UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE NICARAGUA
CUR– MATAGALPA

DEPARTAMENTO DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN Y HUMANIDADES

GRADUATE SEMINAR

Submitted to the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Teaching

General topic:

"TOWARDS TEFL EXCELLENCE IN MATAGALPA: A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE SECOND SEMESTER OF 2024"

Specific topic:

Beyond the textbook: Exploring seventh graders' attitude toward English language at Naciones Unidas school in Rancho Grande, II semester of 2024.

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Msc. César Enrique López Soza

Matagalpa Nicaragua, November 2024

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I.   APPENDIX

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ABSTRACT

This study explores attitudes toward English language learning among students from diverse educational settings. Using a qualitative methods approach, data were collected through interviews to assess factors affecting students' attitudes, motivation, perceptions of the language, and challenges faced during the learning process. The importance of fostering an environment with conducive and engaging attitudes to increase students' enthusiasm for English language acquisition. The results indicate that positive attitudes are closely related to intrinsic motivation, such as personal interest in the language and its cultural significance. These findings can serve as a basis for teachers to improve language teaching methodologies and overcome attitudes that hinder second language learning. (Papi & Phill, 2024), attitude towards language learning is essential in shaping the learner's experience and effectiveness in acquiring a new language. Positive attitudes can increase motivation and engagement, facilitating a more productive learning process. Conversely, negative attitudes can impede progress and reduce the chances of success.

VALORACIÓN DEL TUTOR

El trabajo de Seminario de Graduación elaborado por las Bachilleres: 1. <u>**Hilder Javier Díaz Orozco**</u> carnet: <u>20604395</u>, Cédula: <u>450-220793-0000P</u>. 2. <u>**Fernando José Martínez Martínez**</u> Carnet: <u>20604428</u>, Cedula: <u>441-150702-1006F</u>. 3. <u>**Alexei Gurdián Larios**</u>, Carnet: <u>20604120</u> Cédula: <u>453-170390-0000V</u>, para optar al título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación con Mención en inglés, con el tema: **BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK: EXPLORING SEVENTH GRADER´S ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT NACIONES UNIDAS SCHOOL IN RANCHO GRANDE II SEMESTER.** responde a las normativas del proceso metodológico de la investigación de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua – UNAN Managua/CUR Matagalpa con la adecuada relación entre los objetivos y variables planteadas, la búsqueda documental, el diseño metodológico, los resultados obtenidos y las conclusiones.

El proceso de los resultados se realizó tomando en cuenta las variables del estudio, los objetivos, los instrumentos de recolección de información y la bibliografía consultada. Esto facilitó así mismo la elaboración de análisis y discusión de resultados, y las conclusiones.

El presente trabajo es el resultado del esfuerzo, dedicación y aprendizaje desde la aplicación de conocimientos adquiridos y la puesta en práctica de los pasos metodológicos de la investigación científica. Por lo tanto, se considera apto para su defensa.

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II.   Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, English language proficiency has become an essential tool for communication and learning. This study reaches beyond the confines of the textbook, exploring seventh grade students' attitudes toward learning English. Through an approach that values their experiences, emotions, and perspectives, we seek to understand how these young people view language not only as an academic requirement, but as a window into new cultures and opportunities. On this journey, we will discover not only the challenges they face, but also the passions and motivations that can transform their relationship with English into a path full of possibilities.

Research on seventh-grade students' attitudes toward learning English at the United Nations School of Rancho Grande is critical to improving the educational process and fostering a positive learning environment. As students begin to interact with a new language, their attitudes can significantly influence their level of engagement and academic success. Therefore, understanding these attitudes can provide a solid foundation for designing interventions to increase their interest and motivation for English.

In secondary education, English is often taught using a structured, textbook-based approach, which can limit learning to static and theoretical content. However, it has been observed that seventh grade students can develop varied attitudes towards the language that do not always reflect their actual interest or competence.

The main problem lies in the need to identify how seventh grade students' attitudes towards English are influenced by factors beyond traditional teaching material. It is essential to understand to what extent exposure to alternative methodologies, such as project-based learning, integration of digital technologies, and participation in interactive activities, can modify students' perceptions and attitudes towards the language.

And consequently, lack of motivation and resistance to learning English may be related to the perception that textbook content is irrelevant or disconnected from their everyday lives and experiences.

However, this approach focuses on exploring how teaching methods beyond the textbook can influence learners' attitudes toward English.

The study will identify a variety of factors that affect how students perceive English learning. These factors include personal elements such as their interests and self-confidence, as well as family and social influences that can shape their perspective toward the language. By gaining a clearer understanding of these aspects, more effective learning can be developed that is tailored to students' individual needs.

Therefore, this study aims to examine students' attitudes toward English, assessing how the inclusion of innovative instructional strategies and hands-on experiences impacts their motivation and willingness to learn the language. By better understanding these dynamics, pedagogical practices can be developed that better align with students' needs and interests, fostering more effective and satisfying learning.

The information obtained from this study not only has the potential to improve educational practices at the United Nations School, but it can also offer significant contributions to academic knowledge about language learning in specific contexts. With these findings, learning benefits can be implemented for students, and educators can be provided with valuable tools to adapt their pedagogical approaches more effectively and with positive attitudes.

To carry out this study, the qualitative approach was used, the type of study focuses on the participatory action framework of the study, the understanding of the context, the motivations and emotions that underlie the behaviors and decisions according to the objectives; according to (Thomas, 2023) said that a cross-sectional study is a type of research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time. In cross-sectional research, you observe variables

without influencing them which means that the level of depth this research is transversal since it is carried out at a specific time and in a single place.

According to (Shukla, 2020) said that "a part of population that represents it completely is known as sample. It means, the units, selected from the population as a sample, must represent all kind of characteristics of different types of units of population"; therefore the population and sample were taken as the 7th grade A students of the United Nations Public School with a total of 25 students; an interview was applied to students and teachers to collect data on the research variables.

III.   Objetives

a. Aim

To examine factors influencing students' attitudes toward English language learning.

b. Specific

To identify the personal factors that affect students' attitudes toward learning English.

To analyze the influence of family context on students' attitudes toward learning English.

To examine the effect of prior knowledge of English on students' attitudes toward learning English.

IV.   Theoretical Framework.

4.1.   Conceptualization of language learning attitude.

"Language learning attitude refers to learners' predispositions toward the language learning process, significantly influencing their motivation, engagement, and success in acquiring a new language." (Papi & Phill, 2024)

As a result, learners' predispositions toward language learning play a crucial role in their motivation and engagement, which in turn directly impacts their success in acquiring a new language.

However, most of the students interviewed at the school showed a good predisposition, since they like the language and commented that they will be able to have better opportunities.

Furthermore, as mentioned by (Papi & Phill, 2024),attitude towards language learning is essential in shaping the learner's experience and effectiveness in acquiring a new language. Positive attitudes can increase motivation and engagement, facilitating a more productive learning process. Conversely, negative attitudes can impede progress and reduce the chances of success.

Therefore, it is critical that educators establish a supportive environment that promotes positive attitudes, as this directly influences student outcomes and engagement in learning a new language.

Nevertheless, the teacher with whom we conducted our interview always shows great motivation to share his knowledge with his students, giving them attention and support in each of their difficulties so that they can improve day by day.

4.2.   **Motivation in English language learning.**

"It posits that motivation is enhanced when learners feel autonomous, competent, and connected to others." (Hennebry_Leung Marting, 2024)

Consequently, creating an environment that promotes autonomy and competence while facilitating connections among peers may lead to higher levels of motivation and, ultimately, more effective learning outcomes.

Therefore, the teacher is implementing shared learning activities, such as group singing, vocabulary practice and dynamics that involve all students, in order to keep them motivated to learn the language.

"EVT focuses on learners' expectations of success and the value they place on the task. Learners who believe they can succeed and see the value in mastering a second language are more motivated to persist." (Hennebry_Leung Marting, 2024)

In this regard, EVT highlights the critical role of learners' expectations and the perceived value of tasks in shaping their motivation. When students believe in their potential for success and recognize the importance of mastering a second language, they are more likely to remain committed to their studies, ultimately enhancing their language acquisition and persistence in the learning process.

Fortunately, most of the students despite many difficulties, such as lack of time and lack of resources are super motivated to learn the language in order to improve their skills and improve their employment opportunities and lifestyle.

4.3.   **Factors influencing attitude towards English language learning.**

"There are some factors like educational factors, social factors, learner personality factors and other factors which in turn affect the attitudes of learners towards learning EFL" (Getie, 2020)

As mentioned by (Getie, 2020) said that "Several factors, such as educational, social influences, and learner personality, can shape learners' attitudes toward EFL learning."

Therefore, these family and social motivational factors, as well as negative personal attitudes affect the learning and personal development of some of the students, so here the role of teachers in accompanying and motivating students is very important.

4.3.1. Motivation.

"Motivation to learn is a process of activity that gives energy, and directs one's behavior to achieve one's goals". (Agustina, 2021)

Motivation to learn, as described by Agustina (2021), is a dynamic force that energizes students and guides their actions toward achieving their educational goals. In a school setting, we can apply this understanding by fostering an environment that ignites curiosity and encourages active participation. By recognizing the unique interests and aspirations of each learner, educators can tailor their approach to make learning more relevant and engaging.

4.3.2. Self-Confidence.

"A major factor in English language proficiency is self-confidence" (Ghafar, 2023)

"Self-confidence is a crucial factor that can significantly impact several aspects of an individual's life, including academic, personal, and social domains." (Ghafar, 2023)

Encouraging positive reinforcement, celebrating individual strengths and providing constructive feedback can help build a foundation of self-confidence. By prioritizing self-confidence in the classroom, we empower students not only to excel academically, but also to develop resilience and strong social connections, ultimately preparing them for success beyond school.

Therefore, the teacher interviewed commented that for these reasons we must be prepared by constantly studying and improving every day to provide good knowledge to our students, to meet our students' expectations and to motivate them to learn every day.

4.4. Family and social factors.

"With the advent of globalization, with science and technology continually expanding, it is crucial to start teaching English at an early age and urge parents to extend the education even within their homes" (Jason V. Chavez, 2023). In other words, students are capable of learning English in the classroom, but if they are not followed up at home to remind them of their homework or to remind them to practice, and if they are not motivated, it is likely that they will learn English with a negative attitude. (Agustina, 2021) States that: There is a significant relationship between family social support and student motivation to learn. Student motivation to learn can be built by the family.

According to the interview studies in the question 8 ("How supportive your family in your learning English journey?") and question 9 ("Do you receive any help from family members with your English studies?"), from the sample of 7 students, the data showed most of the students say that the family motivates and encourages them to learn, supports them in the motivational part, even though they do not know the language, this helps them to have a good attitude towards learning the English language.

4.4.1. Family support

"The way that the parents perceived the importance of learning English language reflected their motivation and willingness to extend the language teaching even in their home" (Jason V. Chavez, 2023) It could be said that the way the family influences the idea of learning a foreign language, the student will also have that perspective, therefore the parents' perception of the English language influences the attitude of the students.

4.4.2. Psicology

Research studies that explore the personal, psychological, and social factors affecting English language learning (Muslim, 2023) From this it can be said that: Social or family problems can affect the performance of students, a problem at home can affect learning because this causes distraction, also this affects the attitude and causes disinterest to study English. On either hand, a student's psychological state can affect the learning of the English language (Balachandran Vadivel, 2022)

4.4.3. Emotional

"Emotions play a pivotal role in every aspect of the second language acquisition (SLA) process." (Peng Wang, 2024) So emotions such as sadness, insecurity, frustration and other emotions can affect English language learning and attitude, therefore emotional factors must be clearly observed when learning or teaching English. This is particularly critical in the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), where emotional dynamics can significantly influence learning outcomes and proficiency.

4.5.   Previous experiences of students.

The classroom is a place where different forms of learning emerge in students, from which this environment brings a wealth of experiences and perceptions to the learning environment. As teachers it is necessary to understand and appreciate the influence of the protagonists' previous experiences and their notions of success and failure; examining the need for teachers to recognize and take advantage of these factors to establish a more effective educational experience in the process.

4.5.1. Prior knowledge level

Prior knowledge is the knowledge human beings accrue prior to a specific situation or experience. It is important because it helps inform decisions and actions, even in situations that are unknown to an individual. Humans can pull from their stores of prior knowledge for help in navigating unfamiliar situations. (Conklin, 2023)

What the author means is that we all have our own prior knowledge of something because it is based on our experiences, on situations in the environment that allow us to interact in each situation that arises.

In the school where we applied our research, according to question 14 of the focus group questionnaire conducted with students, it was determined that they have basic knowledge of English upon entering high school, which allows the teacher to appropriate this knowledge by putting into practice their pre-knowledge starting English from scratch in high school and therefore taking this significant advance as a starting point to make the learning process effective.

4.5.2. Previous educational experience.

"The Early Career Framework states that teachers should learn that... Pupils' investment in learning is also driven by their prior experiences and perceptions of success and failure. Managing Behavior" (Education, 2019)

What the author wants to express is that previous experiences have a profound impact on the learning outcomes of students whether positive or negative, these attitudes shape attitudes, motivation and approaches to learning in students, most teachers recognize the importance of these experiences as they can discover valuable information about the thoughts or mindset of their learners and make use of these to adapt their own learning strategies.

In the school where we applied our research, according to questions 15 and 16 of the focus group conducted with the students, we learned that they have not had any educational experience in English, that is, everything they know they have learned in a

practical way, and therefore this becomes a good tool for the teacher to apply their own strategies to teach the language based on the previous experiences of the students.

4.5.3. Practical application.

Practical knowledge — helps you acquire the specific techniques that become the tools of your trade. It sits much closer to your actual day-to-day work. There are some things you can only learn through doing and experiencing. Where theory is often taught in the ideal of a vacuum, the practical is learned through the reality of life. (Bradley, 2,012)

What the author means is that this type of knowledge is essential in many trades and professions, as it enables people to face specific challenges and develop techniques that are crucial to their work. In short, it emphasizes the importance of learning by doing, as some skills and lessons can only be acquired through practice and interaction with real situations.

In the school where we applied our research, according to questions 8 and 9 of the interview with teacher, we were able to learn that the teacher applies strategies in the classroom that allow him to take advantage of the students' previous knowledge and experiences during the learning process, deepening this knowledge through of case studies where the protagonist analyzes and discusses real situations. life cases which allows them to apply theories in practical contexts and understand their relevance, it also provides continuous feedback by providing constant feedback during the realization of the practical cases, it also promotes Games and recreational activities such as word games, flashcards and interactive activities; repetition and practice; common phrases and expressions; use of technology, etc.

V.   Analysis of Results.

After analyzing the results obtained, this research concluded that:

Regarding specific objective 1, Identify the personal factors that influence students' attitudes towards learning English, questions 2 and 7 of the student interview questionnaire were considered to address this objective. The data obtained revealed that many students feel fear, lack of interest, and are not motivated because they do not master the language in its different skills; we also identified the work factor as influential in their attitudes. As ". (Agustina, 2021) states, "The motivation to learn is an activity process that provides energy and directs one's behavior to achieve their goals." To address these conclusions, it is essential to create an inclusive and pressure-free learning environment that values the learning process over perfection. Building self-confidence, adapting activities to students' interests, and providing flexible resources will allow them to overcome insecurities and improve their motivation to learn the language. Furthermore, it is useful to reduce homework load by focusing on short and effective activities, such as practical English exercises that encourage interaction and language application. Integrating the use of technology as a feedback tool is also key, as it will allow students to work at their own pace without losing motivation, facilitating the integration of English into their daily lives in a more fluid and accessible way.

With respect to the specific objective 2 To analyze the influence of family context on students' attitudes toward learning English.

In order to answer this objective, questions 8 and 9 of the student interview questionnaire were taken. The data obtained in the questions 8 showed: the students only receive advise from their parents to study English. The data obtained in the questions 8 showed: The students do not receive help from their families because they do not know English.

From the results obtained it can be deduced that the attitude of the students towards the English language can change according to each individual because some are motivated by their parents and others do not receive help from their relatives. the approach in this area should currently be studied in depth.

(Jason V. Chavez, 2023) "The way that the parents perceived the importance of learning English language reflected their motivation and willingness to extend the language teaching even in their home"

To improve support in learning English, parents can be offered simple information about the importance of the language and how they can motivate their children, even if they do not speak it. In addition, the school could organize group study sessions, where students can practice together and support each other. Another option is, where there is access, to share resources such as recordings or videos that students can watch at home to reinforce what they have learned in class. These steps would help students feel more supported and motivated in their learning process.

With respect to the specific objective 3 To examine the effect of prior knowledge of English on students' attitudes toward learning English. In order to answer this objective, the following questions are posed 14. How would you rate your English level before starting your current class? Justify your answer, and Question 15. Have you taken English classes before? Justify your answer, of the focus group. The data obtained revealed that students claim to have started from scratch because they did not receive prior knowledge before starting high school and, therefore, students have different attitudes towards the language. The results might suggest that a lack of prior knowledge at the beginning of high school can generate varied attitudes towards language learning, ranging from frustration to motivation, suggesting the need for more coherent and continuous education to better prepare students for the challenges of the next level of education. In the same way, these data must be taken into account when considering the approach taken in the theory of (Conklin, 2023) who states that Prior knowledge is the knowledge human beings accrue prior to a specific situation or experience. It is important because it helps inform decisions and actions, even in situations that are unknown to an individual. Humans can pull from their stores of prior knowledge for help

in navigating unfamiliar situations; Indeed, Thanks to the improvements and opportunities that the government has implemented in the educational system, we now have the possibility of learning English from the first years of primary school. Through educational programs and projects, English lessons have been incorporated into the school curriculum from an early age, allowing students to become familiar with the language progressively. In addition, various courses and training centers have been established throughout the country, offering both face-to-face and online learning options, facilitating access to the language in different locations. These initiatives open new doors for students to develop essential language skills that will be useful throughout their lives, promoting inclusion and equal learning opportunities.

5.1. Conclusions

This research examined factors influencing students' attitudes toward English language learning.

In conclusion, this research has identified a number of factors that influence students' attitudes toward learning English, based on interviews conducted with both teachers and students at a school. The results revealed a wide range of attitudes and motivations that affect the language learning process.

On one hand, the interview with the teacher revealed that the lack of motivation among students is largely related to their lack of prior experience in learning English. Many students reported not having received English classes previously, which led to feelings of insecurity and initial disinterest. Additionally, the teacher highlighted that some students do not understand how the different language skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing) are distributed, which hinders their engagement and progress in learning the language.

On the other hand, the interviews with students revealed a variety of factors that influence their attitude toward English. Some students mentioned that a lack of time due to other responsibilities, such as work, represents a significant barrier to their learning. Additionally, some expressed that they are not interested in learning English because they find it unattractive or simply do not have an emotional connection to the language.

However, there were also students who expressed positive and motivated attitudes toward learning English. These students mentioned that they view mastering the language as a key tool for accessing better job and academic opportunities. Parental influence was also mentioned as an important motivating factor, as many students indicated that their parents support and encourage them to learn English as an essential skill for their future.

In summary, the findings of this research suggest that students' attitudes toward learning English are influenced by a range of internal and external factors. The lack of prior experience, difficulties in understanding language skills, time limitations, and lack of interest are some of the factors that negatively affect motivation. However, the perception that English offers better job and academic opportunities, along with parental support, are elements that foster a positive and motivated attitude toward learning the language. These findings underscore the importance of designing pedagogical strategies that address these challenges and promote a more favorable attitude toward English among students.

5.2. Recommendations

For the Teacher:

- ✓ It is recommended to create an environment of trust and a socio-affective bond between teachers and students based on the experience lived in the classroom in each English lesson.

- ✓ Develop motivational strategies taking into account the knowledge needs of each student.

For the student:

- ✓ To take into account the importance of English as a second language and to recognize it as an opportunity and an open door of knowledge for life.

- ✓ Create a self-taught attitude to improve the development of English skills.

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Annexes

Operationalization of variables

General Topic

" Towards TEFL Excellence in Matagalpa: A Study of Effective Instructional Practices for Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Second Semester of 2024"

Specific Topic

Beyond the textbook: Exploring seventh graders' attitude toward English language at Naciones Unidas school in Rancho Grande,II semester.

Tabla de contenido Variable	Concepts or Dimensions	Indicators	Scale	Questions	Technique	Adressed to
I. Attitudes toward English language learning.	1.1. Conceptualization of language learning attitude					
	1.2. Theories of motivation and language learning.					
	1.3. Factors influencing attitude towards English language learning.	1.3.1. Motivación.	Open	1. **What motivates you to learn English? Why?**	Interview	Students
			Open	2. **How motivated are you to improve your English skills? Why?**	Interview	Students
			Open	3. **Can you describe a time when you felt really motivated to learn English?**	Interview	Students
		1.3.2. Self-confidence	Open	4. **Do you believe you can become fluent in English if you continue studying? Why?**	Interview	Teacher, students

		Open	5. How do personal factors like your daily life, interests, or hobbies affect your English learning?	Interview	Teacher, students
		Open	6. How supportive is your family in your English learning journey? Why?	Interview	Teacher, students
	1.4.1. Family support	Open	7. Do you receive any help from family members with your English studies? Justify your answer.	Interview	Students
1.4. Family and social factors.		Open	8. . What role does your family play in supporting or motivating your English studies?	Interview	Students
	1.4.2. Psychology	Open	9. Do you feel stressed or anxious when learning or speaking English? Justify your answer.	Interview	Teacher, students
		Open	10. Do you think your emotional state (e.g., feeling happy or stressed) influences how well you learn English?	Interview	Teacher, students
	1.4.3. Emotional	Open		Interview	Students

			11. **How do you feel when you achieve success in your English learning? Justify your answer.**		
		Open	12. **Do you think your emotional state (e.g., feeling happy or stressed) influences how well you learn English? Justify your answer.**	Interview	Students
		Open	13. **Do you think students' emotional well-being impacts their English learning? Justify your answer.**	Interview	Teacher
1.5. Previous experiences of students.	1.5.1. Prior Knowledge Level	Open	14. **How would you rate your English level before starting your current class? Justify your answer.**	Interview	Students
	1.5.2. Previous Educational Experiences	Open	15. **Have you taken English classes before? Justify your answer**	Interview	Students
		Open	16. **If yes, were those experiences positive or negative? Why?**	Interview	Students
		Open		Interview	Students

				17. How would you describe your previous English learning experiences?		
		1.5.3. Practical Application	Open	18. Do you have opportunities to practice English outside the classroom (e.g., talking to people, online platforms)? Justify your answer.	Interview	Teacher, students
			Open	19. Do you find it easy to apply what you've learned in English to real-life situations?	Interview	Teacher, students