

THE INFLUENCE OF YMCA SUMMER CAMPS PARTICIPATION ON THE EFL
FLUENCY OF THE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSIDAD DEL CAUCA IN SANTANDER DE
QUILICHAO



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Human and Social Sciences school

Bachelor's Degree Program in Modern Languages, English and French

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APPROVAL**UNIVERSIDAD DEL CAUCA**

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Infinite gratitude for the unwavering support, love, and encouragement you have showered upon us throughout this academic journey. Your sacrifices, understanding, and belief in our capabilities have been our constant pillars of strength. This achievement is as much yours as it is ours.

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With deepest appreciation,

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Abstract

Fluency plays a significant role in the acquisition of a second language. It refers to the degree to which an individual can communicate fluently and effectively across a diverse range of topics, i.e., the ability to communicate in the language alongside their native language. However, at times, its advancement may pose a challenge, and there is a need for diverse scenarios that are not typical educational settings. This study examines the influence between immersion and language acquisition by assessing the impact of participation in YMCA summer camps on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) fluency of students at Universidad Del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao (2023 participants). A pre- and post-interviews were utilized as tools to gather the data. Two separate interviews were conducted: the initial interview helped to establish the participants' prior fluency and served as a starting point for comparison with the final interview. The results were subsequently assessed, analyzed and compared to determine whether there was a change in the four target elements: conciseness, language repair, use of fillers and number of mispronounced words when answering. The results demonstrate that the program had a positive impact on the fluency levels of its participants, as the post-interview showed higher scores compared to the pre-interview, indicating a quantifiable enhancement in participants' fluency through the fluency measurement system created. The immersion helped participants develop their existing fluency, showing improvement in their ability to use fillers more effectively, to answer questions more concisely, and to improve the pronunciation of some words.

Keywords: EFL fluency, Immersion, language acquisition, Fluency improvement

YMCA summer camps

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency is a critical asset in today's interconnected world, offering individuals the ability to communicate effectively across borders. As the demand for linguistic competence continues to rise, educational researchers are increasingly exploring innovative avenues that extend beyond traditional classroom settings. According to Crystal (2012), the global spread of English has resulted in its status as a key language for international communication, necessitating the development of effective language learning strategies that accommodate diverse learner needs and contexts.

YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) summer camp programs are renowned for their immersive and engaging environments. These programs have enabled their participants to participate in real-world situations where they are required to engage in continuous activities, interactions, and discussions throughout the day. The immersion programs typically take place during the summer for a brief duration of time (2 or 3 months) and serve as an excellent alternative for language acquisition due to the constant interaction and exposure to communicating with others in diverse scenarios that are not typical educational settings. "Immersion programs provide learners with extensive exposure to the target language and culture, which can lead to rapid language acquisition and high proficiency levels." (Brown, 2004, p. 167) The practical application of language skills in various real-world scenarios enhances the participant's ability to speak, practice, and acquire new vocabulary through constant interaction every day. This exposure allows learners to grasp the finer points of the language, such as idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and cultural references, which may not be readily apparent in traditional classroom setting. As a result, this can lead to a deeper comprehension of the language and improved language skills.

This is why these programs provide a valuable academic resource for students to enhance their language skills through practical, real-world experiences. The setting of Santander de Quilichao's EFL students, coupled with the well-structured immersion programs offered by the YMCA, it forms the backdrop for this investigation into the potential relation between participation in these camps and development EFL proficiency.

This study delves into the fascinating intersection of immersion and language acquisition, focusing on the influence of participation in YMCA summer camps on the EFL fluency of 2023 students at Universidad Del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao. In the following sections, this research will delve into the significance of English fluency. By examining the influence of YMCA summer camps on language fluency development; this research project seeks to contribute with valuable insights about fluency, immersion and language acquisition. This exploration not only addresses the practical implications for language learners but also holds the promise of informing educational practices that foster a more holistic approach to language acquisition.

Problem Statement

Currently one of the main goals of the Universidad del Cauca's Bachelor's Degree in Modern Languages English and French Program (BDML E-F P) is to prepare competent professionals in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Furthermore, the program aims to generate high-quality teachers who possess a high degree of proficiency in the target languages of study. It is expected that students achieve high oral proficiency through the classes at the university and that oral production does not pose a big challenge for students; however, some speech characteristics have been noted during the learning process, and students struggle to articulate themselves in class discussions or oral activities pertaining to previously covered material. Instances of poor fluency, excessive use of fillers, and prolonged pauses between sentences are prevalent, suggesting a persistent trend in which there is a notable challenge in oral production of the target language (L2).

This problem arises due to the lack of spaces for student engagement and opportunities for language practice, which is one of the main issues with second language instruction (L2), including English. For those who are learning, or wish to learn, a language other than their mother tongue, interaction with a second language is essential for their growth and success. It is crucial for students to have good L2 oral proficiency, as it is an important component of their communication skills. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), "Interaction in the second language is necessary for language development and helps learners to practice and improve their oral proficiency, which is vital for effective communication" (p. 115). This is particularly relevant for the BDML E-F P at the Universidad del Cauca.

As mentioned before, oral production poses one of the greatest challenges for students in the BDML E-F P at the Universidad del Cauca. To empirically validate this hypothesis, the research utilized interview recordings conducted with a sample of participants. These recordings aimed to capture the nuances of students' oral expressions, shedding light on their current fluency levels, the presence of fluency deficiencies, mispronounced words when answering, and the impact of extended pauses during verbal communication (see annexes excerpts 1 through 3).

The preceding excerpts from interview audio recordings provide insight into the language fluency levels of participants. Some participants exhibited enhanced language fluency, displaying more control over pauses, reduced use of fillers, and decreased instances of mispronunciation. Conversely, others showcased disparities in fluency levels, manifesting deficiencies in language proficiency alongside prolonged pause during verbal communication and often mispronounced words. This comparative examination serves as a foundational element in elucidating the research's central inquiry.

A possible solution to this problem involves collaboration between the BDML E-F P program and the YMCA summer camps. This collaboration underscores the value of YMCA's immersion programs in bolstering the linguistic proficiency of students. These programs offer a great alternative for acquiring oral proficiency through immersion and language practice outside traditional classroom settings. According to Lo & Murphy (2010) found that “students who participate in an English immersion programs are several times more likely to have higher vocabulary use hence better oral proficiency and grades during English assessment” (p. 119).

By taking part in a YMCA cultural immersion program, participants may engage with local speakers, practice their language abilities in authentic settings, and learn about the subtle

cultural differences in the language. Another study conducted by Jones, Aaron. (2018) found that “being immersed in an English environment can greatly aid students in English development in various situations” (p. 667). Immersion programs can greatly improve fluency by giving students real-world language practice and developing communication skills. Fluency is essential for academic success, particularly in language-focused programs like the BDML E-F P. Students who can articulate their thoughts clearly and succinctly are better equipped to excel in their personal and academic lives. This cooperative partnership provides students with great opportunities for developing fluency which is a vital complement to the traditional academic curriculum.

Insufficient fluency may hinder students' ability to effectively communicate in the target languages, impacting their interactions with classmates, instructors, and future potential employers. This limitation can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and reduced opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, the YMCA’s cultural immersion programs contribute to this research project by spotlighting effective alternative strategies for enhancing fluency skills through experiential learning, immersion programs and cultural exchange.

Consequently, the research question that drives this project was: what is the influence of the participation in YMCA summer camps 2023 on the EFL fluency of students of the modern languages program at the Universidad Del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao?

Rationale

Oral production is one of the hardest skills to develop when interacting in a second language. The results of research consistently show that oral communication is a difficult skill to master, especially when acquiring a second language (Flores-González, 2020; Guado, 2021). However, the use of authentic-interactive activities and the application of communicative language teaching activities have been found to significantly improve student's speaking competence (Flores-González, 2020; Guado, 2021). Currently, the Modern Languages Program of the Universidad del Cauca aims to train competent professionals in listening, writing, reading, and speaking in English and French. As well as the creation of great quality teachers with an excellent level of proficiency in the target languages of study.

Nevertheless, during the learning process, it has been evident that the existence of specific deficiencies in speech, for instance, lack of fluency when talking, many pauses when expressing ideas or answering questions, and excessive use of fillers due to low L2 oral proficiency. These aspects make this process challenging and promote demotivation in students, as they do not have the expected level in the language. Several challenges in oral production have even been identified among university students, such as difficulties with vocabulary, which consequently causes them anxiety and poor presentation skills (Hadi 2020).

The main cause for students' poor fluency is precisely the lack of practice, or in other words, the lack of space to practice the language. A range of factors contributes to poor interaction activities in English oral production, for example, communicative activities that enhance oral production, as well as, environmental, psychological, and linguistic problems. (Seraj and Hadina, 2021; Lara et al, 2022;)

The panorama presented in this work could be deepened by: first, the few interaction activities of L2 students, second, the lack of spaces where they can practice the acquired knowledge, and third, the lack of materials to support the learning process. The above, although these are not all, could be linked to low levels of oral production, resulting in deficiencies in the acquisition of this skill.

On the other hand, it has also been observed that most of the time the activities in the classroom have not been influenced by a real context which may set the students into conversations where the fluency of their speech can be inspired by such relationships in situations where the environment motivates the speaker to flow more effectively during their conversation, Limiting in turn the search and use of new vocabulary, listening, and consequently speaking. Lara et al., (2022), emphasize the role of communicative activities in providing real-life language use opportunities, while, Arfé et al., (2020), demonstrate the effectiveness of oral sentence generation training in improving writing skills, which are closely linked to oral language abilities, both studies, underscore the significance of classroom activities in promoting English oral production.

The classroom represents the nest where knowledge on any topic is usually born and grows. There it is fed and nourished, increasing the previous knowledge that the student already brings. This applies to students of the English and French Language Program (BDML E-F P). students in this program are expected to achieve a certain mastery of the language. Consequently, they are expected to have good fluency in the foreign language (L2) being studied. In other words, the student must be able to communicate with people in a linguistic, geographical, and cultural context, different from their L1 and consequently understand it. However, students seem to have difficulties when dealing with L2 speaking activities in the classroom.

In accordance with the above, Borrero-Sotelo et al., (2016) affirm that the exchange of cultural spaces helps to face real communication situations that require the use of the English language in a context full of factors different from Colombian culture, so that students acquire, practice and improve their linguistic skills in the English language.

L2 fluency involves not only grammatical knowledge but also semantics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2004). A study conducted by De Jong et al., (2013) aimed to identify which components of L2 fluency are associated with L2 linguistic knowledge and processing skills, and to what extent. The study hypothesized how differences in linguistic knowledge and processing skills relate to speaking fluency. As a result, there is a consensus on numerous fluency measures, including speech rate and a wide variety of other indicators. Therefore, to determine whether the oral proficiency interview set by Brown & Abeywickrama (2004) is the best way to evaluate and recognize the improvement of fluency in L2 English learners according to the research project that will be conducted.

In this sense, this project analyzed and determined the enhancement of their fluency through English immersion camps in the United States, where the students had to use their L2 knowledge. Taking the above into account, this project aimed to determine the influence of English immersion camps in the United States (YMCA-Unicauca Agreement) on the fluency of the attending students.

The results obtained from this research would serve as a source of motivation for students to strengthen their confidence when engaging in conversations and try this learning style to improve their skills in the L2 oral language domain. This exchange would be shown as a significant experience, from the perspective of the camp participants and other modern language

students, recognizing essential aspects in acquiring L2 proficiency being in daily contact with a native community.

Finally, this project could contribute to future studies that explore the relationship between immersion and fluency and how both benefit each other. Moreover, in terms of academics, this research is considered necessary, because it could help discover and identify if there is an advance in L2 learning from the development of fluency, as well as if it is worth being part of the immersion program and its potential/presumed beneficial experiential benefits.

Objectives

General Objective

To determine the influence of YMCA summer camps participation on the EFL fluency of the students at Universidad del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao.

Specific Objectives

- To assess the participants' oral fluency before and after participating in a YMCA summer camp in the USA with a pre- and post-interview.
- To analyze students' oral fluency level before and after participating in the YMCA summer camps in the USA through the measurement system designed.
- To compare the participant's oral fluency results before and after participating in a YMCA summer camp in the USA.

Reference Framework

Fluency is a fundamental aspect of the communicative competence of English speakers in a foreign language. Several studies have explored the relevance of immersion in English fluency. Castro, (2023), found that student's lack of exposure to language learning opportunities contributes to difficulties in English fluency. This is supported by Jones, (2018), who found that Korean students in an intensive English program preferred immersion strategies, increasing their English retention. Additionally, Eiten et al., (2019) proposed using code-switching as a tool to improve fluency in spoken English for Bangladeshi students. Additionally, Luo et al., (2022), found that blended instruction which includes elements of immersion, explicit, and implicit instruction was the most effective in improving English pronunciation among Chinese learners (Jones, 2018; Eiten et al, 2019; Luo et al, 2022; Castro, 2023). These studies collectively highlight the importance of immersion in English fluency, particularly in real-life situations and interactions with native speakers.

Regarding assessing speaking skills, Brown & Abeywickrama (2004) describe different ways to measure speaking production and give some ideas of how to create instruments through questions, images, role plays, or interviews, among others. In addition, this document shows some advice about the steps and clarifications to create the evaluative material, and the precautions at the moment of explaining what is going to be evaluated so that the participants can have a clear idea about what the researchers expect from them. This work is considered an important source of information since it clarifies the interview method as the best data collector for this research project, because it allows listening and analyzing the participant's speaking proficiency and fluency. Other researchers explain the interview's significance as a data collection instrument in various fields. Monday, (2020), mentions the power of this instrument in

eliciting narrative data and providing direct explanations for human actions, while also suggesting the use of multiple data collection methods for richer insights, while Patkin (2020), reflects on the adaptation and improvisation require to improve interviewing skills, particularly in the context of language learner experiences. Kapp, (2020), discussed the roles and limits of interview data in architecture urban design, and planning, and the various interview emphases that can be employed. Finally, Benlahcene et al, (2021), offer practical insights for notice researchers on conducting effective interviews, in the context of qualitative research. All studies mentioned above, collectively underscore the importance of interviews as a versatile and powerful tool for data collection (Monday, 2020; Patkin, 2020, Kapp, 2020 and Benlahcene et al, 2021).

Based on this topic, Brown & Abeywickrama (2004a) state that the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is an effective method to evaluate the comprehension and fluency of L2 speakers following four steps: warm-up, level check, probe, and wind down, with the objective that participants effectively demonstrate the level of L2 they have achieved at the current moment. This process is an advantage of not feeling overwhelmed or stressed, even so, the interviewer manages to acquire not only lexical and grammatical information but also semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2004).

In a study conducted by De Jong et al., (2013) the authors try to discover which components of L2 fluency are associated with L2 linguistic knowledge, and processing skills, and to what extent. Through the hypothesis about how individual differences in linguistic knowledge and processing skills are related to individual differences in speaking fluency. This has brought about consensus on numerous goal measures of fluency, for instance, speech rate, a

wide variety of silent and crammed pauses, and different hesitations such as repetitions and repair (De Jong et al, 2013).

For native speakers, disfluencies are visible as responses to problems rather than problems, because speakers can use alerts to inform their interlocutors about upcoming delays. On the other hand, Lennon cited by Steinel et al. (2011, p. 2), mention that fluency is an impression on the part of the listener that the psycholinguistic processes of speech planning and production are working easily and efficiently. It is imperative to highlight this concept within the article because it shows what aspects should be considered when evaluating the fluency of L2 speakers.

In a quantitative study by Del Pozo Beamud (2020), shows how language immersion programs can positively affect variables such as motivation, anxiety levels, and participants themselves. Nowadays, Immersion programs are used worldwide because of their positive effects, enhancing students' motivation to learn an L2 in a more natural environment rather than in academic settings. Furthermore, with this research study, it can be identified by Del Pozo Beamud (2020) and quoted that such programs should be considered for mandatory implementation in at least primary education and students should be offered not only the opportunity to participate in such programs, but also, be actively encouraged to participate in them thereby increasing their learning potential.

As can be seen in other related studies Foster, Bolibauh et al (2014) demonstrated that immersion settings enhance motivation and “the earlier, the better” as well as Grant (2018), in Macau, reported that reduced anxiety levels in university students’ participants in an immersion program. (Bolibauh et al, 2014; Grant, 2018).

Another important study made by Borrero Sotelo et al. (2016) demonstrated the influence of short summer English camp activities on a specific population of first-semester students from the University of Cauca. The authors proposed a series of sessions in which students were in a non-conventional environment (outside the classroom) developing activities that required constant English interaction, teamwork, and meaningful learning. Students of L2 who were exposed to longer periods of total immersion activities had a highly remarkable improvement in their L2 use:

“It is remarkable that the immersion sessions in a second language let the students significantly improve their lexical competence level. Given that when exposing students to contexts of permanent second language use. It seems that those total immersion experiences in neo-conventional environments helped enhance students’ lexical competence and oral production as well, progressing. Produce and receive better language input as well as get better at producing oral clauses more naturally and fluently” (Borrero Sotelo et al. 2016)

A related article on this topic by Shahini & Shahamirian (2017) defines fluency as an *effective communication aspect*. Language learning is enhanced through a second language as naturally as possible. It was based on the hypothesis of how fluency improves, considering age, level of education, and L2 approach. In this qualitative study, the participants were purposely selected based on their English proficiency, and even though they were not abroad but had successfully developed their speaking skills as EFL speakers in their own country. The writers conclude that age is a meaningful factor in achieving a high level of fluency in a second language, in addition, having or not having higher education does not affect the fluency of the speaker, however, having approaches or interaction with native speakers inside and outside a classroom did demonstrate positive results.

The previous report allows to understand the important factors that improve fluency in L2 when interacting with native speakers of the target language. It also describes an ideal method of assessing the fluency of L2, making correct use of pre- and post-tests during the interview. These interviews would help to gather data from a first meeting with the participants. Having a starting point in which the answers of the first interview will be compared and analyzed with the final oral interview output.

All the aforementioned research will help clarify the path of the research study that will be made. These previous projects are going to guide how this research study will be focused on, shedding light on the subjects that will be tested and measured. As well as the benefits found through the experience of being surrounded by native speakers of the target language. In the same way, these previous studies will lead to a better understanding of enhancing the student's fluency level. Besides, the previous information would be an important key in guiding the example of how fluency is graded, measured, and veritable. Finally, these previous studies will be a great starting point to build and develop the research study with the students of the Universidad del Cauca.

Conceptual Framework

Fluency

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) defines fluency as the ability to communicate effortlessly and effectively in a language, demonstrating a high degree of control over linguistic elements and a smooth, natural flow of expression. Fluency encompasses several key components, including lexical range, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and the ability to convey complex ideas coherently. Fluency implies a mastery of vocabulary and grammar and the capacity to adapt language use to different contexts, audiences, and purposes. (Council of Europe, 2001)

It combines various linguistic skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, in order to produce and understand language without hesitation or significant disruptions as well as "Fluency refers to the ability to speak a language with ease, speed, and accuracy, and is an essential component of communicative competence." (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 101)

Acquisition

Acquisition refers to the subconscious language learning process through meaningful exposure to and interaction with a target language. It is argued that learners acquire language by actively participating in authentic communicative activities that allow them to internalize linguistic structures and develop their language skills. It also enables learners to thoroughly understand the language and its cultural context, producing more natural and fluent language. "Speaking fluency is closely linked to language acquisition, as learners must acquire a sufficient knowledge of the language system and vocabulary to be able to produce fluent speech." (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 101).

Assessment

It refers to the systematic process of gathering information and evaluating learners' language proficiency, progress, and performance in the context of language learning. It entails various methods and tools for assessing learners' knowledge, skills, and abilities in the target language. Formative assessments provide feedback for learning, whereas assessments determine achievement or proficiency levels. According to Brown "Language assessment is an essential component of second and foreign language teaching and learning because it provides feedback on learners' progress and helps to guide instruction." (Brown, 2004, p. 1) The author supports that assessment is essential for monitoring learners' development, guiding instruction, and providing feedback.

Filler words

It is a language expression used in speech to fill pauses, give a speaker more time to think, or perform various interactive communication functions, known as fillers or discourse markers. They frequently do not have a clear meaning or directly add to the message's content, but they do help keep the conversation moving and coherent, very often, non-native speakers develop habits of using the same filler words when they need to organize their thoughts. According to Brown (2004), on page 108, "One common fluency problem is the use of filler words, such as 'um' or 'uh,' which can interrupt the flow of speech and make it difficult for listeners to follow the message. Teachers can help learners to reduce their use of fillers by raising their awareness of this issue and providing opportunities for practice." (Lund & Winke, 2008).

Mispronunciation

It is the act of deviating from the standard pronunciation of a word. It occurs when a person does not accurately produce sounds, stress patterns, intonation, or other phonetic elements. They can occur in both first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) speakers. It is a common mistake that all (L2) learners make when talking, this can happen for a great variety of reasons such as deviations from the standard pronunciation, inadequate language instruction, or differences in the native language's sound system. According to Brown (2004), on page 119, "Mispronunciation is a common problem for second language learners and can be caused by various factors, such as interference from the learner's first language or lack of exposure to the target language. Teachers can help learners to improve their pronunciation by modeling correct pronunciation, providing feedback, and creating opportunities for focused practice." (Lund & Winke, 2008)

L2 Use

Use of a second language (L2), which is a language learned or acquired after one's first language (L1), is referred to as "L2 use." It specifically refers to the active use of the L2 in various communication contexts. L2 use, which includes the practical application of language skills, cultural awareness, and the advancement of L2 proficiency, is the active use of a second language for various communicative purposes. According to Brown (2004), on page 24, "A key objective of communicative language teaching is to assess learners' use of the target language in real-world contexts. This can be accomplished through performance-based tasks that demand learners to use the language in meaningful ways." (Lund & Winke, 2008).

Immersion

A person is in the process of immersion when he becomes involved with a second language and a related environment, which applies in this research project since the participants will be in a summer camp in the United States where they must make use of their L2 and also adapt and live with a different culture. According to that, "Immersion programs provide learners with extensive exposure to the target language and culture, which can lead to rapid language acquisition and high proficiency levels. However, immersion programs can also be challenging for learners, particularly if they have limited prior knowledge of the language and culture." (Brown, 2004, p. 167)

Conciseness

Refers to the ability to create an answer or have a conversation in which the discourse of the person who produces it makes sense and his words are coherent, it can also refer to the ability to give a precise and related answer to one or several questions. This is one of the fundamental concepts because it is used for one of the measurements when applying the interviews, taking into account that, "Conciseness is an important feature of fluent speech, as it helps to maintain coherence and coherence in communication and avoid unnecessary repetition or elaboration." (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 104)

Language proficiency

Language proficiency is a complex construct encompassing a range of language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and discourse conventions. (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 101). It also represents the ability to understand, use, and communicate effectively in that language across various contexts and tasks. Proficiency in a language encompasses various key components. These include listening comprehension, which involves understanding spoken language even in diverse

accents, speech rates, and complexity levels. Speaking skills require communicating coherently, fluently, and accurately in oral communication, using appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Reading comprehension is the skill to understand written texts of varying genres, styles, and difficulty levels. It also involves the ability to extract information, infer meaning, and comprehend the text's main ideas. Lastly, writing skills refer to producing written texts with clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy, using appropriate vocabulary, organization, and structure.

Oral proficiency

Oral proficiency is a key component of overall language proficiency and is often assessed separately from other language skills, such as reading and writing. (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 101). Moreover, oral proficiency refers to an individual's ability to understand and express themselves effectively and fluently in spoken language. It specifically focuses on the communicative skills involved in verbal interactions and conversations. Oral proficiency encompasses various aspects, including listening comprehension and speaking skills.

Oral proficiency is often assessed based on the individual's ability to comprehend spoken language, engage in meaningful conversations, convey ideas and information, and respond appropriately in different social, professional, or academic contexts.

Fluency Improvement

It is a gradual and ongoing process. With consistent effort and practice, individuals can make significant strides in speaking a language more smoothly, confidently, and fluently. "Fluency can be improved through a range of strategies, including extensive listening and speaking practice, feedback on performance, and attention to the features of fluent speech, such

as pacing, pausing, and intonation." (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017, p. 102), showing that Fluency improvement is often achieved through various methods, such as regular practice, engaging in conversations with native or proficient speakers, participating in language exchange programs that in this case is going to be summer camps in the USA, using language learning apps or resources, and receiving feedback from teachers or language partners.

Methodology

General Aspects

The main goal of this research project was to determine the influence of the participation in YMCA summer camps 2023 on the EFL fluency of students of the modern languages program at the Universidad Del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao. The research was based on a mixed method approach, in which data was collected through oral performance interviews and scored on a scale of one to five based on design parameters and rubric selected for each session. Data was based on the level of development of the participants' more fluid oral production. Aspects such as Fluency were measured quantitatively, considering the quality of speech based on conciseness, language repair, use of fillers when talking, and quantity of mispronounced words used in a complete answer, which were also analyzed qualitatively.

This research was developed in four stages. The first stage in addressing this inquiry was to explain in detail to the participants what the researchers expect of them, the research project's purpose, the expected results, and other external factors that may affect the participant's L2 interaction. In this meeting, participants were also asked how they feel about their current level of English. This response represented the first approach for researchers to test what the best method is to identify or verify the performance in terms of L2 oral production of the participants of this project.

In the second stage (first interview), an interview was carried out to establish the relationship between their command of oral language and their previous knowledge, as well as, to collect initial data to show a starting point to the researchers who proposed this project.

Two separate interviews were conducted in which the participants were evaluated. The first was developed before their trip to the language immersion program in the USA and the last

was once they completed their immersion program and they returned from the experience to their original country (Colombia). Then, the results obtained in both phases were recorded and saved, to be assessed, analyzed, and compared according to the measurement criteria. The interviews were saved to compare and qualify them according to table 6. The interview consisted of 4 stages where they had a certain time to respond.

Once the participants were in the third stage, when they were in the summer camp, a meeting was scheduled between the researchers and the participants through digital platforms such as Skype, Zoom, etc. This allowed the researchers to verify whether all participants had successful L2 interactions or, if they do not have consistent use of L2 due to external factors, such as, poor ability to relate appropriately, poor L2 daily use, etc.

This intermediate interview was developed to identify if the students were in an optimal environment for using L2 and if there was progress on the part of the participants during the time they were immersed. This part was not scored but served as a record of the specific perspective(s) about being abroad in these types of immersion program. As part of this stage, a checklist applied to collect this data while they were part of a YMCA camp.

Finally, the last and fourth stage was to establish a final oral performance interview to identify what was the level of acquisition obtained in terms of fluency and development of oral competence during immersion throughout the summer camp, this final interaction was quite different from the previous, that is, the interview carried out in the first stage. According to the questions, this second oral production activity was related to what happened in the camp to familiarize them with previous events that occurred during their stay in the camp, in addition to identifying if this process allowed them to improve their oral responses in terms of oral production, fluency, increased vocabulary and in general terms language proficiency.

All data was collected through recordings. The answers provided were processed based on a design measurement system scale and the students were graded according to their performance in both the first and second (final) interviews. In other words, the results obtained in both phases were compared.

The main characteristics evaluated focused on: quality of speech, conciseness when answering questions, repair of language, use of fillers when speaking and the number of mispronounced words used in a complete response.

Participants and context

For this study, 15 participants who are part of the YMCA-Unicauca agreement were selected. Participants were in summer camps in the International Camp Counselor and Summer, Work and Travel Program (ICCP-SW&T) during the year 2023. This program consists of working at a summer camp for 9 to 14 weeks in different states of the USA, so the students were immersed for approximately 2 to 3 months. During this time, the participants had to use their L2 knowledge all the time, considering that because they were abroad, interaction with people of different cultures and nationalities was a fact.

The students who participated belong to the University of Cauca in Santander de Quilichao and their ages range between 19 and 26 years. Additionally, these participants come from different locations in the Cauca department and Valle del Cauca, Colombia.

In order to collect data for this research project, the selected participants who were enrolled in the English and French Modern Languages program and were taking English as a university subject for about 6 to 8 hours per week. Additionally, they were in their 4th, 5th, 9th, or 10th semesters and attend a summer camp in the United States for the first time.

Something important about this study, and which will possibly become its best emblem, is that based on these results, a basis will also be established to identify the level of fluency acquisition in people of different origins.

Students of Modern Languages English and French Program, are the core of the project, but it also aims to show the phenomenon that occurs when people with or without high oral skills in an L2 face an immersion experience.

Instruments

Considering the mixed method chosen for this research project, two instruments were used for data collection: the oral performance interview and the checklist with yes or no questions. Regarding the interview part, two separate interviews were conducted, with the same format but different questions. The initial interview helped establish the participants' prior knowledge and fluency and served as a starting point for comparison with the final interview, conducted at the end of the immersion program. The results were subsequently analyzed and compared to discover whether there was improvement in the target elements: speech quality based on conciseness when answering questions, language repair, use of fillers when speaking, and number of mispronounced words used in a complete answer.

These interviews were developed by the researchers with the participants. They were carried out keeping in mind the general format of all interviews, that is, both parties sat down in a face-to-face exchange to proceed and collect the desired data. These interviews were recorded to be listened later on, analyzed and scored under the parameters mentioned above. The interview will last approximately 10 to 15 minutes and will have 4 stages. In fundamental work related to communicative competence, Canale (1984) proposed a series of parameters that researchers adapted and used to carry out both interviews:

Stages

1. Warm-up: small talk to reduce the anxiety levels of the test-taker, where the test administrators and test-taker have a preliminary introduction, also helping the test-taker become comfortable with the situation.
2. Level check: Through a series of planned questions, the interviewer prompts the candidate to respond using the expected or planned forms and functions. Responses can be straightforward or complex, depending on the learner's entry level. Questions are usually intended to obtain grammatical categories (like the past or the subject-verb agreement). This stage could also give the interviewer a picture of the test taker's motivation, willingness to speak, and confidence, all of which can significantly impact the interview results. These are some of the examples of the questions.
 - First you have 2 minutes to talk about yourself, your personality, etc.
 - If you could change one thing about your personality, what would it be?
 - What hobbies or sports are you involved with? How often do you practice them? And why do you enjoy them?
 - What drives you in your life? For example, what motivates you? What makes you love coming to work/college?
 - Tell us about a stressful scenario that you lived in the past and how you handled it.
3. Probe: Probe questions challenge test-takers to go to the limits of their ability, to extend beyond the limits of the interviewer's expectation, through

increasingly difficult questions. Probe questions may be complex in their framing and/or cognitive and linguistic demands. Here are some examples of difficult questions.

- What career advice would you give to your younger friends?
 - What do you think would be the hardest part of being abroad for you?
 - If you could redo your education all over again, what (career, degree) would you pick instead and why?
4. Wind down: This final stage is simply a short period when the test-taker is asked easy questions to encourage him/her to relax, sets the test-takers to mind at ease, and provides information about when and where to obtain the results of the interview. Here are some examples of the questions.
- What is your favorite food?
 - Where would you like to travel in the future?
 - Is there any food you would like to try out?
 - Would you like to go skydiving?

Results

Descriptive data analysis.

To obtain the data of this pre-test, the interview was implemented as a tool to collect it. The interview was structured to grade the participant's fluency skills and assess them with the measurement system created on a scale from 1 to 5 (See Table No. 6) different parameters: Language Repair, mispronounced words, use of fillers, and finally pauses when answering to measure and compare the results between their previous oral proficiency and the fluency acquired after their experience in the YMCA summer camps. This helped set the bar on each participant's level to observe their fluency level before immersing themselves in an English summer camp environment for a short time (3 months for most of the participants).

This research project was originally intended to have an average of 15 participants from the different careers offered by the Universidad Del Cauca Sede Norte (2023) but because of external factors and other participant's motivations, the experimental group ended up with just 10 participants, who were only from the English and French Modern Languages Program. As mentioned before, it was necessary to record participants' interviews to be assessed and compared later on to quantify the answers they gave using the measurement system created.

Pre-Test data results

Table 1. Pre-test Data results

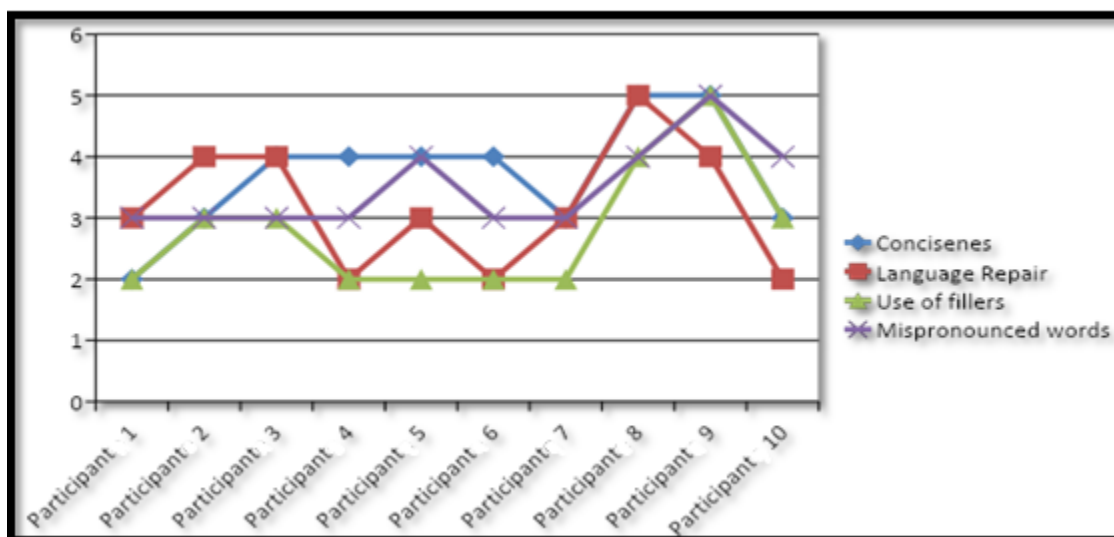
Participants	PRE-TEST				Mean	SD
	Conciseness	Language repair	Use of fillers	Mispronounced words		
Participant 1	2	3	2	3	2,5	0,6
Participant 2	3	4	3	3	3,3	0,5
Participant 3	4	4	3	3	3,5	0,6
Participant 4	4	2	2	3	2,8	1,0
Participant 5	4	3	2	4	3,3	1,0
Participant 6	4	2	2	3	2,8	1,0
Participant 7	3	3	2	3	2,8	0,5
Participant 8	5	5	4	4	4,5	0,6
Participant 9	5	4	5	5	4,8	0,5
Participant 10	3	2	4	4	3,0	0,8
Average of each item	3,7	3,2	2,8	3,5	3,3	0,4

It can be seen that each participant was rated under 4 different fluency parameters to determine their fluency level before being immersed in a summer camp environment for a short time. Each participant had a different level of English depending on their previous approach to the L2 (English); all of the participants were EFL students in different semesters; Thus, some of them already had a good level of English, which was observed due to the high scores they obtained during the pre-test interview, that is, they had very low or almost no use of language

repair, minimal use of fillers or pauses when taking the test, and had almost none or imperceptible mispronounced words. Conversely, participants in earlier semesters had limited exposure to English, primarily restricted to what they had learned in previous classes or had just begun to study. These participants scored lower than those who had been studying English for a longer period. The results were as expected; increased exposure to the language correlates with higher fluency and overall proficiency in English.

Figure No. 1 shows the 10 participants' scores during the first interview and how they were graded under the 4 fluency parameters intended to be measured in this research project.

Figure 1. Pre-test graphic.



Note: This figure shows the results obtained by the participants and their scores in the variables Conciseness, Language repair, Use of fillers and Mispronounced words.

Participants with greater experience in English as a foreign language (EFL) exhibit comparatively higher levels of conciseness due to continuous exposure to English language learning, this result is explained on the basis of greater exposure to the language, and

consequently, greater ability to resolve the questions in the interview with better performance in the expression of ideas, and/or with more concise and precise answers.

On the other hand, participants with less L2 exposure faced challenges with conciseness due to their restricted understanding of English structure. Their responses tended to be either overly detailed or less structured, often straying off topic or falling short when answering questions.

This result can also be analyzed when evaluating students from different semesters, for reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph, the more time a student or ordinary person has linked to learning processes in any topic, the better the results obtained as a result of practice made of it. In this sense, students from different semesters should show different results that depend on their level. In this first phase, it was observed that students in higher semesters showed greater conciseness due to advanced language skills acquired over time.

Ultimately, using an L2 would be challenging for someone who does not know the words to express their opinion or simply answer a basic question if they are unaware of the vocabulary used, and could therefore result in their use of the language be less concise and limited practice and exposure.

Another variable that reinforces what was mentioned above was language repair, the students of the Modern Languages program from higher semesters showed better strategies to correct errors efficiently because they are constantly exposed to the language, while those students who were from lower semesters had difficulty correcting their linguistic errors, for the same reason, lack of knowledge and practice.

Analysis of Use of fillers in Pre-Test Results:

The use of fillers can vary significantly; the use of fillers was the most significant item in the pre-test interview because of the surprise of participants sharing the same score despite being in different semesters. The grades acquired in the first interview were markedly different from the other items. Five out of ten participants scored between 3 and 5 because they relied heavily on fillers and used long pauses when answering questions. The other five participants, EFL students from intermediate to advanced semesters, had acquired better confidence and fluency skills and were likely to use fillers less often. These participants shared the same score of 2 according to the measurement system created. Conversely, individuals with limited exposure to English tended to rely on fillers or pauses as linguistic support, showing a higher use of fillers to bridge gaps when answering questions. This is often used as a linguistic tool to pause momentarily, allowing the brain to search for the specific word or group of words needed to complete an idea and finish the sentence.

However, the difficulty faced by participants in lower semesters might be the primary reason for their frequent use of fillers. These students often struggled with forming complete and coherent sentences due to their limited exposure to and practice with the English language. As a result, they relied on fillers to bridge the gaps between their thoughts and words. This frequent use of fillers helped them buy time to think and search for the appropriate vocabulary, ultimately allowing them to piece together their responses, even if less fluently or confidently compared to their more advanced peers, in which case would be expected that they had a higher score on use of fillers due to the lack of vocabulary. It is hard for them to know how to say a word when they have never used it or learned it before. Individual differences among EFL students further enrich this scenario; In the other items assess some of them showed advanced language repair

techniques, while others still cope with basic linguistic challenges. Understanding these nuances is crucial; it not only sheds light on the participants' initial language proficiency but also helps to set the bar to compare the data collected in the post-summer camp phase, meaning the final interview, ensuring a more targeted and effective critical experiential analysis for each participant.

Checklist while being abroad analysis.

Throughout the third stage of our research program, it faced significant challenges when implementing the checklist while abroad. External factors created obstacles that hindered the ability to execute the checklist successfully. One major issue was the limited availability of participant spaces, which made it difficult to gather comprehensive data. In addition, the fluctuating nature of internet connections at each participant's summer camp complicated the process. The lack of enthusiasm among participants and their limited interest in completing the checklist also played a role in the less-than-ideal implementation, with just 3 out of 10 participants completing the checklist. Moreover, the demanding nature of a summer camp environment, characterized by a multitude of diverse activities and tasks each day, affected the participants' commitment to the checklist.

Despite the efforts, these external factors collectively contributed to the challenges encountered during the third stage of this research. Consequently, analysis of a particular aspect of the research project was excluded. Unfortunately, sufficient data could not be obtained to facilitate a comprehensive examination of this study segment. As a result, a complete analysis of this aspect cannot be provided. The results are resumed in this table.

Table 2. Results obtained from the 3rd stage form

Part. 3	Part. 9	Part. 10	Part. 1	Part. 2	Part. 4	Part. 5	Part. 6	Part. 7	Part. 8
<i>1. Are you consistently using English as your primary language during your day-to-day interactions?</i>									
yes	yes	Sometimes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>2. Do you actively seek out opportunities to engage in conversations with native English speakers?</i>									
Yes	Sometimes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>3. Are you regularly immersing yourself in English-language media while being at camp (e.g. Tv shows, movies, news articles, etc.)?</i>									
Sometimes	Sometimes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>4. Do you make a conscious effort to think in English rather than translating from your native language while speaking or writing?</i>									
Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>5. Are you engaging in informal, everyday conversations with your fellow campers and camp staff in English, and seeking out opportunities to use the language naturally and authentically?</i>									
Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>6. Do you prioritize speaking English over your mother tongue during meals, leisure time, and other social events with campers and camp staff?</i>									
Yes	Sometimes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>7. Are you intentionally avoiding speaking your mother tongue with campers and camp staff, to practice and improve?</i>									
Yes	Yes	Sometimes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: This table brings together the data obtained in the 3rd stage of the study.

Post-test Data results

After completing the post-camp phase (traveling to the United States and being immersed for a short period: 3 months almost all of them), the second interview was conducted, employing the same tool to collect the data. This interview was camp-related to give the

participants a better background to answer the questions, allowing them to use all the new vocabulary and share experiential gains they acquired over the YMCA CAMP program. The data collected showed a great quantitative difference between the first and second interview results.

Table 3. Post-test data results.

Participants	POST-TEST				Mean	SD
	Conciseness	Language repair	Use of fillers	Mispronounced words		
Participant 1	4	4	4	5	4,3	0,5
Participant 2	5	4	4	4	4,3	0,5
Participant 3	5	4	4	5	4,5	0,6
Participant 4	5	4	4	5	4,5	0,6
Participant 5	5	5	5	5	5,0	0,0
Participant 6	4	4	4	4	4,0	0,0
Participant 7	4	4	3	3	3,5	0,6
Participant 8	5	5	5	5	5,0	0,0
Participant 9	5	5	5	5	5,0	0,0
Participant 10	4	3	4	4	3,8	0,5
<i>Average of each item</i>	<u>4,6</u>	<u>4,2</u>	<u>4,2</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>4,0</u>	<u>0,8</u>

Note: This table shows the results obtained by the student's participants after the immersion

Post-interview results revealed that every student who participated in the YMCA summer camps in a second language, with English being the specific language of focus, experienced a

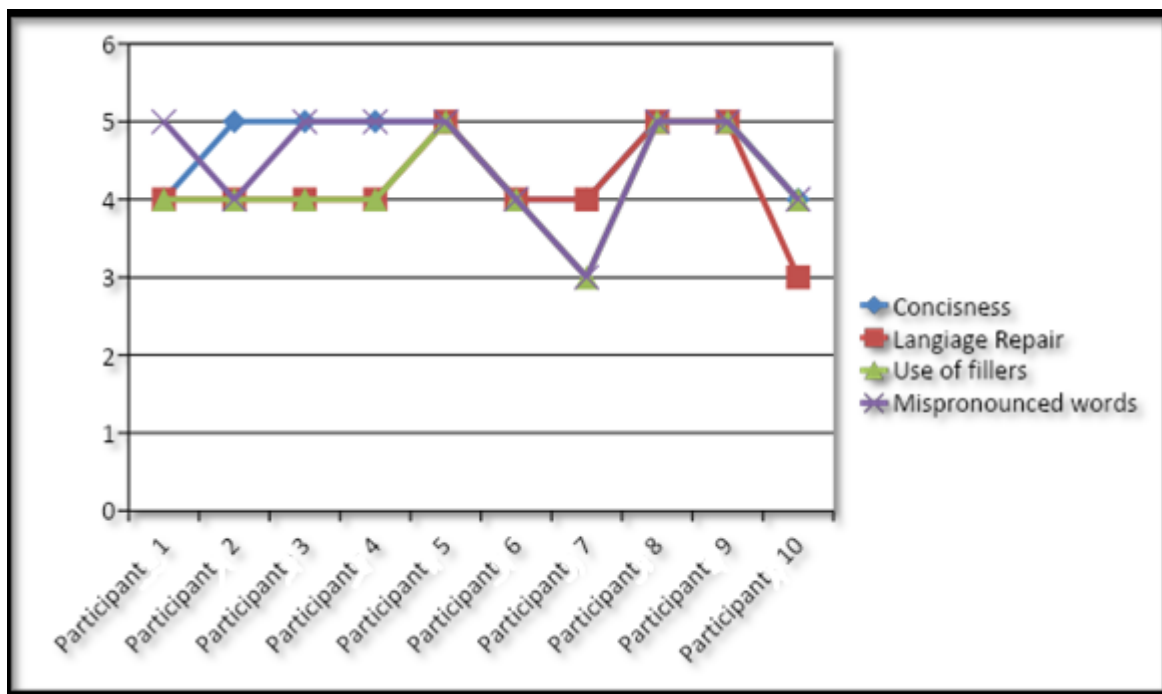
significant increase in their fluency levels in all the elements described in the rubric. Data analysis indicates that these camps had a significantly positive effect on improving fluency skills for the same students who obtained lower scores in the first interview, as well as for participants who already had a good level of fluency, some of the items remained the same, but they improved in other areas outside the rubric.

If, for example, Table No. 1, which contains the results of the pre-immersion test, is compared with the results of Table No. 3, an increase can be seen between each of the participants in the measured variables. The use of fillers, for example, which in the first table average was below 3.0, in the second interview they obtained almost two points above the previous value (See figure No. 4). This variable draws attention, because as already mentioned before, the use of fillers denotes little flexibility of the language and, consequently, its fluency.

It is pleasantly surprising, how with only three months of immersion, such favorable changes can be observed for the study itself, but beyond this, the real gain is obtained by the participants.

To provide a more complete understanding of the results, a series of graphs have been included to illustrate the progress made by each participant in each skill area.

Figure 2. Post-test graphic.



Note: This table shows the scores after the participants return to Colombia.

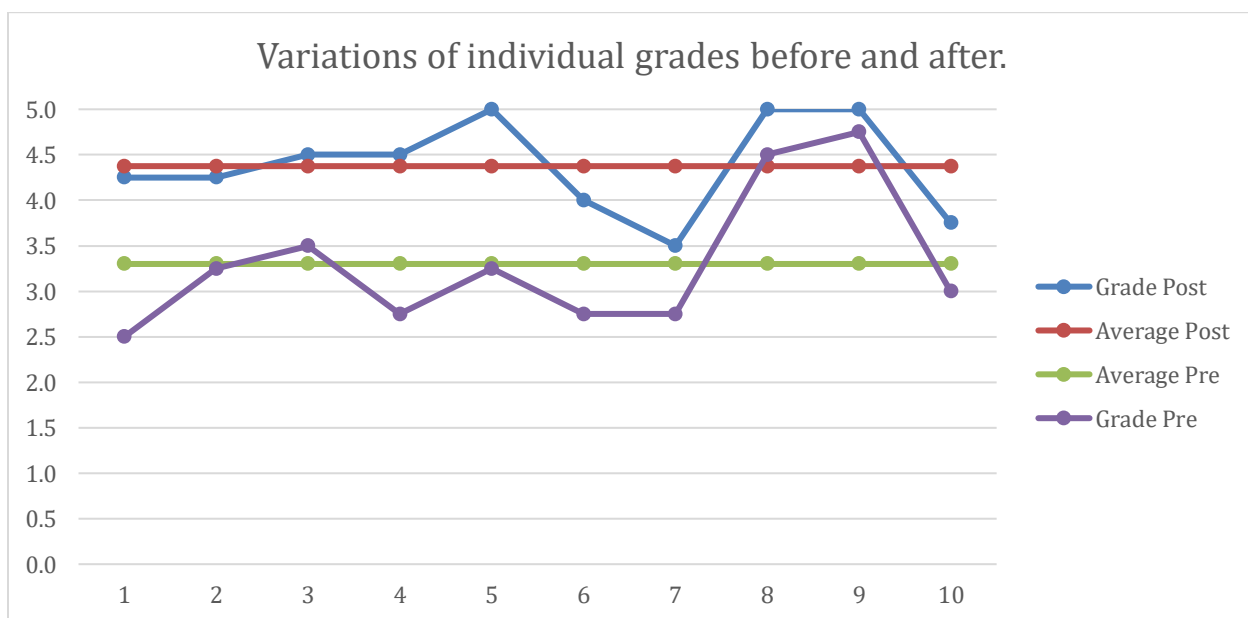
The post-interview took place after the participants completed the program and returned to Colombia. It was observed that with the data collected, the grades and scores were higher, indicating an improvement in all items of the previously created measurement system. The range of scores after participating in the YMCA summer camps increased considerably compared to the first interview; most participants noted an increase of 1 or 2 points above their previously obtained scores.

The chart illustrates the performance of each participant across four key areas: conciseness, language repair, use of fillers, and mispronounced words. For instance, participants generally showed significant improvements in conciseness, as evidenced by higher scores post-program. Participants 1, 5, and 7 particularly excelled, achieving top scores in this category.

Language repair also saw noticeable enhancements. Participants 2 and 9 demonstrated substantial progress, reducing their reliance on corrective measures during speech. Similarly, the use of fillers decreased for most participants, with participants 4 and 8 showing marked improvement by limiting unnecessary pauses and filler words. Furthermore, the issue of mispronounced words was addressed effectively through the program. Participants 3, 6, and 10 showed considerable reduction in pronunciation errors, as reflected in their higher scores.

Overall, the post-interview data underscores the positive impact of the YMCA summer camps on the participants' English proficiency. The consistent improvement across all measured areas indicates that increased exposure and structured learning environments significantly enhance language skills.

Figure 3. Individual grade variations before and after the camp immersion



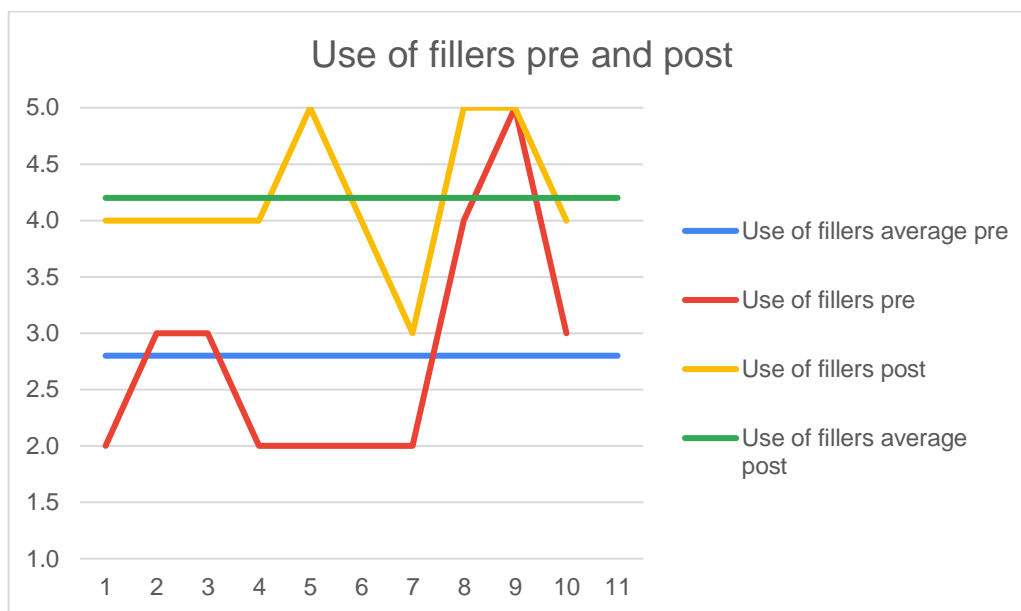
Note: This figure shows the changes evident in the pre- and post-immersion interviews carried out with the students participating in the camp

There was a noticeable improvement in all the participants' grades. The assessment displayed marked progress across all items. All participants performed better in the second interview after participating in the program, due to the immersion time in the camp. In every role they were assigned during the YMCA summer camp program, every challenge faced, and the experiences gained, the interaction became routine, reflected in the post-immersion interview.

The chart on variations of individual grades before and after the program provides a clear illustration of this improvement. The post-immersion grades (Grade Post) for all participants showed a significant increase compared to their pre-immersion grades (Grade Pre). For instance, Participant 5 and Participant 9 showed the most considerable improvement, rising from pre-immersion scores around 3.0 to post-immersion scores nearing 5.0. The average post-immersion grade was consistently higher than the average pre-immersion grade, highlighting the overall enhancement in performance.

The interaction and practice they received during the camp, coupled with the immersive environment, played a crucial role in this development. The continuous use of English in diverse contexts allowed participants to internalize language structures and vocabulary, leading to better performance in the post-interview assessments. This comprehensive approach, which involved both formal and informal language use, contributed to their improved grades and overall language proficiency.

Figure 4. Use of fillers pre and post-test results.



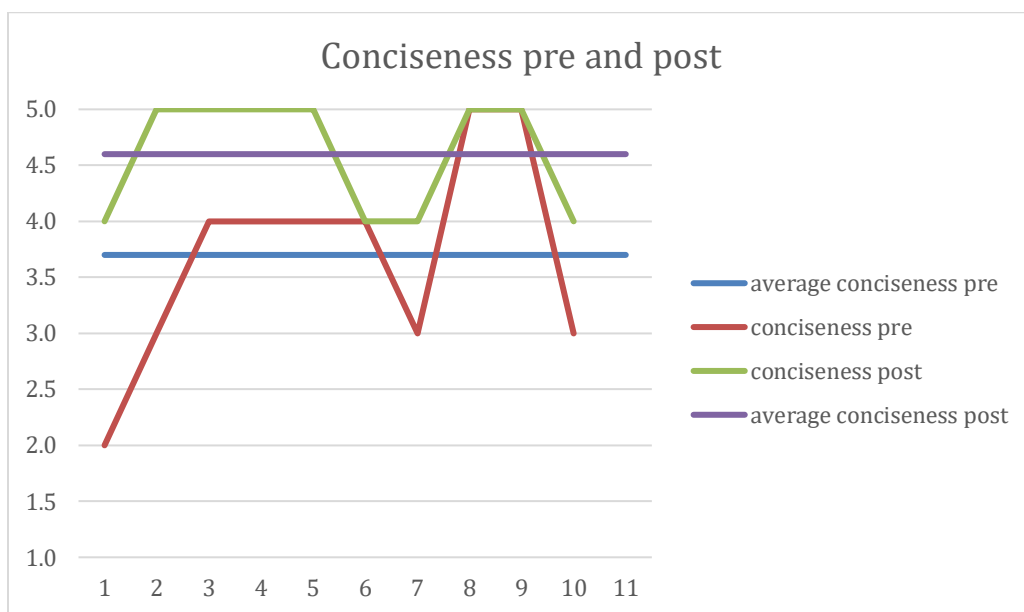
Note: In this figure, the variable use of fillers was evaluated between the participants of the camps.

Native English speakers constantly use fillers in their speech, but they still have a fluent conversation, which is natural in their mother tongue as in Spanish. What these results show from each participant is that they obtained a different range of grades compared with the other aspects evaluated in this research, that is to say, in this case, the grades between each participant had a notable difference. Because the pauses in each speech were also counted as fillers in the participants' answers, pauses are one fact that limits the participants' fluency and the reason why the pre-test had a generally low score compared with the post-test results. To put it in perspective, it can be observed that participants did better in the post-test because they reduced the use of pauses without letting aside the use of regular fillers.

Additionally, the participants' way of answering changed. Their use of pauses was minimal, down to almost non-perceptible levels, and changed to a different pace when talking. It

seems they have picked up the pace of their L2 environment, in this particular case, every English environment in which each participant was immersed. This allows them to sound more confident and fluent as well.

Figure 5. Conciseness, pre- and post-test results.



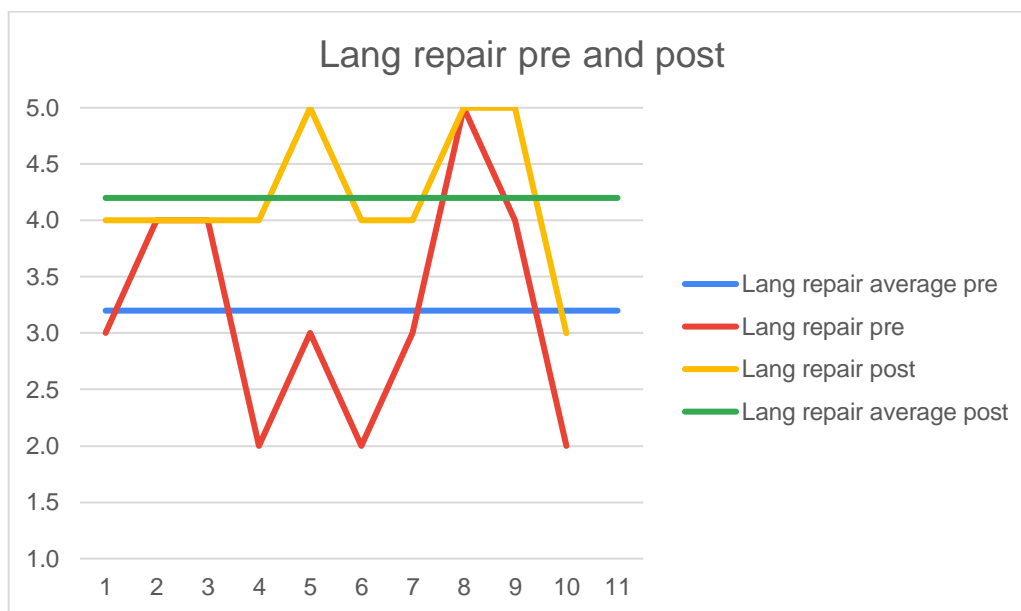
After the analysis, participants showed positive results on their post-test answers due to the conciseness of the speech. The difference between the pre-and post-tests allows to give importance to immersion, the experience gained, and, consequently, the improvement in the fluency skills of the participants.

One of the main reasons for improving these skills is because they made an effort not just to think but to speak constantly in the second language instead of translating literally to Spanish, so they gave concise and more precise answers.

In this graph, it can be seen that participants number 1, 2, 7, and 10, who obtained the lowest results in their pre-test results, improved their conciseness with a range of more than 1.5 grades of difference. In contrast, the rest of the participants who scored better in their pre-test

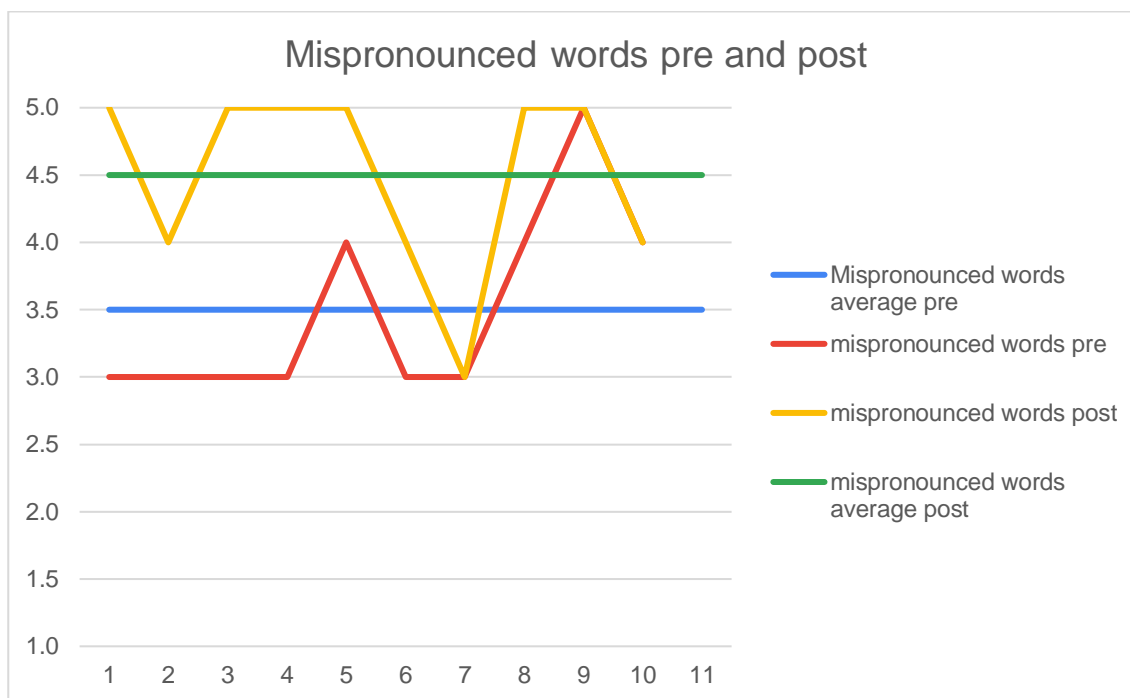
improved by a range of 1 point of difference as shown with participants 3, 4, and 5. Participants 6, 8, and 9, kept the same results in this item, giving positive answers for the researchers and showing that, the improvement in each skill that they were tested at, varied between each camp and others, giving the participants more or fewer opportunities of interaction with the L2.

Figure 6. Language repair pre and post-test.



Notably, language repair stood out with greater improvement than the other items, as evidenced by an average difference of over 1.0 points between the pre- and post-interview scores. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the participants' overall average grades were noticeably higher in the second interview than in the first. These findings demonstrate a clear and quantifiable enhancement in the participants' abilities as fluency.

Figure 7. Mispronounced words pre and post-test.

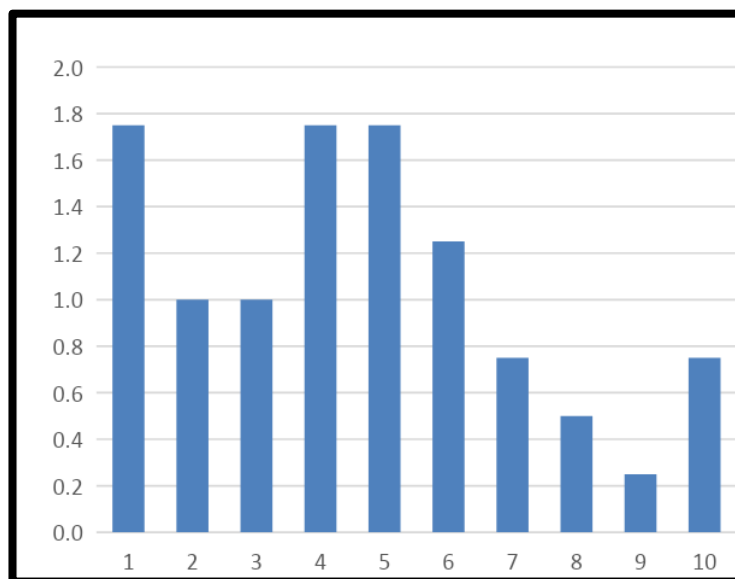


Note: In his graph, the mispronounced words pre-immersion and post-immersion are compared.

This graphic shows that most of the participants who had difficulties performing the pre-test obtained better grades in the post-test, which shows the researchers another positive aspect gained by the participants. It could be stated that these participants had a good performance on the post-test because being involved in a total English environment helped them improve their listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, when humans find themselves in a non-familiar space, the need to adapt to new events, which is related to what happened in this case with the participants' immersion. Once native English speakers surrounded them, they needed to be understood, so they adapted their hearing to new accents and started repeating the words with better pronunciation to express themselves clearly and efficiently.

As seen in Figure No. 7, substantial changes are observed between the same variable but at different time points.

Figure 8. Individual grade increase.



Note: This graphic shows an increase in the difference between the grades of each participant

The individual grade increases vary significantly, with some participants demonstrating more substantial improvements than others. For instance, Participants 1, 4, and 5 showed the highest increases, with scores rising by nearly 1.8 points, while Participants 8 and 9 exhibited the smallest increases, around 0.2 and 0.4 points respectively. A possible explanation for this could be the difference between participants from different countries, as this was an international camp. The variation in grade increases might be influenced by the linguistic environment at each camp location. Some camps may have had a higher concentration of Spanish speakers, providing more opportunities for native Spanish-speaking participants to engage and practice English in a

supportive setting. This could have facilitated more significant improvements for some individuals.

Additionally, the students' intention or vocation to learn played a crucial role. Those who actively sought to immerse themselves in the English-speaking environment and took advantage of every opportunity to practice likely saw greater improvements. Conversely, participants who opted to stay within their comfort zones and primarily interacted with linguistic peers may have experienced less dramatic progress. This suggests that the willingness to adapt to new linguistic contexts and engage with speakers of different L2 backgrounds can significantly impact the extent of language development.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of immersion and active participation in diverse linguistic environments for achieving substantial improvements in language proficiency. The varying degrees of grade increases underscore the role of individual motivation and the linguistic composition of the camp in influencing language learning outcomes.

Discussion

In general terms, Fluency in L2, is a complex construct influenced by various factors. Tong et al, (2022), highlights the significant role or productive vocabulary depth in L2, speaking proficiency, with overall lexical knowledge explaining a substantial portion of the variance. Shiba et al, (2019), provide insights into the structural and interactional aspects of L2 fluency, and weak interactions offering potential analogies for understanding the dynamics of L2 fluency.

On the basis of this work, it is appropriate to mention that learning English in a real environment has numerous advantages, with exposure to authentic English language use being one of the most significant. By immersing oneself in an English-speaking environment, learners can experience the language in its natural context, gaining exposure to native speakers and their various language uses. This exposure can help learners to detect and understand the nuances of the language, including idioms, slang, and cultural references, that may not be apparent in a classroom setting. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the language and improved language skills.

Another advantage of practicing English in a real environment is the opportunities it provides for the practical application of language skills. In an immersive environment, learners can use the language in real-life situations, such as ordering food at a restaurant, asking for directions, or engaging in social interactions with native speakers. This practical application of language skills can help learners to develop their fluency, accuracy, and confidence in using the language, as they receive immediate feedback on their language use.

Nevertheless, some aspects reinforce the impact of these in the improvement of the fluency in the YMCA camp participants.

External factors that affect the influence on participants within the program.

Navigating the diverse little “universes” that each camp is, the external factors that influence the program's overarching goals (enhancing English oral proficiency through constant interaction) become apparent. While these camps often share commonalities in activities and rules, the nuances in their universes create distinct challenges.

The varied roles undertaken by participants serve as pivotal factors, as not every role guarantees sufficient exposure to L2 interactions. Factors such as one's assigned role, crew dynamics, or the presence of non-English-speaking co-workers can create environments where the opportunities for L2 engagement are limited; this happens where there is a big group of Spanish-speaking people working together; thus, the use of L2 would be avoided because they can communicate with each other in their mother tongue. This scenario could significantly impact the objective of the YMCA summer camp program because the participant would not be able to speak in English and would not get any better at it.

In this sense, the literature has shown that the presence of non-English speaking co-workers can create challenges in work groups, potentially undermining the participant's abilities to learn and contribute meaningfully (Leki, 2001; Knoxville, 2016). However, these challenges can be mitigated by providing opportunities for L2 engagement, such as through contact assignments or volunteer work (Springer et al, 2008). Furthermore, the nature of interaction in these contexts can significantly impact L2 learning opportunities (Cheng, 2018). Therefore, camps need to consider these dynamics and create environments that facilitate meaningful L2 engagement.

This limitation extends to the composition of camp staff, where proficiency in English can vary. Positions with lower language requirements, like certain roles in camp staff such as kitchen staff and maintenance staff, among other positions, may inadvertently limit participant's English-speaking interactions.

Additionally, the potential apprehension of participants to step out of their comfort zones can impede L2 engagement by being afraid to actively seek out opportunities to improve their English language level, counteracting the program's intended purpose. The complex interplay of these external elements underscores the need for a nuanced approach to ensure a comprehensive and effective language-learning experience within the diverse scenarios of each summer camp environment. This fear can manifest as reticence and anxiety, particularly in oral communication spaces. However, better L2 immersion spaces, could help overcome this inhibition and improve proficiency (Bueno, 2006; Liu and Jackson, 2011; Savasci, 2014; Linck, 2009).

Therefore, creating a supportive, encouraging, and more organized environment is crucial for learners to seek out opportunities to improve their language actively, but they do not have enough courage or confidence to start a conversation in L2 or just follow it.

On the other hand, the influence of Hispanic co-workers in an immersion process has been reported. This issue is a complex topic. Factors such as language dominance, and age of acquisition can significantly impact phonemic fluency performance in bilingual Hispanics (Bennett and Verney, 2019). The sociocultural dimensions of language learning and use, including the influence of prosodic elements and overall fluency, also play a role (Spezzini, 2004). However, the diversity among students in terms of their Spanish proficiency, can pose challenges in form-focused instruction (Tedick and Young, 2018). Despite these challenge, two-

way immersion programs have been shown to promote bilingual development and positive cross-cultural attitudes (Potowsky, 2005).

Roles of the YMCA summer camp programs have to offer.

The YMCA summer camp programs significantly promote psychological need satisfaction and immersion, which can lead to the expansion of the self (Elis et al, 2020). These programs also have the potential to influence positive health behaviors and the home food environment (Mabary-Olsen et al, 2015), as well as academic and workplace readiness (Wilson, 2018). Furthermore, they can serve as a secondary prevention measure for at risk youth, leading to improved academic performance and reduced behavioral issues (Hanes et al, 2005).

In order to clarify the relevance of the position in the camp, it is important to explain the following topic: there are 2 different positions available when participating in the YMCA summer camp programs. These positions are either being a summer camp counselor or the support staff team to keep the summer camp working and running smoothly throughout the summer.

This support staff position embarked different roles such as housekeeping personnel, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, janitorial staff or any other different positions related to maintaining the good functioning of all the summer camp activities, this role is more of a back-stage role where people are frequently working on different projects.

In the YMCA summer camp programs, participants are presented with dynamic roles, each offering a unique avenue for growth, contribution, and learning. The two primary positions available are a summer camp counselor and a member of the support staff team, both integral in ensuring the seamless operation of the summer camp.

The role of a summer camp counselor is a leadership and mentorship position. These individuals play an important role in guiding and enriching the experiences of fellow participants. Engaged in hands-on interactions with campers, counselors are immersed in an environment that demands higher English proficiency. The responsibilities extend beyond mere language use; they encompass effective communication, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to clearly articulate instructions. It's a front-stage role where individuals actively shape the camp experience for both themselves and their peers.

This position demands an unwavering commitment to the English language as counselors engage in continuous activities, interactions, and discussions throughout the day. The counselor's responsibilities are mostly conducted in English, from communicating with supervisors to collaborating with fellow camp counselors. The counselors are expected to use the language constantly. This is a 24/7 role where they have to lead several activities during the day and live with a group of campers and co-workers for at least 1 or 2 weeks, several times during the summer. This means that the counselor will need to use English almost all the time, from the moment they wake up until they go to sleep.

The role of a camp counselor involves extensive exposure to the English language. Not only are most of the duties performed in English, but the responsibility of being with a group of children means creating an environment where language learning is facilitated through total immersion. Due to the constant interaction, this allows participants to be fully engaged with the target language at all times and creates a fertile ground for learning. Because of this, the position of a camp counselor allows the participant to use the L2 practically at all times of the day, having the possibility to improve, using, and putting into practice their second language.

The practical application of language skills in various real-world scenarios enhances the counselor's ability to speak, practice, and acquire new vocabulary. The overarching goal is not just linguistic but better fluency development, influenced by the pace, expressions, and communication nuances of native speakers. Through this role, participants lead activities and actively participate in a linguistic adventure, gaining fluency through constant engagement and exposure to the rich summer camp environment.

Contrastingly, the support staff team embodies the backstage essence of the camp, diligently working to ensure the smooth functioning of all summer camp activities. This multifaceted role encompasses various positions, including housekeeping personnel, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, janitorial staff, and others essential for the camp's infrastructure. The support staff operates behind the scenes, orchestrating the logistics that enable the camp atmosphere. In comparison, the nature of the work may not demand extensive use of English.

Adding to this fact, numerous people want to participate in the YMCA summer camp but do not have or think they do not have a high English level. In this case, they take this secondary role to avoid being pressured to talk in terms of L2. In this position, they tend to perform different activities that do not require a high English level, because of this one of the program's objectives could backfire if the L2 constant interaction they are supposed to have is not maintained. Of course, this does not mean that they are never going to use their L2, but the environment would be different due to the following reasons:

Because this is an international program, people from different parts of the world can apply to go to this kind of camps, normally the majority of people who choose the support staff role are people from Spanish-speaking countries, and they decide to work in the support staff

role. These participants have a low, or they think they have a low English language proficiency and rather being out of the spotlight that is being a counselor because everything that position embodies and all the talking it requires. Thus, they preferred being in this kind of environment, where there is less oral interaction. What would happen if a large group of people who believe they do not have the appropriate English level applied to the same summer camp or were assigned to it? Their interaction could be different, and this could affect their L2 proficiency. They may not be able to advance or improve their L2 proficiency because they would share the same grammatical base, which is a product of their native language.

That particular scenario could affect one of the main objectives of this program, which is English interaction due to being with people from different countries that share the same mother language. It was analyzed the influence in terms of fluency enhancement of the 10 participants that went to the YMCA summer camp considering what were the results the participants obtained during the program and taking into account the different roles they performed.

To better understand the differences between these two roles implicated (camp counselors and support staff), the table below was created to show the grade differences in all the items evaluated and the grade quantity improved. In the following section, we will explain why there was a discrepancy between the progress achieved by the participants in their roles as counselors versus their roles as support staff members.

Table 4. Camp counselor role quantitative data.

Participants	Pre-test				Post-test				Average of difference
	Cons	Language repair	Use of fillers	Mpnd words	Cons	Language repair	Use of fillers	Mpnd words	
Participant 1	2	3	2	3	4	4	4	5	1.8 +
Participant 3	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	5	2 +
Participant 4	4	2	2	3	5	4	4	5	1.7 +
Participant 6	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	1.2 +
Participant 8	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	0.5 +
Participant 9	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	0.2 +
Participant 10	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	4	0.8 +

Note: In this table, results pre and post immersion are compared.

Being a camp counselor in the YMCA program has different meanings, such as: being an open-minded person, getting out of our comfort zone, interacting with others, getting involved in all the activities and even being every day of each camp week with the campers. This said, the interaction in the second language would be the principal tool. In this table, positive differences are observed between the pre-test and post-test and the reason why it happened, is because camp counselors always have to interact, share, enjoy, and even dream in a total English environment.

Table 5. Support staff role quantitative data.

Participants	Pre-TEST				Post-TEST				Average of difference
	Ccns	Language repair	Use of fillers	pnd words	Ccns	Language repair	Use of fillers	Mpnd words	
Participant 2	3	4	3	3	5	4	4	4	1 +

Participant 5	4	3	2	4	5	5	5	5	1.7 +
Participant 7	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	0.7 +

The positive results are evident in the second table as well. However, in this case, the support staff members did not have a complete English interaction every day. Therefore, if it can be identify any improvement, it is because the participants made an effort to get involved and interact on their own, including having conversations in their free time (refer to Table 5). This difference in the support staff position is because these participants have to concentrate on their tasks to make camp run correctly and make the camp enjoyable for the campers behind the scenes. That is to say, that participants who were in this position did not have the same time as the camp counselors to interact with the L2, even though they also showed a positive impact in terms of English skill's improvement.

With this comparison of these two tables, it is clear to say that there is an improvement in the evaluated aspects of both the camp counselors and the support staff. Moreover, the analysis of the data and its results showed, that summer camps in the United States positively influence the improvement of fluency, due to the motivation of participants to improve both by what happens around them and autonomously and envelop themselves in all their surroundings at the time they were immersed. It is also identified, that the participants with more interaction are those who applied as camp counselors since they have a total interaction, on the other hand, those who participated as staff had an improvement, but their interaction with the second language was not so frequent because their occupation is more practical and direct verbal interaction is not involved as often as in the other position, which implies that the improvement depends more on the participant and his autonomy than his environment.

According to what was mentioned above, it could be said that for future participation in this summer camp program in the United States, if what people want to achieve is to improve their communication skills in the second language, it is imperative to participate as a camp counselor, because exposure to the language will be higher and, consequently, the level of interaction with English speakers will be more frequent. Likewise, the duties of this position require the use of L2 communication at all times. Co-counselors communication is another important factor in the acquisition of language skills. This action encourages practice, since they come from different countries, and their common language is English. This, in turn, develops the need to use this language to have effective communication and good teamwork.

Although the reason mentioned above could be considered a collateral result, it helps to improve the understanding of the paradigm discussed here, the reasons why increased interaction promotes fluency in L2 and also why it is interesting to investigate this topic. Furthermore, in the results of the analysis, the improvement of speech in terms of fluency is evident. (See figures No. 2, 3, 4 and 5)

External factors that can affect the research's objective.

One challenge of developing this research, was the participants' engagement during this research; sometimes, it was tough to schedule the interview sessions due to a high amount of external factors in each participant's daily life and own schedule, because they had classes, or they did not have the time for a short interview and so on. Also, the follow-up while in camp to check how they were doing and how their experience started was challenging as well because they had to follow a schedule for daily activities or their shift. It was not easy to arrange these meetings, so they would have to take some time aside from their camp duties to attend a short meeting or fill out a survey, or they simply did not want to do it. Now, researchers have to

consider this factor if they want to replicate this kind of research in the future and ensure the participants selected are interested and engaged in providing the data. Finally, it could be possible that collecting data in a significant group could be more complex to do.

Why does not everybody participate in this kind of program?

The YMCA Colombia and its agreement with the Universidad del Cauca is open each year for all the students at the university. Students can get into the program even being from different semesters or programs, even though some students lack self-confidence, fear about opening themselves to new adventures, or may feel uncomfortable with their English level. Other reasons apart from the ones mentioned above are the policies of the YMCA: age limitation (18 to 26 years old), not being enrolled with a higher education institution (in this case, Universidad del Cauca)

On the other hand, there is no secret that it is hard to access to this kind of programs, not only because the language proficiency level it requires to get in and pass the interview process and all the training sessions, but also because the majority of the students who apply to, do not have the economic resources to participate. The average Colombian student income in a public university is always very low or sometimes non-existent, so they would have to look for different ways to get resources to cover the expenses of this kind of program. A few students have the necessary resources, which limits the number of participants in the program.

Additionally, there are factors other than economic, for example, the behavior of people, this topic is something very important because, it is also taken into account when being selected by the program.

Some participants have an open-minded attitude, like adventures, and are always willing to enjoy new experiences, the participants from this program, are also people with skills related to the needs of the summer camps in general for example outdoor activities, field activities, land sports, and teamwork.

Otherwise, summer camps are places where you can find people from all around the world. There are people with different languages and cultures who take advantage of the camp to socialize, learn about new cultures, and an additional group to practice their L2 and earn money. In this sense, more than academic training spaces, summer camps with English immersion, result in opportunities to grow as individuals, culturally and monetarily. However, it is important to highlight that the main objective of the participants should always be to improve fluency in L2, so activities that go beyond that objective would negatively influence the final result of the immersion period.

It is important to mention that these camps select their members depending on how attractive their profile is and what skills the camp requires. Based on this information, program participants may encounter places and spaces different from those they are used to, which can cause worry, stress, anxiety, and even depression when they begin to miss their families.

These behaviors could influence participants to generate fear, timidity, and discouragement in wanting to interact or participate in activities proposed by the camp. These are some other external factors that can influence the participant's interaction, hence their second language improvement process, like the role they choose to play at camp, their co-worker's background, and if they are placed in an environment where there are a lot of people that share the same mother tongue. These situations could negatively influence the process of improving the skills of participants who present any of these symptoms.

Recommendations for future projects

Thanks to this research project, important key factors that led to significant improvements in fluency for individuals participating in language immersions were identified. In this case, four distinct aspects were identified, that differentiate fluent speakers from less fluid ones. Additionally, external factors that may hinder participants in achieving their goals of cultural exchange or improved communication skills in their second language, were also identified. This research provides valuable insights for future investigations into related factors. Possible future research projects could explore additional factors beyond those identified in this study, here some future research can take a deeper analysis in different contexts.

Comparing the impact of English YMCA summer camps on EFL fluency with other language immersion programs or traditional classroom instruction

Initially, the main reason to participate in this type of camp is to increase proficiency in L2 and take advantage of these spaces to exchange knowledge and experiences culturally. But it would be interesting to compare the impact that these interaction spaces have with the traditional methodology of classes or immersion programs. The first reason is the ability to choose. If there were more information on this topic, from the parents to those directly involved who are the participants, they would have different options, and consequently, the possibility of choosing would increase their motivation. A comparative study would help identify the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.

On the other hand, different students can benefit from different approaches. Understanding the impact of various programs helps tailor language learning experiences to the needs and preferences of diverse learners. In this way, more interconnected, language

proficiency is crucial for global competence. Comparing different language programs contributes to the development of effective strategies to foster language skills, cultural understanding, and communication.

In summary, comparing the impact of YMCA summer camps in English with other language programs is essential for making informed decisions, optimizing resource allocation, improving existing programs, and promoting effective language education strategies in a global context.

Exploring the sociolinguistic aspects of language development during the summer camps, considering factors such as peer interaction, social dynamics, and cultural exchange.

Exploring the sociolinguistic aspects of language development in summer camps involves examining how language skills evolve within the social context of peer interaction, social dynamics, and cultural exchange. The participants in these camps engage in various conversations, and social dynamics influence the variation in language. The cultural diversity of the camp encourages linguistic adaptation, leading to cases of communication code switching and the modifications and/or learning of multiple forms of language. No less important, camp activities impact language use, influencing the emergence of slang and informal language. Linguistic adaptation is observed, where participants adapt to align with their peers, which is reflected in social dynamics. Overall, sociolinguistic exploration reveals the dynamic and evolutionary nature of language development during summer camps, emphasizing the influence of social factors on participants' linguistic behaviors and interactions.

Assessing the development of cultural competence among participants in English YMCA summer camps and its correlation with language fluency.

Assessment of cultural competency development in YMCA English summer camps reveals an intertwined relationship with language fluency. Participants are immersed in diverse environments and face peers with a palette of cultural nuances during camp and personal activities. This in turn influences learning new vocabulary and communication styles. The correlation with language fluency is evident as individuals learn to express themselves with cultural sensitivity. Leadership orientation plays a fundamental role in promoting this competence, so the connection emphasizes learning or reinforcing the language from a cultural perspective, which in the short, medium, and long term, would show integral benefits of the summer camps of the YMCA to develop well-rounded and culturally aware individuals.

To conduct this assessment, interviews as the instruments showed in this document could be used, but also, observations to gather data on participant's cultural awareness and language proficiency before and after the camp. In this sense, analyzing the results could provide insights into how the camp experience influences cultural competence, competence, and language fluency.

Evaluating the effectiveness of different language assessment tools or methodologies in capturing language fluency in the context of English YMCA summer camps.

Assessing language fluency in English at YMCA summer camps involves evaluating the effectiveness of various language assessment tools or methodologies. Traditional assessments, such as standardized tests, can measure linguistic proficiency. Additionally, interactive methods, such as real-life scenario evaluations, capture practical applications of the language. Observational assessments during camp activities provide information on contextual fluency. The effectiveness of these tools lies in their ability to comprehensively measure language skills,

considering both formal mastery and practical communication within the dynamic camp environment. A comprehensive assessment ensures a nuanced understanding of language fluency, reflecting the diverse and immersive nature of YMCA English summer camps.

The mentioned above has importance in the fluency acquisition progress because, the tools used to evaluate this, could be align with the specific goals, activities, and linguistic environment of YMCA camp. Moreover, the effectiveness of assessment will allow organizers to refine English programs and contribute to the continuous improvement of language education within the camp, leading to better outcomes for participants.

An important effort of this program could contribute to a more meaningful and enriching experience for participants. It ensures that language learning goals are met, fostering a positive and beneficial environment within the YMCA camps and it will give to the teachers and organizers information about the success of the language learning component.

In summary, the assessment of language in this context, it would be crucial for ensuring that the methods used to measure the language fluency are appropriate, effective and contribute to the overall success of the language immersion program.

Extending the study to include participants from different regions or countries and compare the influence of English YMCA summer camps on their EFL fluency.

Finally, expanding the study to encompass participants from various regions or countries allows for a comparative analysis of the impact of YMCA English summer camps on their fluency in EFL. Testing participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds provides insight into how cultural and linguistic diversity influences language acquisition. By comparing the results, the study not only evaluates the effectiveness of YMCA camps around the world, but also

identifies possible regional nuances in language development. This broader perspective enriches our understanding of how YMCA English summer camps contribute to EFL fluency in various international contexts.

Conclusions

This research project aimed to determine the influence of YMCA summer camps participation on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) fluency of students at Universidad del Cauca in Santander de Quilichao (2023 participants). The project included pre- and post-interviews, which helped to assess the participant's oral fluency scores for both interviews, after collecting the data, the results were analyzed and compared to determine if there was an influence in the participant's fluency skills according to the authors' presumption.

It is noteworthy that immersion in a second language environment helped the participants improve the results they had previously obtained in the pre-interview before embarking on this program. Immersion could be one of the principal ways to increase fluency in L2 students when a participant is exposed to a constant English environment, which in this case were YMCA summer camps in the United States. Even though, there could be external factors that prevent participants from having a complete English interaction with native L2 speakers, giving non-expected results for the participant. Those external factors could be: being surrounded by only Spanish-speaking people while being at camp, not participating and getting involved with activities where the use of English is principal, also, avoiding the necessity of communication with others, in their L2 for fear, shyness, or lack of confidence. It is important to note that these external factors that can negatively impact the program's objectives. Lack of language exposure outside the program, can also negatively impact immersion in L2.

Undoubtedly, this type of program had a positive impact on the fluency skills of its participants, as it helped them develop their existing fluency and gain a better understanding and command of their speech. The findings showed that the methodology and approach used in this study provided effective tools to evaluate the improvement in the fluency of the participants,

being able to score the participant's enhancement quantitatively through the fluency measurement system created. Overall, the program was successful in achieving its goals.

According to the mentioned above, it is evident that not only in their speaking skills abilities but also in qualitative aspects, as the participants' self-confidence and other skills are improved through the experience. These results revealed that participants demonstrated improvement, indicating a positive enhancement in all participants' speaking skills in terms of fluency.

The program seems to have achieved its objective and had a positive impact on the speaking skills of the participants. According to the author's presumption, the YMCA summer camp program helped the participants to use fillers more effectively, not just to avoid pauses in their speech but to sound more natural and native-like. Additionally, they were able to answer questions more concisely, and their mispronunciation of words decreased due to the interaction they had with others. They were exposed to hearing how some words were pronounced, and the program also helped them acquire new vocabulary with more accurate pronunciation.

However, if students do not have opportunities to continue using the language outside the program, they may struggle to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. This lack of exposure can lead to frustration and demotivation, hindering progress in the language.

Language immersion programs require students to practice the language frequently to develop their skills. Nevertheless, if students do not have access to opportunities for language practice, such as language exchange programs or conversation partners, they may struggle to develop their proficiency. This limited practice might lead to a lack of confidence and hinder progress in the language. Therefore, it is essential to provide students with opportunities for

language practice outside the immersion programs like the YMCA summer camps to facilitate their language acquisition and fluency development. To address this issue, L2 learning programs should prioritize creating opportunities for students to interact with native speakers, both inside and outside the classroom.

Many of these factors are beyond the researcher's control, and a controlled environment is necessary for further understanding.

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Annexes

Responses from participant 1



**Participant 1
responses.mp3**

Interviewer: Hello (participant name), How are you today?

Participant 1: I'm good. I'm good. a little .. a little bit tired, but I'm good

Interviewer: Okay. How was your day? What were you doing today?

Participant 1: My day was good. So so hard, but ahhh okay, I'm here.

it's over. It's over, But but with the job, but with the university, no.

Of course, I have to do an exam, but it's okay.

Interviewer: Exam about what subject?

Participant 1: French. French exam.

Interviewer: Ah Okay. How was it? Was it difficult?

Participant 1: No, no. I have to do it. I haven't ehh done ehh it yet.

Interviewer: Okay. Perfect. Okay. Why did you like to participate in this summer camp?

Participant 1: Why why I like ... to participate?

Interviewer: Yeah. Why did you choose to participate in this summer camp?

Ohh Okay ehh I made the decision to participate in this summer camp because

I wanted it .. I wanted to improve My my English skills ehh, emmm

but principally the listening, also to be more... more more like fluiding in speaking,

and yeah, improve all my English skills.

Interviewer: Okay. Cool.

Excerpt from participant 1 (06/2023)

Responses from participant 7



**Participant 7
responses.mp3**

Interviewer: Why would you like to participate in an immersion program?

Participant 7: Like hmm...

I can't understand, like...

Interviewer: Yeah like, I'm asking like what motivates you to participate in an immersion program?

Participant 7: Okay, I got you ahh.

It's like, I think... that

First of all, I would like to say I travel, travel.

Meeting new cultures, meeting new .. new people, you know?

Ahh Meeting new food, too ahh.

I think...

I like talk with people, and I like, like the items, like the language.

So, yeah, I think it was more like just for...

For knowing the world, the world in general.

Yeah, I think so.

Excerpt from participant 7 (06/2023)

Responses from participant 9



**Participant 9
responses.mp3**

Interviewer: What are your goals for learning English in this program?

*Participant 9: Okay I think one of my goals is just having more opportunities because
ahh*

*Like .. the situation of our country right now and since like a few years ago it's not
so good*

so ... I

*I was like always looking for like maybe working in another place even though I love
Colombia ahh*

and I'm in love with that country

*I know that I would have more like better opportunities in other in another country
so I think that learning English ahh*

*it's like probably focused on that like having more opportunities for me and my family
but also because I love having new experiences and knowing new people
and I think English have like allowed me to do that
and ahh ..*

that's why I want to like learn English and then

*also French because I would like I would also like to have like an opportunity with that
language as well.*

Excerpt from participant 9 (06/2023)

Table 6. Rubrics to evaluate and grade the interviews.

Rubrics	1	2	3	4	5
Conciseness	The speaker is unable to express their ideas clearly and concisely. They ramble, repeat themselves, and struggle to stay on topic. They frequently lose their train of thought and are difficult to follow.	The speaker has some ability to express their ideas, but they tend to wander off-topic and include unnecessary information. They may repeat themselves or struggle to get to the point. The speech lacks coherence and may be difficult to follow.	The speaker can express their ideas in a reasonably clear and concise manner. They stay on topic and avoid repetition, However, there may be some extraneous information included, or the speech may lack depth or complexity.	The speaker can express their ideas clearly and concisely, with little or no unnecessary information. They stay on topic, use appropriate transitions, and have well-developed and coherent ideas. The speech is easy to follow and engaging.	The speaker can express their ideas with exceptional clarity and concision. They use appropriate transitions and avoid unnecessary information. Their ideas are highly developed and show depth and complexity. The speech is engaging and memorable.
Language Repair	The speaker demonstrates excessive use of language repair, leading to significant breakdowns in communication which may be incomprehensible or confusing.	The speaker makes too much use of language repairs, leading to significant interruptions to the flow of conversation. Frequently relies on the listener to correct or clarify utterances, resulting in interruptions to the flow of conversation.	The speaker demonstrates the frequent use of language repair but without significant impact on the clarity. Able to talk with some effort and occasional interruption to the flow of conversation.	The speaker demonstrates occasionally the use of language repair. Able to talk with some accuracy and minimal interruption to the flow of conversation.	The speaker demonstrates minimal use of language repair. Able to talk with ease and accuracy, without interrupting the flow of conversation.
Use of fillers	The speaker relies heavily on fillers, leading to a significant breakdown in communication. Utterances may be incomprehensible or confusing.	The speaker uses fillers excessively, leading to significant interruptions in the flow of conversation. Utterances may be difficult to follow or understand.	The speaker uses fillers frequently but without significant impact on the clarity or fluency of utterances. Some pauses or hesitation markers are	The speaker uses fillers occasionally, but with control. Utterances are still clear and fluent, with minimal impact on the flow of conversation.	The speaker uses no or minimal fillers. Able to express ideas clearly and smoothly, without the need for unnecessary pauses or hesitation markers.

			noticeable.		
Mispronounced words	The speaker consistently mispronounces words, making it difficult or impossible to understand their intended meaning.	The speaker frequently mispronounces words, with errors that significantly impede comprehension or require significant effort to understand.	The speaker frequently mispronounces words, but the errors are generally minor and do not significantly impede comprehension.	The speaker pronounces words correctly most of the time, with occasional errors or mispronunciations that do not significantly impact comprehension.	The speaker pronounces words correctly and clearly, with no noticeable errors or mispronunciations.

Note: This rubric will be applied to both the first and final interviews

Table 7. First interview questions

First Interview

<p>1. Warm-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hello, how are you? ● What's your name? ● What city are you from?
<p>2. Level check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How long have you lived in your city? ● Tell me about your family ● What is your major? (degree, major, profession) ● Describe your home (town, city) to me. ● How do you like your home? (town, city)? ● What are your hobbies or interests? ● Why do you like/enjoy your hobby? ● Have you traveled abroad? ● Where would you like to go? ● Have you been to a summer camp? ● What are your skills? ● Tell me how to (make, do) something you know very well.
<p>3. Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your goals for learning English in this program? ● Why would you like to participate in an immersion program? ● What would you like to gain by being a participant in this program? ● What do you think it would be the hardest part of being abroad ? ● If you could redo your education all over again, what (career, degree) would you pick instead and why? ● If you were the president of your country, what would you like to change about your country? ● What career advice would you give to your younger friends?
<p>4. Wind down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did you feel okay about this interview? ● What are your plans for the next month's regarding your trip? ● Where would you like to travel in the future? ● How do you feel about your English level? ● What is your favorite food?

Table 8. Second interview questions

Second Interview

<p>1. Warm-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hello, how are you? ● What's your name? ● What city are you from?
<p>2. Level check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How long did you stay in your camp? ● Tell me about your role there. ● What is your major? (degree, major, profession) ● Describe your camp to me. ● How do you like your state? (town, city?) ● Did you have the chance to travel? ● Did you like your experience overall? Why? ● Where would you like to go? ● Tell me about your best memory at camp ● What skills do you think you developed? ● Tell me how to (make, do) something you know very well.
<p>3. Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your goals for learning English in this program? ● What was the most challenging thing that happened to you during the program? ● Would you like to participate in this program again? Why? ● What do you think was the hardest part of being abroad for you? ● Describe someone you look up to and tell me why that specific person is. ● If you could redo your education all over again, what (career, degree) would you pick instead and why? ● Did your point of view about the world change?
<p>4. Wind down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did you feel okay about this interview? ● Did this program meet your expectations? ● What are your plans for the future? ● What is something new you tried out being there? ● Where would you like to travel in the future? ● Is there any new food that you liked?

Table 9. Checklist while being abroad.

Checklist while being abroad.

○ Are you consistently using English as your primary language during your day-to-day interactions?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Do you actively seek out opportunities to engage in conversations with native English speakers?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you actively seek out opportunities to engage in conversations with native English speakers?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Are you regularly immersing yourself in English-language media (e.g. TV shows, movies, news articles, etc.)?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Have you made a conscious effort to think in English rather than translating from your native language while speaking or writing?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ ¿Are you engaging in informal, everyday conversations with your fellow campers and camp staff in English, and seeking out opportunities to use the language naturally and authentically?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Do you prioritize speaking English over your mother tongue during meals, leisure time, and other social events with campers and camp staff?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Are you intentionally avoiding speaking your mother tongue with campers and camp staff, to practice and improve your English skills as much as possible?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>

