceforth referred to as the 2009 questionnaire—was designed following one developed by Gravatt, Richards, & Lewis (1997, as cited in Richards, 2001, pp. 80–86) because of the perceived similarities between these authors' university EAP setting for non-English background students and the *IPD* setting: a tertiary EAP English program for non-English background students. Not only did the similarity

of the contexts have an exciting face validity when developing the 2009 survey instrument, it was also believed that a questionnaire based on Gravatt, Richards, & Lewis's would be useful at later stages of curriculum development for monitoring student interest in the program. This was because this questionnaire template asked informants to describe or rate many factors of high interest to curriculum developers. For instance, the two sections *the importance of different general English language abilities [reading, writing, speaking, and listening] for success during / after their PhD program* was used to establish the degree of relevance of different general English language abilities for PhD informants; *number of hours spent per week studying English / in English throughout primary, secondary, and university level education* was used to help document informant development within the target language. Items concerning the importance of different sub-skills (eg., *starting a discussion, understanding verbal instructions, understanding unknown vocabulary*) were used to affirm stakeholder interest in *Programa IPD* course sub-skills.

As part of this current (2011) feedback project for *Programa IPD*, the 2009 questionnaire was extensively revised (only 11 of the original 173 items - 6.36% - remaining identically the same) with the result of a 12-page, 180-item, Spanish-language questionnaire instrument. To revise the questionnaire, suggestions from Brown's book section "Guidelines for Writing Good Survey Questions" (2001, pp. 40-54) were considered by the authors: 71 items (41.04%) from the 2009 questionnaire that were unused in the 2009 data analysis were eliminated (p. 54); 16 items (9.25%) that were logically flawed<sup>10</sup> (p. 49), 25 items (14.45%) that were either prestige questions<sup>11</sup> (p. 50) or questions that "led the witness" (p. 51) were reformulated to maintain a broader neutrality; almost all other questions were rephrased for greater clarity (p. 49). Seventy-six



new items were added for themes warranting exploration—those themes emerging from previous focus groups with course graduates—were written or expanded from existing question stems.

The revised questionnaire was reviewed by these authors in real-time using Google Docs while simultaneously messaging each other using Google Docs chat or Facebook chat, as one author was working remotely from his PhD program in Hawai'i while the other two were

on-site in Colombia. The final draft version of the 2011 questionnaire was reviewed by several professors in Colombia to eliminate any grammatical, semantic, or technical problems before its implementation. The complete questionnaire is described below in Table 1; the specific questions for each subsection of the questionnaire are included as part of the statistical analyses in the different appendices.

**Table 1.** IPD Questionnaire Overview

§	Questionnaire section construct	Question number, types
§1	Project description, authorization of data use for research purposes	1 yes/ no
§2	Personal biodata	11 items: 5 pull-down menu multiple-choice items; 6 open-ended items
§3	Academic biodata	31 items: 7 pull-down menu multiple-choice items; 24 open-ended items
§4	Time uses	19 items: 9 pull-down menu multiple-choice items; 10 open-ended items soliciting further commentary.
§5.1	Historical English language use in different domains	18 items: 17 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting further commentary
§5.2	Time investment in English language study during schooling	5 items: 4 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting further commentary
§5.3	Reported skill level, different general English language abilities	8 items: 7 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting further commentary
§5.4	Difficulty, different general English language abilities	8 items: 7 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting further commentary
§6.1	Relevance of different general English language abilities for success during PhD	10 items: 9 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting additional commentary
§6.2	Relevance of different general English language abilities for success after PhD	10 items: 9 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting additional commentary
§6.3	Dis/ agreement with statements about Programa IPD	6 items: 5 5-point Likert-scale items, 1 open-ended item soliciting additional commentary
§7	Programa IPD speaking sub-skills	25 items: 24 5-point Likert-scale items; 1 open-ended item soliciting additional commentary
§8	Programa IPD listening sub-skills	17 items: 16 5-point Likert-scale items; 1 open-ended item, soliciting additional commentary.
§9	Programa IPD writing sub-skills	27 items: 26 5-point Likert-scale items; 1 open-ended item, soliciting additional commentary.
§10	Programa IPD reading sub-skills	17 items: 16 5-point Likert-scale items; 1 open-ended item, soliciting additional commentary.
§11	Programa IPD vocabulary and grammar sub-skills	6 items: 5 5-point Likert-scale items; 1 open-ended item, soliciting additional commentary.
§12	Thank you and final comments	1 open-ended item, soliciting additional commentary.





## Procedures

The 2011 questionnaire was implemented on October 22, 2011 as part of the admissions testing and interview protocol at *Universidad de los Andes*. The questionnaire was the last part of the *IPD* placement exam and was optional. Nevertheless, of the 96 people who took the exam on this date, 93 responded to the questionnaire. One potential informant chose not to give permission to use their results, so only 92 results could be analyzed, giving a response rate of 95.83% for the 2011 questionnaire administration.

## Analyses

Though the 2011 questionnaire gathered qualitative and quantitative data, this project only reports quantitative results, with an eye towards expanding quantitative studies in the Colombian EFL context. First, descriptive statistics looking reporting indicators of central tendency—“the typical or most representative characteristics of a set of scores” (Hudson, (in press) p. 4–7)—were calculated for each section of the questionnaire, using Excel. The measures reported in this study include the mean, median, and mode. Following Iwai *et al.* (1999), the items in each questionnaire subsection were organized according to their means in a decreasing order. This methodology effectively ranks the results of each questionnaire subsection within the different categories from the highest mean (i.e. “most important concept”) to lowest mean (i.e. “least important”). Medians (the middle number of a data set) and modes (the most common response)—when different from the arithmetic mean—have been reported as they help describe when the distribution of the data points is skewed towards one end of the spectrum of the possible answers (Brown, 2001, pp. 121–122). Measures of dispersion have also been reported as they “describe the variability around a central value” (Hudson,

2011, 4–8, 4–9). Thus, this paper reports the minimum, maximum, and range of the different Likert-scale items. In addition, it also reports the standard deviation “perhaps the single most useful statistic for indicating dispersion in a set of scores...[which is] the average amount the scores vary from the mean for each questionnaire item” (Hudson, (in press) pp. 4–9). By calculating these descriptive statistics, and most importantly, by listing these results in descending mean order, one can see the larger picture that these distinct data points collectively construct about what the PhD student population thinks is important in their EAP studies.

Finally, Cronbach’s alpha—measuring the data’s internal consistency—was calculated using the free statistics software Systat; this measure has been reported for the items within each section of the questionnaire. Cronbach’s alpha, when approaching 1.00 for the group of data being studied, signals strong internal consistency within a data set. In this case, a large Cronbach’s alpha for a set of items within a questionnaire section indicates that the questionnaire section has a strong internal consistency with itself. Accordingly, this statistic also supports arguments for the questionnaire’s construct validity.

## Results

The complete descriptive statistics have been provided for the entire questionnaire in Appendix A, Tables 2–13. These results consistently confirm PhD student interest in EAP studies that target both the Colombian context and the international context. Following are what these researchers believe are the most important of all the results shown in these different questionnaire sections.

The biodata that were gathered in the 2011 questionnaire are shown in Appendix A, Table 2. Most directly relevant to *Programa IPD* is that



most informants have finished their MA studies in the past two years (2009), finishing their BA approximately in 2005. Assuming a two-year master's program, these results indicate that the average informant has had approximately four years of "other" experience before continuing on with their doctorate level education. This suggests a more developed level of personal maturity than typically found in undergraduate students. Also of importance to *Programa IPD* program developers is the number of publications and presentations informants report having completed. The means for these data points are 3.35 publications and 4.76 presentations, yet it is important to note that the medians and modes are lower than the means: the medians being 2.5 publications and 3 presentations, the modes being 1 publication, and 2 presentations. This indicates that there are some statistical outliers that have published and presented a great deal, whereas the typical incoming PhD candidate has done much less. The implications of these candidates' maturity and publication/ presentation history will be further examined in the discussion section.

In terms of their usage of time, these informants reveal that they are busy professionals, working and studying on average approximately 54 hours per week, as is shown in Table 3, Appendix A. Of particular importance to *Programa IPD* is the result that informants would ideally dedicate approximately 6 hours per week on average to English studies, realistically hoping to dedicate 3 1/3 hours per week on average to these studies. This is inconsistent with the amount of time that IPD programming requires of its students: 7.5 hours per week (plus another 3–6 hours per week in homework) for IPD 1, 2, and 3; 4.5 hours per week (plus another 3 hours per week in homework) for IPD 4 (Janssen, Ángel, & Nausa, 2011). This important difference in perspectives about time use will also be discussed in the conclusion section.

Finally, informants consistently rated as being "more important" language sub-skills whose use is to be developed in the international context (e.g., *giving a presentation in an English speaking context*) than those to be developed within the Colombian context (e.g., *giving a presentation in English in Colombia*). Furthermore, all specific academic subskills were considered very important (e.g., *understanding a scholarly publication*), while distractor-type items added to ensure informant attention to the survey (e.g., *reading fiction*) were rated less favorably. These findings, shown in Tables 9–13, Appendix A, indicates that *Programa IPD*'s different student learning outcomes should focus specifically on skills for the international context in addition to in the Colombian context. Further implications of this will be considered in the discussion section.

In terms of Cronbach's alpha and its indications concerning the construct validity of this questionnaire instrument, the very high Cronbach's alpha calculations for each section of the questionnaire indicate that informants respond to the different items within each sub-section in a highly consistent fashion. This consistency also serves to show that items may be omitted from each section without jeopardizing the general construct being developed by the section.

## Discussion

The 2011 *Programa IPD* questionnaire was able to shed light on valuable information for different stakeholders in *Programa IPD*. These global trends should continue to be monitored to ensure that the *Programa IPD* is able to respond to changes in demographics or perceptions about the role of English in the life of a PhD student.

First, when observing the age of these candidates and realizing that the majority have had at least four years of life experience beyond undergraduate education, course





instructors should realize that this student population is markedly different from typical undergraduates: it can be said that these students are more mature and have a sharpened focus on what is academically interesting to them, something that is also anecdotally believed by IPD course instructors about these students. These researchers believe that this greater maturity warrants a program philosophy that has as one of its pillars *respect for students as adult colleagues*.

Despite their greater life experience than typical undergraduate students, it is interesting to note that most students report little experience in these academic genres, as evidenced by low numbers of informant publications and presentations. Since academic publication and presentation skills are at the heart of *Programa IPD*'s coursework objectives, this lack of skills in incoming students indicates that the program is filling the niche it was originally called to address and reaffirms that these foci should continue to be among the core foci that *Programa IPD* coursework should have. Nevertheless, instructors should not assume no experience in these genres, but rather that there is "room for growth." Furthermore, instructors should also assume that some students will have a good deal of publication and presentation experience, which can help enrich the class development of these themes. It could also be a possibility that *Programa IPD* directorial personnel consider extensive publication and presentation experience—in addition to placement test results—as part of a variety of factors that determine exemption from IPD coursework. *Programa IPD* developers should not be satisfied with the results of this second survey, but should continue to monitor the publication and presentation experience of this student population, to assure that the program adequately responds to changing student needs.

The second important result concerned a difference in student and program developer

expectations for the time investment require for the completion of *Programa IPD*, a finding that should be contemplated by Dpto-LESC and *Programa IPD* directors and instructors alike. Large differences in expectations in something as valuable as time use suggests that there could be an issue that needs addressing, especially as this trend has also been evidenced by a focus group in 2010 and two led in 2011. Since time is such a sensitive issue in the twenty-first century, globalized context, left unheeded, this issue could prove deleterious to the overall long-term success of *Programa IPD*. Instructors must ensure that their class plans treat each moment as an important one; homework tasks equally must be well-developed and of clear value to these busy students. Furthermore, instructors and staff should engage in efforts to remind students that language learning is not an easy process, but rather one which requires an extensive investment of time. Further survey research could also address whether different stakeholders believe this incongruity should be resolved through the reduction of coursework or through the recognition by their home departments of the demands that making gains in language proficiency will require a certain investment of time. As with the prior results, these survey results should not be thought of as definitive; instead, simple feedback cycles should be developed with the student population, to ensure that all stakeholder needs are being met within the language program.

In terms of the importance of different language skills, the data from the 2011 questionnaire reconfirms the data gathered in 2009: once again, the development of EAP English language skills is highly important for PhD students in this particular university context, much more so than other non-academic language skills. However, the degree to which informants were able to distinguish between these different specific sub-skills is not known; indeed, it is quite



possible that anything “academic sounding” would necessarily be important to them as a PhD candidate, while less academic skills (e.g., *reading poetry aloud, socializing with peers in English in Colombia*) are not as important. Preliminary factor analysis of the entire survey bears this out: as an example, the entirety of the different academic writing subskills correlates very closely to one factor (i.e., there is presumably one underlying theoretical construct operating in this section), while the entirety of the academic reading subskills correlates to a second, different factor (i.e., there is presumably a second, underlying theoretical construct operating in this second section). This implies that future efforts to document the importance students give to different course goals or create feedback cycles between students and *Programa IPD* directors may be done with a survey instrument that is much more concise.

As part of this result, there were also interesting differences in the importance concerning certain language skills being used in the Colombian context versus these same skills used in an international context. The consistent importance given to the international context indicates that tasks considering different interactive general language abilities (speaking and listening) should be contextualized for the international context, something which will be a new addition to the curriculum. Nevertheless, using these EAP skills in the Colombian context should not be forgotten or omitted from future curricular developments. Again, it bears repeating that only through a development of a deliberate evaluative feedback cycle can program developers hope to refine their understanding of what is important to students and the ways in which this is important.

Finally, due to the extremely high values of the Cronbach’s alpha that were calculated for each questionnaire subsection—in addition

to a preliminary factor analysis indicating that informants were responding to the separate academic subskills as one broader construct, curriculum designers should consider omitting a large portion of the questions that were asked within each subsection. This would support Dörnyei & Taguchi’s maximum suggested questionnaire length of “four to six pages” (2010, p. 12, as cited in Davis, 2010), something that was broadly ignored by these researchers in hopes of gaining a rich description of the informants’ contexts. Having a much briefer questionnaire would foster the development of a deliberate feedback cycle that is informative, but also efficient to complete and interpret.

One last area that could be considered in future editions of the survey would also consider what the students need from the instructors in this program. While survey questions to date have looked closely at student needs for their own lives or for the IPD coursework that they are about to take, no mention has been made of their conceptualization of the instructors who actually facilitate these courses. Accordingly, it would be highly informative to begin to include such questions in the next edition of the survey, such that *Programa IPD* not stagnate in the apathy of the known, but rather strive forward to serve and otherwise interact with its adult colleague participants in the most useful way that is possible.

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## Appendix A: Complete Questionnaire Results by Section

**Table 2. 2, 3.** Descriptive statistics, informant biodata

	Item	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
2.1	Age	91	29.23	5.44	21	49	29	28	26
3.5	Year MA	73	2009.56	2.97	1996	2012	17	2010	2011
3.7	Year BA	80	2005.58	4.15	1988	2011	24	2006	2008
3.9	Publications	86	3.35	3.65	0	16	17	2.5	1
3.1	Presentations	88	4.76	6.04	0	40	41	3	2
2.2	Gender	87	female 30 (34.48%)		male 56 (64.37%)		declined to state 1 (1.15%)		
2.4	Marital status	92	single 67 (72.83%)		separated 2 (2.17%)		divorced 2 (2.17%)		total 71 (77.17%)
			domestic partner 6 (6.52%)		married 16 (17.39%)		total 22 (23.91%)		
2.5	Children	91	no children = 63 (69.23%)		children = 28 (30.77%)				

**Note. N = 92.** These data come from questionnaire sections 2 and 3, which asked informants to report basic personal and academic biodata, respectively. Items described in the results section have been shaded grey. Cronbach's alpha = -0.025.

**Table 3 4.** Descriptive statistics, time investments (hours per week)

	Time investment	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
4.1	Work*	91	24.96	18.37	0	100	101	20	20
4.2	In class*	89	10.15	6.42	0	40	41	9	10
4.3	English, desirable	91	5.98	4.58	0	20	21	4	4
4.4	English, realistic*	88	3.76	3.34	0	13	14	3	0
4.5	Other homework*	88	15.33	10.16	0	40	41	10	10
4.6	Family**	83	12.07	11.32	0	40	41	10	0
4.7	Relatives**	86	5.38	6.18	0	40	41	4	0
4.8	Sport**	88	5.43	3.72	0	20	21	5	4
4.9	Religion**	87	1.33	2.14	0	12	13	0	0
	Work, study sum*		54.20						
	Personal time sum**		24.21						
	Sum		78.41						

**Note.** N = 92. Means are reported in terms of hours/ week. These data come from section 4, which asked informants to report the number of hours per week invested in various settings. Desirable time for English was not included in either calculation, as it represents a fictitious time use. Items described in the results section have been shaded grey.

\*indicates work/ study time use. \*\* indicates personal time use.



**Table 4 5.1.** Descriptive statistics, English use in different language domains, mean ranked

	Language domain	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
5.1H	Reading-university	90	4.51	0.91	1	5	5	5	5
5.1J	Reading-work	90	4.07	1.27	1	5	5	5	5
5.1P	Music	91	4.00	1.05	1	5	5	4	5
5.1N	Movies	91	3.86	1.12	1	5	5	4	5
5.1O	TV	91	3.43	1.28	1	5	5	4	4
5.1M	Reading-fun	91	3.12	1.26	1	5	5	3	3
5.1I	Writing-university	91	3.01	1.19	1	5	5	3	3
5.1K	Writing-work	88	2.88	1.22	1	5	5	3	2
5.1L	Writing-friends	91	2.38	1.09	1	5	5	2	3
5.1F	Speaking-work	89	2.35	1.09	1	5	5	2	1
5.1G	Speaking-friends	91	1.84	0.96	1	5	5	2	1
5.1E	Speaking-partner	90	1.82	1.00	1	5	5	1	1
5.1Q	Dreaming	88	1.77	1.00	1	5	5	1	1
5.1C	Speaking-siblings	90	1.34	0.75	1	4	4	1	1
5.1D	Speaking-relatives	91	1.31	0.76	1	4	4	1	1
5.1A	Speaking to parents	91	1.10	0.45	1	4	4	1	1
5.1B	Parents speaking to informant	91	1.09	0.38	1	3	3	1	1

**Note.** N = 92. Cronbach's alpha: 0.876. These data have been organized in decreasing order of means. Question 5.1 of the 2011 questionnaire asked informants to report their frequency of English use within these different domains, with (5) indicating a high usage, (3) indicating a moderate usage, and (1) indicating a low usage. Cronbach's alpha for the 2011 and 2009 data together is 0.804.

**Table 5 5.3.** Descriptive statistics, reported ability in different general English language skill areas, mean ranked

	Skill area	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
5.3E	Reading	88	4.23	0.99	1	5	5	5	5
5.3C	Listening	89	3.54	1.24	1	5	5	4	4
5.3G	Vocabulary	89	3.34	1.11	1	5	5	4	4
5.3A	Grammar	89	3.33	0.99	1	5	5	3	3
5.3B	Writing	89	3.06	1.10	1	5	5	3	3
5.3F	Pronunciation	89	2.96	1.11	1	5	5	3	3
5.3D	Speaking	88	2.85	1.02	1	5	5	3	3

**Note.** Question 5.3 of the 2011 questionnaire asked informants to report their ability in different general English language skill areas, with (5) indicating a high level, (3) indicating a moderate level, and (1) indicating a low level. N=92. Internal consistency for this data was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.914. In contrast to table 6, this table has been organized from highest to lowest means, to demonstrate that level (table 5) and difficulty (table 6) are negatively correlated.







**Table 6.5.4.** Descriptive statistics, reported difficulty in different general English language skill areas, increasing mean ranked

§	Skill area	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
5.4E	Reading	87	1.66	0.91	1	5	5	1	1
5.4C	Listening	87	2.52	1.30	1	5	5	2	1
5.4A	Grammar	87	2.63	1.16	1	5	5	3	3
5.4G	Vocabulary	88	2.65	1.07	1	5	5	3	2
5.4B	Writing	88	2.92	1.19	1	5	5	3	3
5.4F	Pronunciation	88	2.94	1.20	1	5	5	3	2
5.4D	Speaking	88	3.24	1.27	1	5	5	3	3

**Note.** Question 5.4 of the 2011 questionnaire asked informants to report the frequency of difficulties experienced in the different general English language skill areas, with (5) indicating a high frequency of difficulties, (3) indicating a moderate level, and (1) indicating a low level. N=92. Cronbach's alpha 0.881. In contrast to table 5, this table has been organized from lowest to highest means, to demonstrate that level (table 5) and difficulty (table 6) are negatively correlated.

**Table 76.1.** Descriptive statistics, importance of different general English language skill areas in terms of being successful during a PhD program

	Skill area	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
6.1G	Reading	90	4.86	0.41	3	5	3	5	5
6.1F	Speaking INT	90	4.73	0.51	3	5	3	5	5
6.1D	Listening INT	90	4.71	0.64	1	5	5	5	5
6.1B	Writing	89	4.69	0.67	1	5	5	5	5
6.1I	Vocabulary	89	4.48	0.74	2	5	4	5	5
6.1A	Grammar	88	4.39	0.86	1	5	5	5	5
6.1H	Pronunciation	90	4.36	0.83	2	5	4	5	5
6.1C	Listening COL	90	4.11	1.04	1	5	5	4	5
6.1E	Speaking COL	88	3.84	1.02	1	5	5	4	5

Note. Question 6.1 of the 2011 questionnaire asked informants to report the importance of different general English language skill areas in terms of having success during a PhD program, with (5) indicating a high level of importance, (3) indicating a moderate level, and (1) indicating a low level. N=92. Internal consistency for these data was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.853. COL indicates the use of this skill area in Colombia; INT indicates the use of this skill area in the international context.

**Table 8 6.2.** Descriptive statistics, importance of different general English language skill areas in terms of being successful after a PhD program, mean ranked

§	Skill area	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
6.2D	Listening INT	87	4.84	0.43	3	5	3	5	5
6.2G	Reading	86	4.84	0.43	3	5	3	5	5
6.2F	Speaking INT	87	4.82	0.47	3	5	3	5	5
6.2B	Writing	86	4.76	0.46	3	5	3	5	5
6.2I	Vocabulary	87	4.61	0.62	3	5	3	5	5



6.2A	Grammar	86	4.49	0.75	2	5	4	5	5
6.2H	Pronunciation	87	4.48	0.78	2	5	4	5	5
6.2C	Listening COL	87	4.15	1.03	1	5	5	5	5
6.2E	Speaking COL	86	4.09	0.99	1	5	5	4	5

**Note.** Question 6.2 of the 2011 questionnaire asked informants to report the importance of different English language abilities in terms of having success after a PhD program, with (5) indicating a high level of importance, (3) indicating a moderate level, and (1) indicating a low level. **N=92**. Internal consistency for these data was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.879. COL indicates the use of this skill area in Colombia; INT indicates the use of this skill area in the international context.

**Table 9 7.** Descriptive statistics, importance of different Programa IPD speaking sub-skills, mean ranked

	Speaking sub-skills	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
7.1H	Fluency INT	90	4.81	0.56	1	5	5	5	5
7.1D	Presentations INT	88	4.80	0.57	1	5	5	5	5
7.1N	Discussion participa. INT	90	4.79	0.59	1	5	5	5	5
7.1R	Communicating ideas INT	90	4.79	0.57	1	5	5	5	5
7.1T	Participate projects INT	89	4.79	0.57	1	5	5	5	5
7.1L	Discussion start INT	89	4.76	0.64	1	5	5	5	5
7.1X	Host visitor INT	89	4.76	0.67	1	5	5	5	5
7.1V	Socialize w/ peers INT	90	4.76	0.59	1	5	5	5	5
7.1J	Pronunciation INT	90	4.74	0.63	1	5	5	5	5
7.1F	Word precision INT	90	4.73	0.75	1	5	5	5	5
7.1P	Lead discussion INT	90	4.71	0.62	1	5	5	5	5
7.1W	Host visitor COL	89	4.69	0.70	1	5	5	5	5
7.1S	Participate projects COL	90	4.39	0.86	1	5	5	5	5
7.1M	Discussion participa. COL	90	4.38	0.84	1	5	5	5	5
7.1E	Word precision COL	90	4.32	0.98	1	5	5	5	5
7.1I	Pronunciation COL	90	4.32	0.96	1	5	5	5	5
7.1O	Lead discussion COL	90	4.27	0.96	1	5	5	5	5
7.1K	Discussion start COL	89	4.26	0.95	1	5	5	5	5
7.1Q	Communicating ideas COL	90	4.23	1.05	1	5	5	5	5
7.1G	Fluency COL	90	4.17	1.04	1	5	5	4	5
7.1U	Socialize w/ peers COL	90	4.04	1.07	1	5	5	4	5
7.1C	Presentations COL	90	3.86	1.24	1	5	5	4	5
7.1B	Poetry INT	87	2.52	1.40	1	5	5	2	1
7.1A	Poetry COL	89	1.92	1.14	1	5	5	2	1

**Note. N = 92.** In Question 7.1 of the 2011 questionnaire, informants rated the importance of different Programa IPD speaking sub-skills for both the national (COL) and international (INT) contexts. Cronbach's alpha: 0.947.



Table 10 8. Descriptive statistics, importance of different Programa IPD listening sub-skills, mean ranked

	Listening sub-skills	N	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
8.1F	Understand instructions INT	89	4.84	0.52	2	5	4	5	5
8.1J	Understand main ideas INT	89	4.83	0.53	2	5	4	5	5
8.1B	Understand presentations INT	88	4.82	0.54	2	5	4	5	5
8.1P	Understand discussions INT	89	4.80	0.62	1	5	5	5	5
8.1L	Understand different speech paces INT	88	4.80	0.63	1	5	5	5	5
8.1H	Understand informal language INT	89	4.78	0.56	2	5	4	5	5
8.1N	Understand different accents INT	89	4.71	0.73	1	5	5	5	5
8.1A	Understand presentations COL	89	4.70	0.61	2	5	4	5	5
8.1D	Taking notes INT	89	4.70	0.63	2	5	4	5	5
8.1I	Understand main ideas COL	89	4.64	0.64	2	5	4	5	5
8.1E	Understand instructions COL	89	4.57	0.85	1	5	5	5	5
8.1A	Understand discussions COL	89	4.51	0.85	1	5	5	5	5
8.1K	Understand different speech paces COL	89	4.47	0.87	1	5	5	5	5
8.1C	Taking notes COL	89	4.40	0.90	1	5	5	5	5
8.1G	Understand informal language COL	89	4.33	1.01	1	5	5	5	5
8.1M	Understand different accents COL	89	4.21	1.07	1	5	5	5	5

**Note.** In question 8.1 of the 2011 questionnaire, informants rated the importance of different Programa IPD listening sub-skills for the national (COL) and international (INT) contexts. N=92. Cronbach's alpha: 0.961.

Table 11 9. Descriptive statistics, importance of different Programa IPD writing subskills, mean ranked

	Writing sub-skills	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
9.1J	Articles in scholarly journals	87	4.84	0.57	1	5	5	5	5
9.1D	Results sections	87	4.80	0.61	1	5	5	5	5
9.1Q	Idea development	83	4.80	0.60	1	5	5	5	5
9.1V	Idea coherence	83	4.76	0.67	1	5	5	5	5
9.1H	Argument structure	87	4.75	0.61	1	5	5	5	5
9.1W	Information synthesis	83	4.75	0.66	1	5	5	5	5
9.1O	Paragraph organization	83	4.73	0.66	1	5	5	5	5
9.1P	Text organization	83	4.73	0.68	1	5	5	5	5
9.1E	Concision	86	4.73	0.69	1	5	5	5	5
9.1N	Vocabulary	84	4.73	0.63	1	5	5	5	5
9.1B	Introduction sections	86	4.72	0.66	1	5	5	5	5
9.1S	Editing	83	4.71	0.72	1	5	5	5	5
9.1M	Sentence structure	84	4.70	0.65	1	5	5	5	5
9.1R	Tone	83	4.69	0.70	1	5	5	5	5
9.1C	Methods sections	86	4.67	0.73	1	5	5	5	5



9.1I	Cause-effect	86	4.67	0.68	1	5	5	5	5
9.1U	Citations	83	4.65	0.77	1	5	5	5	5
9.1F	Compare-contrast	86	4.64	0.70	1	5	5	5	5
9.1X	Information critique	83	4.64	0.77	1	5	5	5	5
9.1L	Punctuation	85	4.64	0.70	1	5	5	5	5
9.1Z	Emails	82	4.56	0.80	1	5	5	5	5
9.1Y	Taking notes	83	4.53	0.85	1	5	5	5	5
9.1G	Narratives	87	4.38	0.96	1	5	5	5	5
9.1K	Creative writing	86	4.24	1.01	1	5	5	5	5
9.1A	Literature reviews	87	4.23	1.06	1	5	5	5	5
9.1T	Journalistic articles	83	4.04	1.27	1	5	5	5	5

**Note.** In question 9.1 of the 2011 questionnaire, informants rated the importance of different Programa IPD writing subskills. N=92. Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.976.

**Table 12 10.** Descriptive statistics, importance of different Programa IPD reading subskills, mean ranked

§	Reading subskills	n	M	SD	min	max	range	median	mode
10.1A	Understanding publications	83	4.87	0.44	3	5	3	5	5
10.1G	Reading to memorize	82	4.78	0.50	3	5	3	5	5
10.1H	Scanning	83	4.71	0.53	3	5	3	5	5
10.1O	Finding information on the internet	83	4.71	0.62	3	5	3	5	5
10.1F	Skimming	83	4.66	0.59	3	5	3	5	5
10.1L	Responding critically to a reading	83	4.66	0.61	3	5	3	5	5
10.1J	Understanding a text's organization	83	4.65	0.61	3	5	3	5	5
10.1P	Understanding author point of view	83	4.64	0.67	2	5	4	5	5
10.1E	Understanding main ideas	83	4.63	0.73	1	5	5	5	5
10.1I	Understanding unknown vocabulary	83	4.63	0.64	3	5	3	5	5
10.1N	Finding information in a library	83	4.63	0.66	3	5	3	5	5
10.1M	Understanding author's tone	83	4.60	0.66	3	5	3	5	5
10.1K	Reading pace	83	4.55	0.72	2	5	4	5	5
10.1D	Understanding reports	83	4.52	0.80	1	5	5	5	5
10.1C	Understanding news items	83	3.95	1.05	1	5	5	4	5
10.1B	Reading fiction	82	3.71	1.22	1	5	5	4	5

**Note.** In question 10.1 of the 2011 questionnaire, informants rated the importance of different Programa IPD reading subskills. N=92. Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.949.



**Table 13 11.** Descriptive statistics, importance of different Programa IPD lexico-grammatical subskills, mean ranked

§	Lexico-grammatical sub-skills	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	min	max	range	median	mode
11.1A	Academic vocabulary	84	4.82	0.58	1	5	5	5	5
11.1E	Functional grammar	84	4.69	0.68	1	5	5	5	5
11.1D	Grammatical precisión	83	4.63	0.71	1	5	5	5	5
11.1C	Grammatical terminology	84	4.56	0.77	1	5	5	5	5
11.1B	Informal vocabulary	84	4.55	0.73	1	5	5	5	5

**Note.** In question 11.1 of the 2011 questionnaire, informants rated the importance of different Programa IPD lexico-grammatical SLOs. N=92. Internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.909.

## Appendix B: Cronbach's Alpha

**Table 14.** Cronbach's alpha by questionnaire section

§	Questionnaire construct	
All	Statistical data for entire questionnaire	0.116
§2, §3	Biodata	-0.025
§4	Time uses	0.438
§5.1	Historical language use in different domains	0.876
§5.3	Reported skill level, different general English language abilities	0.914
§5.4	Difficulty, different general English language abilities	0.881
§6.1	Relevance, different general English language abilities, success during PhD	0.853
§6.2	Relevance, different general English language abilities, success after PhD	0.879
§7	Programa IPD speaking sub-skills	0.947
§8	Programa IPD listening sub-skills	0.961
§9	Programa IPD writing sub-skills	0.976
§10	Programa IPD reading sub-skills	0.949
§11	Programa IPD vocabulary and grammar sub-skills	0.909

**Note.** The high values for each sub-section demonstrate very high internal consistency. Low alpha values are expected in for the whole questionnaire, which evaluates many different constructs, as does the sections 2, 3, and 4 that report biodata and time use.

### Endnotes

- 1 Facilitar la internacionalización de los programas.”
- 2 “Promover la movilidad efectiva de profesores en los ámbitos regional e internacional.”
- 3 “4.3 Promover el desarrollo de investigaciones conjuntas con pares de universidades reconocidas internacionalmente.”
- 4 “Mantener una activa presencia nacional e internacional mediante publicaciones, seminarios y eventos que promuevan la crítica y el debate en temas de interés público.”
- 5 Project English for Doctorate Students
- 6 English for Doctorate Students Program





- 7 In this paper, theoretical constructs will be italicized to separate these ideas from surrounding text. Questionnaire constructs, though written originally in Spanish, will be presented in English without a translation gloss, this for the sake of brevity
- 8 It is important to note that this survey research project was mixed methods in its approach, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources; however, it is beyond the scope of this particular paper to report on anything beyond the quantitative results.
- 9 There were also 18 spaces where informants could provide extra information; these have not been included in the item count as they were not a different construct.
- 10 Logic flaws in this questionnaire were related to double- and triple-barreled questions, e.g. "Have you published articles and given conference presentations in English before?"
- 11 Prestige questions give to or take away from an informant's social status, e.g. "do you agree, as all wise people will, that learning a second language is essential in today's globalizing world?"

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