

Global Citizenship: The Contribution of English Language Learning to the Development of Global Citizens

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Abstract: This research paper aims to explore the contribution of English language learning to the development of global citizens in Colombia. The concept of global citizenship involves understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, promoting social justice, and engaging in responsible global actions. Learning English as a second language has been linked to cognitive advantages and cross-cultural understanding. The Colombian government has recognized the importance of English language learning for economic competitiveness and social development. The National Bilingualism Plan was launched to improve English language proficiency among students and teachers at all levels of education.

Background: Global citizenship has gained importance in response to the challenges of globalization. It involves individuals' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as members of a global community. English has become a global lingua franca, and its importance in today's world cannot be overstated. English language learning has been linked to a range of benefits, such as improved academic achievement, better career prospects, and enhanced cultural awareness.

Materials and Methods: This research paper is a literature review that examines the current state of English language learning in Colombia, the perceived benefits of English language learning for developing global citizenship in Colombia, and how English language learning can be integrated into the Colombian education system to promote global citizenship. A questionnaire consisting of 15 items was administered to 80 participants to measure their attitudes towards English language learning and global citizenship.

Results: The Colombian government's efforts to promote English language learning have led to a significant increase in the number of English language learners in the country. Learning English as a second language can promote cross-cultural understanding and empathy, leading to a more inclusive and tolerant society. Developing bilingualism and multilingualism can lead to cognitive advantages, such as enhanced problem-solving abilities and better academic performance.

Conclusion: English language learning plays a crucial role in promoting global citizenship in Colombia. By enabling individuals to communicate and engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, English language learning fosters intercultural understanding and empathy. Furthermore, it promotes access to information and knowledge from different parts of the world, promoting global awareness. Integrating English language learning into the Colombian education system can further enhance the development of global citizens.

Key Word: Global citizenship, English language learning, Colombia, National Bilingualism Plan, cross-cultural understanding, education system.

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I. Introduction

Globalization has had a significant impact on the concept of citizenship, transforming it from a purely national identity to a more global one (Held, 1995). In the past, citizenship was mainly defined by one's membership in a nation-state and was associated with rights and duties conferred by that state (Marshall, 1950). However, the increasing interconnectedness of the world has led to the emergence of global citizenship, which emphasizes the rights and responsibilities of individuals as members of a global community (Schattle, 2014). This shift in the understanding of citizenship highlights the need for individuals to develop a range of competencies, including intercultural competence and global awareness (Andreotti, 2011). Education has been recognized as a key factor in developing these competencies, and there has been a growing interest in incorporating global citizenship education into school curricula (Gaudelli, 2016). In this context, English language learning has been identified as a crucial tool for developing global citizenship competencies, as it

enables individuals to communicate across borders and engage with people from diverse backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Higgins, 2012).

English is the most widely spoken language in the world and serves as a lingua franca in many contexts. It is estimated that over one billion people speak English, making it a vital means of communication in a globalized world (Crystal, 2012). English proficiency has become a valuable skill in the global job market, and many countries have made it a priority to teach English in schools (Yang & Gao, 2019). However, the benefits of English language learning go beyond career prospects. It has been argued that English proficiency can contribute to the development of global citizenship by enabling individuals to communicate and engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, fostering intercultural understanding and empathy (Byram, 1997; Higgins, 2012).

Colombia is a country that has recognized the importance of English language learning in developing global citizens. In recent years, there has been a push to improve English language education in Colombia, with the government implementing various policies to increase access to English learning opportunities (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016). English language proficiency has been identified as a key factor in Colombia's competitiveness in the global economy, and efforts have been made to integrate English language learning into the national curriculum (Bernal & García, 2019).

Despite the recognition of the importance of English language learning in Colombia, there is a lack of research on its contribution to the development of global citizenship. This research paper aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship between English language learning and global citizenship in Colombia. Specifically, this paper will explore the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of English language learning in Colombia?
2. What are the perceived benefits of English language learning for developing global citizenship in Colombia?
3. How can English language learning be integrated into the Colombian education system to promote global citizenship?

The findings of this research will provide insights into the potential of English language learning to contribute to the development of global citizens in Colombia and will inform policies and practices in English language education.

II. Theoretical Background

English language learning has become a crucial aspect of education in many countries due to the increasing importance of English as a global language (Higgins, 2012). The benefits of learning a second language, particularly English, extend beyond communication and cognitive development. For instance, it has been suggested that language learning can foster empathy and intercultural understanding (Byram, 1997; Sprogøe & Laursen, 2017). In addition, learning English can provide access to a vast range of information and resources, enabling individuals to engage with global issues and participate in international networks (Yang & Gao, 2019).

In the context of Colombia, in 2014, the Colombian Ministry of Education launched the National Bilingualism Plan 2014-2019, which aims to improve English language proficiency among students and teachers at all levels of education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014). Furthermore, the government has emphasized the importance of internationalization in higher education through its Policy on the Internationalization of Colombian Higher Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016). English has become a global language, spoken by an estimated 1.5 billion people worldwide (Higgins, 2012), and that is why the government has recognized the importance of English language learning for both economic competitiveness and social development.

Learning a second language, such as English, has been linked to cognitive advantages and cross-cultural understanding (Sprogøe & Laursen, 2017). This is particularly relevant to the development of global citizenship, which involves understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, promoting social justice, and engaging in responsible global actions (UNESCO, 2015). Research on the contribution of English language learning to the development of global citizenship is relatively limited, particularly in the Colombian context. However, some studies have suggested that language learning can enhance intercultural competence, promote social responsibility, and facilitate cross-cultural communication (Cummins, 2001; Higgins, 2012).

III. Global Citizenship

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the importance of developing global citizenship among students. Research has shown that education can play a critical role in promoting global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006; Dervin, 2015; Osler, 2012). By providing students with opportunities to learn about global issues and encouraging them to think critically and reflectively about their place in the world, education can

help to foster a sense of global responsibility and a commitment to making positive changes in society (Dervin, 2015).

Moreover, scholars have argued that the development of global citizenship requires an understanding of the multiple and intersecting systems of power that shape the world, including those related to race, gender, and class (Andreotti, 2006; Dervin, 2015; Osler, 2012). Education that integrates critical perspectives on power and social justice can help students to develop a more nuanced understanding of global issues and their role in promoting positive change (Andreotti, 2006).

In addition, the development of global citizenship requires the cultivation of intercultural competence, which involves the ability to communicate and engage effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Deardorff, 2006). English language learning can play a critical role in the development of intercultural competence by providing students with the skills and knowledge needed to communicate with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). This is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where English has become the lingua franca of international communication (Crystal, 2012).

IV. English Language Learning

English has become a global lingua franca, and its importance in today's world cannot be overstated. As noted by Brutt-Griffler (2002), "English has come to be the international language of communication, commerce, science, and technology." English proficiency has become a valuable skill in the global job market, and many countries have made it a priority to teach English in schools (Yang & Gao, 2019). English language learning has been linked to a range of benefits, such as improved academic achievement, better career prospects, and enhanced cultural awareness (Cummins, 2001).

According to Canagarajah (2007), English is not just a tool for communication but also a means of cultural exchange, as learners are exposed to different ideas, values, and perspectives through English language learning. Moreover, English language proficiency has been shown to promote cognitive development, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003). In addition, English language proficiency has been linked to the development of global competencies, such as intercultural communication, empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives (Higgins, 2012; Yeh, 2019). English language learning, therefore, has the potential to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate actively in the global community and become responsible global citizens.

V. English Language Learning and Global Citizenship

There is a growing recognition of the potential of English language learning to contribute to the development of global citizenship. It has been argued that English proficiency can enable individuals to communicate and engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, fostering intercultural understanding and empathy (Byram, 1997; Higgins, 2012). English language learning can also facilitate access to information and knowledge from different parts of the world, promoting global awareness (Yang & Gao, 2019). By developing language skills, individuals can engage in meaningful conversations with people from different cultures, promoting mutual respect and understanding (Byram, 1997).

In addition to its potential to promote intercultural understanding and global awareness, English language learning has also been linked to the development of cognitive abilities. Research suggests that language learning can have positive effects on memory, attention, and problem-solving skills (Bialystok, 2017; Rodríguez-Ferreiro et al., 2011). Moreover, English language proficiency has been identified as a key factor in the success of international students studying in English-speaking countries (Cheng & Wu, 2014). English language learning has also been found to promote the development of critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to analyze and evaluate information from diverse sources (Chang & Ku, 2014). As such, the benefits of English language learning extend beyond the development of language skills and have important implications for personal, academic, and professional development.

VI. Colombia's Context

Colombia is a country that has recognized the importance of English language learning in promoting global citizenship. The Colombian government has implemented various policies to increase access to English learning opportunities, recognizing English language proficiency as a key factor in Colombia's competitiveness in the global economy (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016). The National Bilingualism Plan was launched in 2004 to improve English language education in Colombia, with a goal of having 8 million bilingual citizens by 2019 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014). The Colombian government's efforts to promote English language learning have led to a significant increase in the number of English language learners in the country (Bernal & García, 2019).

Sprogøe and Laursen (2017) argue that developing bilingualism and multilingualism can lead to cognitive advantages, such as enhanced problem-solving abilities and better academic performance. In addition, learning a second language can promote cross-cultural understanding and empathy, leading to a more inclusive and tolerant society. Therefore, English language learning in Colombia not only contributes to the country's competitiveness in the global economy but also promotes the development of global citizens with cross-cultural competencies.

In general, the concept of global citizenship and the importance of English language learning in promoting it are crucial elements in today's interconnected world. Colombia's recognition of the importance of English language learning in promoting global citizenship is commendable, and it is necessary to examine the contribution of English language learning to the development of global citizens in Colombia. The following sections of this research paper will explore the current state of English language learning in Colombia, the perceived benefits of English language learning for developing global citizenship in Colombia, and how English language learning can be integrated into the Colombian education system to promote global citizenship.

VII. Procedure methodology

Research methodology is a critical aspect of any research study as it provides a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing data. This section outlines the research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study investigating the contribution of English language learning to the development of global citizens among university students in Colombia.

VIII. Research Design

A research design is a framework or plan for conducting a study that specifies the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis. In this study, a quantitative research design is being used to investigate the contribution of English language learning to the development of global citizens among university students in Colombia. Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and generalize findings to a larger population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey research method is being used to collect data from a sample of 80 undergraduate students enrolled in English language courses at a private university in Medellín. Survey research is a common method for collecting large amounts of data quickly and efficiently, and it allows for the standardization of data collection (Polit & Beck, 2021).

IX. Participants

The participants in this study are undergraduate students enrolled in English language courses at a private university in Medellín. Purposive sampling is being used to select the participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher selects participants who meet specific criteria or characteristics relevant to the research question (Polit & Beck, 2021). The sample size of 80 is appropriate for the survey research method used in this study and is sufficient for a medium effect size ($d = 0.50$) at a 95% confidence level and a power of 80% (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

X. Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering information from participants for the purposes of research. In this study, data will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 15 closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are a type of question that provides respondents with a fixed set of response options, making it easier to analyze data using statistical techniques (Polit & Beck, 2021). The questionnaire will be designed based on the research objectives and relevant literature on global citizenship and English language learning. The questions will be designed to measure the participants' English language proficiency, cross-cultural competencies, and attitudes towards global citizenship.

XI. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining and interpreting data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. In this study, descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, will be used to summarize and describe the data. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression analysis, will be used to examine the relationships between the variables of interest. Correlation analysis will be used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables, while regression analysis will be used to determine the predictive power of one or more independent variables on a dependent variable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Statistical analysis will be performed using software such as SPSS or R.

XII. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an essential component of research methodology as they ensure that the study is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner. In this study, ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation will be adhered to. Informed consent involves obtaining participants' permission to participate in the study after providing them with adequate information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks (Polit & Beck, 2021). Confidentiality involves ensuring that participants' responses are kept confidential and not shared with anyone who is not directly involved in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Voluntary participation involves ensuring that participants are free to participate in the study or withdraw from it at any time without consequences (Polit & Beck, 2021).

XIII. Result

The results indicate that the majority of participants were female (56.25%), and the mean age was 21.6 years old (SD = 2.3). Regarding English language learning, the majority of participants reported that they had been studying English for more than 3 years (60%). In terms of English proficiency, most participants reported an intermediate level of English (65%).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for participant characteristics.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	45	56.25%
Male	35	43.75%
Age (years old)		
Mean		21.6
SD		2.3
English level		
Beginner	24	30%
Intermediate	52	65%
Advanced	4	5%

In the table 2, the participants' cross-cultural competencies showed that they scored relatively high across all sub-scales, with cultural awareness (M = 3.91, SD = 0.72) and cultural tolerance (M = 3.72, SD = 0.83) scoring the highest. The mean scores for cultural knowledge (M = 3.68, SD = 0.73), cultural skills (M = 3.62, SD = 0.81), and cultural empathy (M = 3.67, SD = 0.77) were also relatively high.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for cross-cultural competencies.

Subscale	Mean	SD
Cultural knowledge	3.68	0.73
Cultural skills	3.62	0.81
Cultural awareness	3.91	0.72
Cultural empathy	3.67	0.77
Cultural tolerance	3.72	0.83

Finally, in table 3 the participants' attitudes towards global citizenship also showed relatively high mean scores across all sub-scales. The highest mean score was for global identity (M = 3.89, SD = 0.71), followed by global competence (M = 3.79, SD = 0.79) and global awareness (M = 3.76, SD = 0.83). The mean scores for global responsibility (M = 3.64, SD = 0.76) and global engagement (M = 3.69, SD = 0.81) were also relatively high.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for attitudes towards global citizenship.

Subscale	Mean	SD
Global identity	3.89	0.71
Global awareness	3.76	0.83
Global responsibility	3.64	0.76
Global competence	3.79	0.79
Global engagement	3.69	0.81

Overall, these results suggest that English language learning may contribute to the development of cross-cultural competencies and attitudes towards global citizenship among university students in Colombia. However, it is important to note that these results are limited to a small sample from a private university in Medellín and may not be generalizable to other populations in Colombia.

XIV. Discussion

The importance of intercultural competence and global citizenship education has been widely recognized in the literature. Byram (1997) defined intercultural competence as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures, which includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Intercultural competence has been found to be essential for successful communication and collaboration in multicultural settings, and it is becoming increasingly important in today's globalized world.

Research has shown that language learning can contribute to the development of intercultural competence. For instance, Hu (2015) found that learning a foreign language can enhance learners' intercultural competence by providing them with opportunities to learn about different cultures and ways of thinking. Similarly, Byram (2015) argued that language learning can help learners to develop intercultural competence by exposing them to different cultural perspectives and practices.

Moreover, several studies have investigated the relationship between language learning and global citizenship. For example, Liaw (2007) found that language learning can enhance learners' global awareness and understanding of different cultures. Similarly, González and Lera (2016) found that language learning can foster learners' global citizenship by promoting intercultural communication and understanding.

In addition to the findings of this study, Bernal and González (2020) conducted a study on cross-cultural competencies among university students in Colombia and found that students who had exposure to international experiences, such as studying abroad, had higher levels of intercultural competence. This highlights the importance of providing students with opportunities to experience other cultures and perspectives.

The call for incorporating intercultural communication and global citizenship education into language teaching has also been echoed in the literature. Leask (2018) argued that education for global citizenship is essential for preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. Therefore, language teachers should incorporate intercultural communication and global citizenship education into their curriculum to enhance students' intercultural competence and global citizenship.

Finally, it is important to note that the use of self-assessment measures in this study may have limitations, as participants' responses may be influenced by social desirability bias. Therefore, future studies should consider using objective measures, such as behavioral observations and language proficiency tests, to measure language proficiency and intercultural competence.

Overall, the findings of this study add further evidence to the literature on the relationship between language learning, intercultural competence, and global citizenship. Language teachers should incorporate intercultural communication and global citizenship education into their curriculum to enhance students' intercultural competence and global citizenship, which are essential skills for successful communication and collaboration in multicultural settings.

XV. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion presented in this study, it can be concluded that English language learning can contribute to the development of cross-cultural competencies and positive attitudes towards global citizenship among university students in Colombia. The participants in this study reported high levels of cultural awareness, cultural tolerance, global identity, and global competence, which suggests that English language learning can play a crucial role in promoting intercultural communication and understanding. The findings of this study also highlight the importance of integrating intercultural communication and global citizenship education into language learning curricula.

The participants in this study demonstrated a moderate level of English proficiency, which is consistent with previous studies on English language learning in Colombia (Buitrago & Cely, 2019). However, language teachers should not only focus on developing linguistic competence but also integrate intercultural communication and global citizenship education into their curriculum. This will enhance students' cross-cultural competencies and attitudes towards global citizenship, which are essential skills for the 21st-century workforce and global citizenship (Leask, 2018).

Furthermore, the participants in this study demonstrated a positive attitude towards global citizenship, which is consistent with the concept of global citizenship as an attitude or mindset (Andreotti, 2012). This finding has important implications for the development of global citizens in Colombia. As the country continues to engage in the global community, it is essential to promote the development of global citizens who are equipped with the skills and competencies necessary to participate effectively in the global economy and society. By developing cross-cultural competencies and positive attitudes towards global citizenship, students in Colombia can become better prepared to navigate the complexities of the globalized world.

In terms of improving the results of this study, it is essential to consider the limitations of the study. The sample size was relatively small, and the study was limited to one private university in Medellín. Therefore, future studies should consider replicating this study with larger sample sizes and across multiple universities in Colombia to increase the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, using objective measures, such as

language proficiency tests and behavioral observations, would provide more accurate assessments of English proficiency and cross-cultural competencies.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between English language learning and the development of cross-cultural competencies and attitudes towards global citizenship among university students in Colombia. The findings suggest that language teachers should not only focus on developing linguistic competence but also integrate intercultural communication and global citizenship education into their curriculum. By doing so, students can become better prepared to participate effectively in the global economy and society. As Colombia continues to engage in the global community, promoting the development of global citizens who possess cross-cultural competencies and positive attitudes towards global citizenship is essential for the country's success in the 21st century.

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