Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language learning: a case study in a colombian university corporation

Reflexiones sobre el aprendizaje permanente en inglés como lengua extranjera: un estudio de caso en una corporación universitaria colombiana

iD **Juan Habib Bendeck Soto***
juan.bendeck@uniremington.edu.co

iD **Jairo León Cardona Jiménez****
jairoleon01@gmail.com

* Magíster en Educación (Tecnológico de Monterrey). Ingeniero de Sistemas (Universidad Simón Bolívar). Profesor Asistente de inglés como Lengua Extranjera – Uniremington Medellín.

** Magíster en Epidemiología (Universidad de Antioquia). Profesor Asociado.

Juan Habib Bendeck Soto
Jairo León Cardona Jiménez

Abstract

Learning a foreign language like English requires significant effort in various universities, prompting students to view it as a lifelong educational pursuit. Nevertheless, learners do not always see it this way and do not seem to be ready for such an approach. Therefore, it is relevant to identify what orientations guide learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and determine their understanding of language development and acquisition through the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL). This study used Jean Proulx's lifelong learning questionnaire to assess the level of lifelong learning among students in different English language learning modalities at a private university; the instrument was adjusted with components focused on EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Data was collected online, and evaluation ranges were established to assess how much students at a private university in Medellin enjoy learning the language, considering items such as gender, age, and scores in specific areas like motivation, perseverance, self-regulation, and curiosity. Gender was found to make a significant difference in the students' LLL orientations; age was seen as a relevant finding in a specific population of learners. The sections of the questionnaire revealed areas for improvement in the institution's EFL program, particularly in enhancing students' motivation, perseverance, self-regulation, and curiosity. Suggestions are given for improving and promoting the learning of the English language through continuing education in the institution, motivating students to develop a lifelong learning attitude for their respective careers, and providing learning techniques to help students improve their language skills.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, higher education, adult education, English as a Foreign Language.

132

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

Resumen

Aprender una lengua extranjera como el inglés requiere un esfuerzo significativo en varias universidades, lo que lleva a los estudiantes a verlo como una actividad educativa que dura toda la vida. Sin embargo, los alumnos no siempre lo ven así y no parecen estar preparados para ese enfoque. Por lo tanto, es relevante identificar qué orientaciones guían el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) y determinar su comprensión del desarrollo y adquisición del lenguaje a través del concepto de Lifelong Learning (LLL). Este estudio utilizó el cuestionario de aprendizaje permanente de Jean Proulx para evaluar el nivel de aprendizaje permanente entre estudiantes en diferentes modalidades de aprendizaje del idioma inglés en una universidad privada; el instrumento se ajustó con componentes enfocados en EFL (inglés como lengua extranjera). Los datos se recopilaron en línea y se establecieron rangos de evaluación para evaluar cuánto disfrutan los estudiantes de una universidad privada de Medellín aprendiendo el idioma, considerando elementos como género, edad y puntajes en áreas específicas como motivación, perseverancia, autorregulación y curiosidad. Se encontró que el género marca una diferencia significativa en las orientaciones de LLL de los estudiantes; la edad se consideró un hallazgo relevante en una población específica de estudiantes. Las secciones del cuestionario revelaron áreas de mejora en el programa de inglés como lengua extranjera de la institución, particularmente en mejorar la motivación, la perseverancia, la autorregulación y la curiosidad de los estudiantes. Se dan sugerencias para mejorar y promover el aprendizaje del idioma inglés a través de la educación continua en la institución, motivando a los estudiantes a desarrollar una actitud de aprendizaje permanente para sus respectivas carreras y brindando técnicas de aprendizaje para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades lingüísticas.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje permanente, educación superior, educación de adultos, inglés como lengua extranjera.

Introduction

The university corporations in Colombia are characterized by promoting technical, technological and professional studies, and become a more accessible option for many students in the country, and also, being able to speak a foreign language helps students become more employable and with better job opportunities in a local or international environment (Deveci, 2015).

Nowadays, a common perception in the learning process is: the more we learn, the more we earn (James, Guile, and Unwin, 2013). This is where the concept of lifelong learning comes into play. It goes beyond just learning and has gained more interest over the years, being researched at various academic levels (Agudo-Peregrina et al., 2014; Dascalu et al., 2016; Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2013).

Now, the education regarding the learning of English as a second or foreign language is generally not well received in these institutions by many students who come from public or private schools, since the basics of the language are not taught effectively, leading to curricula lacking in content or added value in the teaching and learning of the language (Bernal Castañeda, 2017; Castañeda, 2016). In addition, once these students begin their learning process in higher education, they do not consider English as an option or added value in their professional profile to enhance their careers at the end of their studies, indicating a lack of motivation or knowledge of the importance of handling a second language nowadays (Agudo-Peregrina et al., 2014; Dascalu et al., 2016).

As a result, it is essential to help our students understand that there are various reasons for studying English, such as pursuing a personal hobby or aiming for a more fulfilling career in the future. Students should recognize their right to choose their own reasons for learning English and how they might use the language in their lives. Todaka (2020) notes that research on EFL students' language learning continues to highlight motivation as a crucial factor for success in the foreign language learning process (Lamb, 2017; Boo et al., 2015).

Even though lifelong learning is not currently managed within the country since there are no laws defined by the State regarding the learning process after graduation, it is surprising to find out why students do not see the learning of the English language as an enhancer of their professional profiles. This could be due to various factors such as lack of motivation, co-

134

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

operation, leadership, or ineffective teaching methodologies used to teach a second or foreign language. Additionally, students may have a limited understanding of the concept of being a lifelong learner.

With regard to factors like gender, age range, and average scores in the key areas defined by Coskun and Demirel (2012) in their LLL questionnaire—motivation, perseverance, self-regulation, and curiosity—this study aimed to research and review the levels of lifelong learning among students at a University corporation in Medellin. This research would provide valuable insights for future studies on enhancing English language learning in similar educational contexts.

In the development of this study, the following 3 research questions were generated:

1. How do the levels of lifelong learning of students in a University corporation learning English as a foreign language compare?

2. How do the lifelong learning orientations of these students differ according to their gender and age?

3. How do the lifelong learning orientations of these students vary depending on their motivation, self-regulation, perseverance, and curiosity?

Theoretical Background

The concept of lifelong learning encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and qualifications for personal, social, or professional reasons. UNESCO (1984) defined lifelong learning as "any learning activities developed lifelong, with the objective of developing knowledge, skills and/or qualifications because of personal, social or professional reasons." Preece (2013) further elaborated that the term "lifelong learning" refers to a broad range of activities that encompass formal, informal, and widespread learning, characterized by a systematic understanding and vision.

The lifelong learning approach has been extensively researched over the years in many countries. Numerous studies have defined it in both general and specific environments, considering personal and academic contexts as key references in the lives of learners who adopt this approach (Klug, Krause, Schober, Finsterwald, and Spiel, 2014; Özcan and Uzunboylu, 2012; Demirel, 2011; Gorghiu, Gorghiu, Doan, and Gerçeker, 2013). Lifelong learning is un-

derstood as a process involving continuous change, where individuals seek to acquire skills and abilities in various areas of knowledge throughout their lives. This approach helps individuals meet their daily needs and adapt to new learning techniques and behaviors (Özdamli and Özdal, 2014). As Demirel (2011) and Gorghiu et al. (2013) emphasize, lifelong learning involves recognizing oneself and the world through innovation, incorporating new learning techniques, and adapting new behaviors.

When the concept of lifelong learning is taken to the academic environment, the approach is more focused on preparing students for their professional fields, within their career studies or by applying for continuing education extensions after graduation.

The following study comprised 3 aspects from the lifelong learning approach, which were present among the development of the research.

Lifelong Learning

The ability to learn is one of the most outstanding qualities of human beings. That is when the concept of lifelong learning appears and proves itself as constant and goes beyond the formal field of education. To this day, after several decades of international recognition and institutional support, it continues to be a topical issue at all educational levels (from early childhood education to higher education) and in all fields (national and international) (UNESCO, 1984; Preece, 2013).

UNESCO has been working on the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) since the 1970s, proposing it as a new paradigm for education and learning in the 21st century, in view of the construction of the "knowledge society" and the "learning society," in a context in which information and knowledge are expanding rapidly and life expectancy is increasing worldwide (UNESCO, 1984).

The concept of lifelong learning encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and qualifications for personal, social, or professional reasons. UNESCO (1984) defined lifelong learning as "any learning activities developed lifelong, with the objective of developing knowledge, skills and/or qualifications because of personal, social or professional reasons." This definition highlights the importance of continuous learning beyond formal education, emphasizing its role in personal and professional development.

Preece (2013) elaborates that lifelong learning includes formal, informal, and wide-spread learning activities, which contribute to a systematic understanding and vision. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2006) also supports this view, stating that lifelong learning helps people maintain and advance their knowledge, skills, and moral character.

These definitions underscore the importance of lifelong learning in adapting to the rapid changes in knowledge and technology. For the present study, understanding these broad definitions helps to frame the investigation into how students perceive and engage with lifelong learning, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Recognizing the value of lifelong learning can aid in developing strategies to enhance students' motivation, self-regulation, perseverance, and curiosity, ultimately improving their language acquisition and professional prospects.

Table 1 contrasts traditional learning models with lifelong learning models, emphasizing the shift from basic skills and knowledge absorption to education set in continuing work activities and knowledge development. This table illustrates key differences in approaches, such as the mode of learning, the role of trainers, methods of solving problems, and the structure of assessment.

Table 1

Characteristics of traditional learning and lifelong learning models

	Traditional Learning	**Lifelong Learning**
Emphasis	Basic skills	Education set in continuing work activities
Mode	Knowledge absorption	Knowledge development
New Topics	Defined by curricula	Appear incidentally from work cases
Trainers	Expound subject matter (Teaching)	Engage in work practice (Facilitating)
Problems	Given	Constructed
Method of Solution	Mostly personal work	Group work
Role	Expertise model	Reciprocal learning
Assessment	Basis for promotion	Guide learning strategies
Structure	Pedagogy (logical structure)	Work activity

Note. Soni (2012)

This table, sourced from Soni (2012), provides a clear framework to understand the evolution from traditional to lifelong learning paradigms. It underscores the need for educational institutions to adopt lifelong learning approaches to better prepare students for the dynamic and ever-changing professional environments.

Lifelong Learning And English As A Foreign Language

Foreign language proficiency is no longer merely a prerequisite for graduation. The ability to communicate in a second language is essential in today's globalized and fiercely competitive society. Students must be able to express themselves more clearly, communicate their meanings more effectively, and overcome their anxiety about conversing in a foreign language through meaningful learning and lifelong learning approaches (Bernal Castañeda, 2017; Castañeda, 2016).

One of the main goals of higher education is to prepare students for success in their personal and professional lives after graduation, providing them with the necessary information, skills, and behaviors to navigate a complex, globalized "super complex" society (Barnett, 2000). The purpose of language education is significantly altered when viewed from this angle. It is no longer aimed at "mastering" one, two, or even three languages with the "ideal native speaker" as the goal. Instead, creating a language repertoire with spaces for all linguistic skills is the objective (Lasagabaster, 2014).

The development of a young person's motivation, ability, and confidence in addressing new language experiences outside of school becomes crucial once it is recognized that language acquisition is a lifelong endeavor. Consequently, the employment of a foreign language, with a particular emphasis on English, has shifted from being a privilege to a necessity in various productive sectors. English has become increasingly important worldwide due to globalization and is now regarded as the universal business language (Biava and Segura, 2010).

The development of a young person's motivation, ability, and confidence in addressing new language experiences outside of school becomes crucial once it is realized that language acquisition is a lifelong endeavor. Consequently, the employment of a foreign language, particularly English, has shifted from being a privilege to a necessity in various productive

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

138

sectors. According to Biava and Segura (2010), English has become increasingly important worldwide due to massive globalization, making it the universal business language.

Because English is a global language and a common tongue worldwide, there is an increasing need to pique interest among students and educators and develop innovative and effective strategies for improving English competence. Additionally, "the ultimate purpose of foreign language instruction is to foster a lifetime interest in learning and intellectual development" (Dimova, 2012, p. 21). Learning a foreign language, particularly English, may be a lifetime passion fueled by intellectual curiosity or a pursuit of casual or serious leisure, claims Kubota (2011). Equally important, Coskun and Demirel (2012) and Karakus (2013) were able to disclose university students' lifelong learning dispositions and competencies in their studies.

Key Competences In Lifelong Learning For Efl

The notion of lifelong learning is supported by the fact that learning a foreign language is an ongoing endeavor. Since language is woven into the very fabric of existence, it cannot only be studied in language classrooms (Deveci, 2015). To achieve personal fulfillment, learners must continuously develop their skills and competences by actively participating in their society and ensuring they are prepared for a constantly changing workforce.

Students must possess the necessary abilities to take advantage of the learning opportunities available throughout their lives to improve communication efficiency, highlighting the significance of lifelong learning (LLL) skills. Developing these skills is crucial for adapting to various contexts and enhancing overall learning experiences. There have been several attempts to identify overarching categories of skills, and one of these has been developed by Coskun and Demirel (2012), who categorized lifelong learning skills into four broad areas: motivation, self-regulation, perseverance, and curiosity. The vast scope of learning throughout life makes it difficult to provide a definitive list of typical skills a lifelong learner should exhibit.

Motivation is the method of allocating energy to maximize the fulfillment of needs (Pritchard and Ashwood, 2008), and it can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic motiva-

tion, as Ryan and Deci (2000) describe, involves doing something because it leads to a separate consequence, such as a reward or the avoidance of punishment. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is defined as doing something because it is naturally interesting or pleasurable. According to Deveci (2013), intrinsic motivation can be attained if actual learning usage is acknowledged. Falk (quoted in Holt, 2001) notes that language learners' intrinsic motivation increases if they are enthusiastic about engaging with the culture of the people whose language they are learning. In order for learning to be lifelong, motivation must be intrinsic.

Another category of LLL skills is self-regulation, which incorporates self-directed learners who are intrinsically motivated. Self-regulated learners are also capable of changing their learning processes to fit different settings (Knapper and Cropley, 2000).

The third category of LLL skills is perseverance, defined by Rovai (2003) as the practice of pressing forward in the face of challenges. Additionally, Zimmerman (2002) describes perseverance as the sustained effort to overcome obstacles and achieve long-term goals. These definitions imply that persistent people continue their efforts despite challenges and failures, particularly in the context of learning.

The fourth category of lifelong learning skills is curiosity. Litman (2005) characterizes curiosity as a will to know, to see, or to feel, which engages exploratory behavior directed towards acquiring new information. This intrinsic desire to learn drives individuals to seek out new experiences and knowledge, making it a critical component of lifelong learning.

These categories suggest that for individuals to develop these skills themselves, they must feel the necessity to obtain new knowledge and be involved in new learning experiences. This likely leads to the development of intrinsic motivation for learning. Curiosity and motivation are interlinked because curiosity drives the desire to learn new things, while motivation provides the energy and persistence needed to pursue this learning. According to Deveci (2015), intrinsic motivation can only develop when individuals find personal relevance and satisfaction in their learning experiences. Therefore, fostering a persistent attitude towards learning necessitates a significant amount of learning commitment and the engagement of both curiosity and motivation.

140

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design, which is used to observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs (Karasar, 2009). The focus of this design is to provide a detailed account of the current state of phenomena without manipulating any variables. A total of 120 students participated in this study, all of whom were from a private university corporation studying English as a foreign language in online and face-to-face modalities. Female participants accounted for 76 students, while male students accounted for 44, with the majority belonging to the face-to-face modality. The ages of the participants varied from 17 to 60.

The data for this study were collected using an online questionnaire, adapted from a questionnaire designed by Jean Proulx (2004). This instrument focused on lifelong learning aspects provided by the author. The questions were adjusted to focus on EFL learning and were based on the competencies created by the European Council and Parliament (2006). The modified questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section aimed to collect data on demographics: gender, career of study, type of program, and place of birth. The second section was based on the Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLLTS), developed by Coskun and Demirel (2012). This instrument was applied in Spanish and adjusted to the principles of the study in some questions. Certain statements were slightly modified to reflect language learning experiences from the LLL concept.

As described earlier, the questionnaire comprises 15 questions, organized in four subsections: a) motivation (4 items), b) perseverance (4 items), c) self-regulation (4 items), and d) curiosity (3 items).

The Survey assessment scale was established in the following way:

0-15: Enjoys learning the language and do it with passion

16-30: Enjoys learning the language

31-45: Likes learning the language, but does not do it with passion

46-60: Does not enjoy learning the language (forced or compulsory learning)

The statistical program SPSS was utilized for the analysis. Absolute frequencies and proportions were used for the univariate analysis of the qualitative variables (sex, age groups,

major, origin, and learning mode), while ranges and averages were used for the quantitative variables (lifelong learning scale score). Given the normal distribution of the lifelong learning scale score variable, the mean difference was employed in the bivariate analysis using the Student's t-test for dichotomous variables and ANOVA for polytomous variables. The significance level was set at p < 0.05 to determine if the observed differences were statistically significant, indicating a less than 5% probability that the results occurred by chance.

Results

Table 2

Percentage distribution of the sociodemographic characteristics of students learning English at a private university in Medellín, 2021

	Variable	N	%
Sex/Gender	Female	76	63,3
	Male	44	36,7
Age in Years	16 – 30	96	80,0
	31 – 45	18	15,0
	46 -70	6	5,0
Major	Health Sciences (Medicine, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy Regency)	70	58,3
	Business (Business and Financial Management, Business and Financial Administration)	14	11,7
	Engineerings (Systems, Civil, Industrial, Software Development)	13	10,8
	Law School	12	10,0
	Accounting	9	7,5
Location	Medellín and Surroundings	56	46,7
	Department different from Antioquia	34	28,3
	Other municipality of Antioquia	30	25,0
Learning Modality	Face-to-Face	105	87,5
	Virtual	15	12,5

Note. Own elaboration

142

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

Table 2 presents the distribution of participants according to their sex/gender, age range, major, location, and learning modality. Among the participants, 63.3% were female and 36.7% were male. The majority of the participants (80%) were aged between 16 and 30 years, with 15% aged between 31 and 45 years, and 5% aged between 46 and 70 years. In terms of majors, the majority of participants were from the health sciences field (58.3%), followed by business (11.7%), engineering (10.8%), law school (10.0%), and accounting (7.5%). Regarding location, 46.7% of the participants were from Medellín and surroundings, 28.3% were from a department different from Antioquia, and 25.0% were from other municipalities of Antioquia. Finally, in terms of learning modality, 87.5% of the participants preferred face-to-face learning, while only 12.5% opted for virtual learning.

These findings suggest targeted strategies should be developed to support English learning among these demographics, particularly in enhancing online learning modalities and addressing the specific needs of health science students. For example, in the group of students, the female sex is more frequent (63.3%), indicating a higher participation rate among female students in learning English. The youngest group, aged between 16 and 30 years old, comprises 80.0% of the participants, suggesting that younger individuals are more engaged in acquiring English proficiency. This aligns with responses to survey questions such as "How motivated are you to learn English?" and "How frequently do you participate in English learning activities?" which showed higher motivation and participation rates among younger students.

The area of Health Sciences, with 58.3%, shows a significant interest in English learning, likely due to the global nature of the healthcare profession requiring English proficiency. Students from Medellín and Valle de Aburrá make up 46.7% of the sample, highlighting the regional concentration of learners. Additionally, the most relevant learning modality was face-to-face, with 87.5% of the cases, emphasizing the preference for traditional in-person learning environments despite the availability of online options. This preference was reflected in responses to questions like "How comfortable are you with online learning?" and "Do you find in-person classes more engaging than virtual ones?" which showed a significant lean towards face-to-face interactions.

These detailed insights into the participants' demographics and preferences underscore the need for educational institutions to tailor their strategies to support these groups effectively. For instance, developing interactive and engaging online modules could help bridge the gap for those who prefer face-to-face learning, and creating specialized support programs for health science students could further enhance their learning outcomes.

Figure 1

Percentage distribution according to levels of the lifelong learning scale
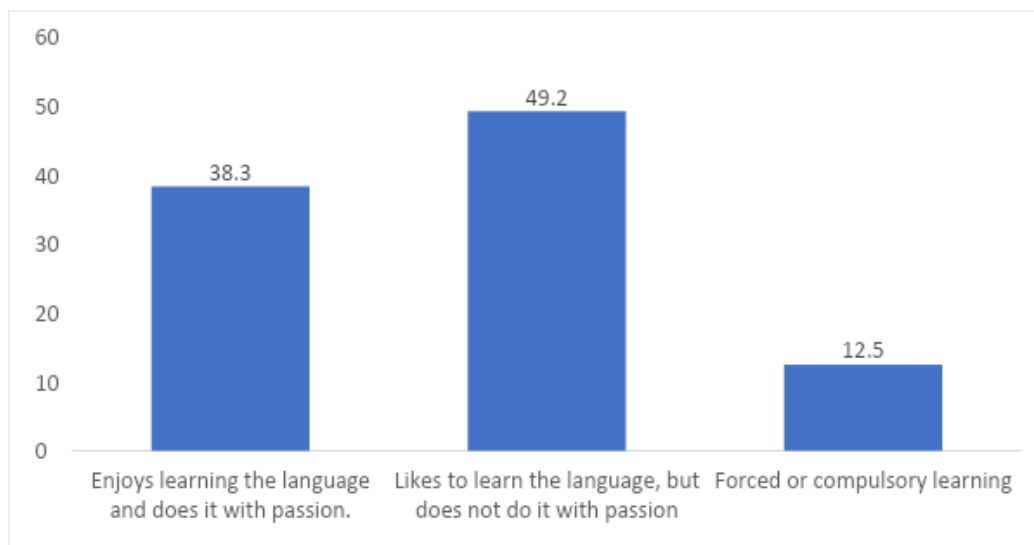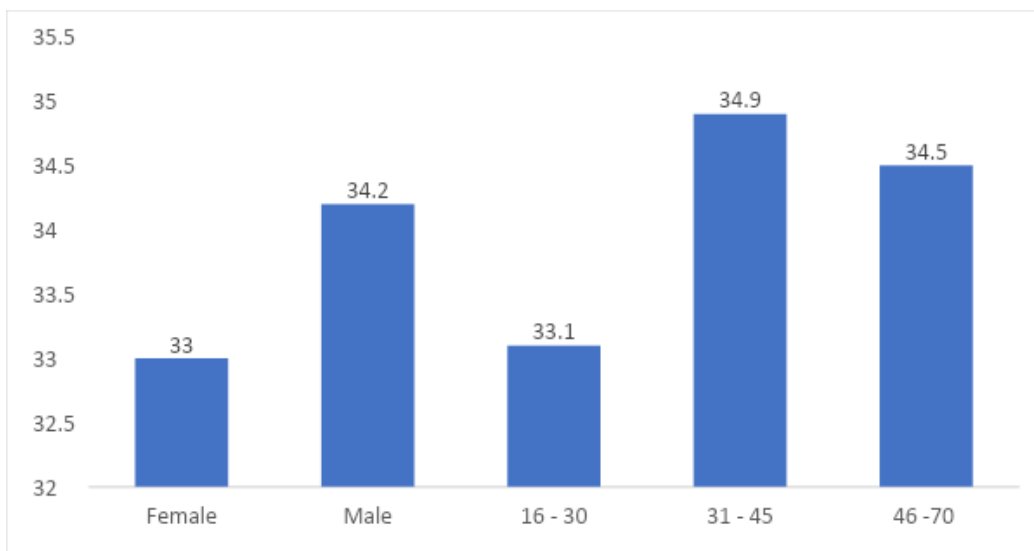

Note. Own elaboration

Regarding the results of the lifelong learning scale, 38.3% of the students enjoy learning the language and do it with passion, 49.2% like to learn the language but do not do it with passion, and 12.5% consider it mandatory (Figure 1). These results were derived from specific items in the questionnaire that assessed students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English. The items included questions on the frequency of engagement with English learning activities, the reasons for learning English, and the level of enjoyment and enthusiasm towards language learning.

The data show that a significant portion of students (49.2%) have a positive attitude towards learning English but lack a passionate commitment. This suggests that while students

recognize the importance of English, additional efforts are needed to enhance their intrinsic motivation. The 38.3% of students who learn with passion are likely driven by personal interest and enjoyment, which aligns with theories that emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation in lifelong learning (Deveci, 2013). The 12.5% who see learning English as mandatory may be motivated by external factors such as academic or professional requirements.

Figure 2

Average score of the lifelong learning scale according to sex and age group

Note. Own elaboration

The left scale of Figure 1 starts at 32 to better illustrate the differences in percentages among the groups. This scaling choice was made to emphasize the variations in responses and provide a clearer visual representation of the data.

These findings indicate the need for educational strategies that foster greater intrinsic motivation among students, such as incorporating more engaging and relevant content into the curriculum and providing opportunities for meaningful language use.

In Figure 2, the comparison of lifelong learning scale scores by gender reveals that female students scored significantly higher than male students ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, the average score for female students was 51.3, while male students had an average score of 47.1.

These results indicate that female students generally exhibit a higher level of lifelong learning tendencies compared to their male counterparts. This difference may be attributed to various factors, including differences in motivation, socialization, and educational experiences.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted gender differences in motivation and learning behaviors. For instance, studies by Coskun and Demirel (2012) have shown that female students often display higher levels of intrinsic motivation and persistence in learning activities. This suggests the need for targeted educational strategies to support male students in developing similar lifelong learning skills, possibly through interventions that enhance motivation and engagement.

Figure 3

Average score of the lifelong learning scale according to major
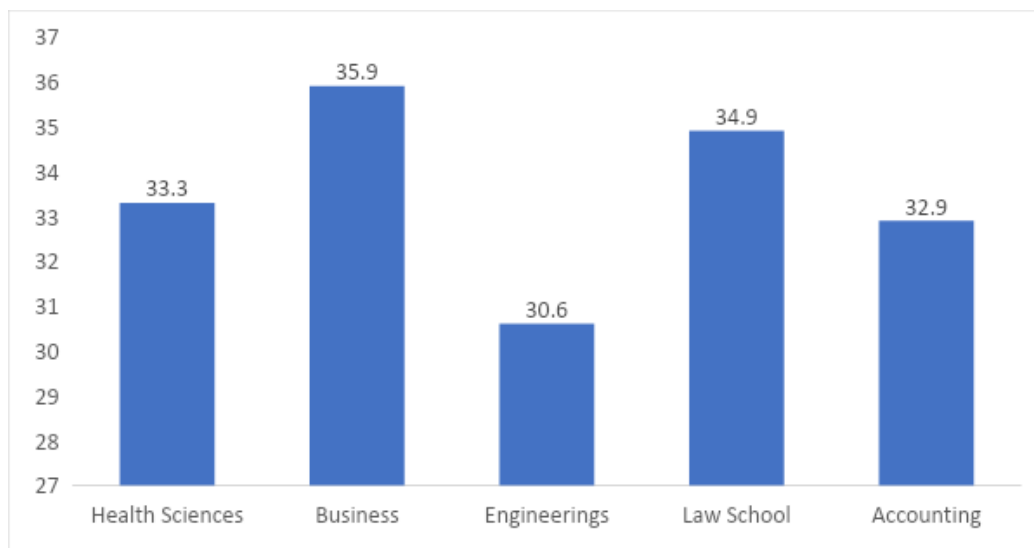
Note. Own elaboration

Figure 3 shows the average scores of the lifelong learning scale across different majors. Business students have the highest average score (35.9), followed by law school students (34.9), accounting students (32.9), health sciences students (33.3), and engineering students (30.6). These results suggest that students in business and law school exhibit a higher tendency towards lifelong learning.

The higher scores among business and law school students could be attributed to the dynamic nature of their fields, which require continuous learning and adaptation to new regulations, market trends, and business practices. This aligns with theories that emphasize the importance of lifelong learning in professions that demand ongoing professional development and knowledge updates (Preece, 2013).

In contrast, engineering students, despite the technical and evolving nature of their field, show lower scores. This might indicate a need for more engagement and motivation strategies tailored specifically for engineering students to enhance their lifelong learning tendencies. The moderate scores for health sciences and accounting students highlight the importance of integrating lifelong learning principles into these curricula to ensure that students are well-prepared for the continuous advancements in these fields.

These findings underscore the necessity for targeted educational strategies that foster lifelong learning across all disciplines, particularly in fields where the scores are lower. Enhancing the curriculum with more relevant and engaging content, providing professional development opportunities, and emphasizing the importance of continuous learning can help bridge these gaps.

Figure 4

Average score of the lifelong learning scale according to municipality of origin and type of learning
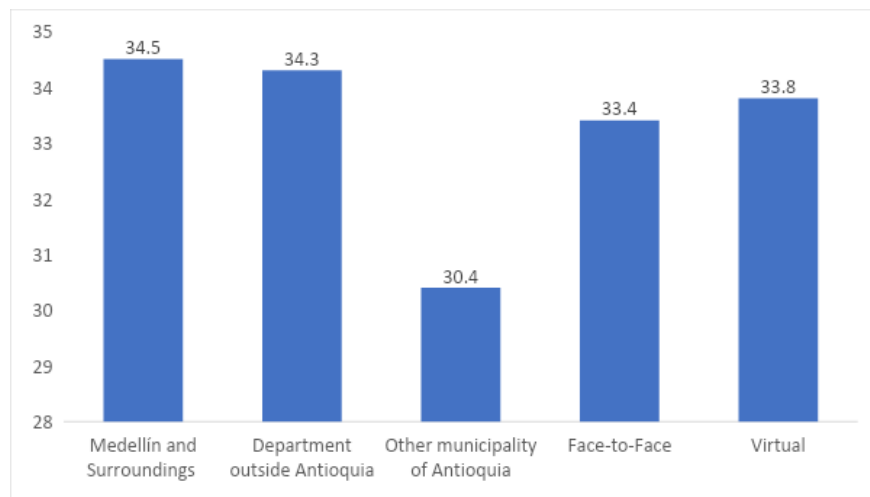
Note. Own elaboration

Those who show greater acceptance for learning the English language are students who come from other municipalities of Antioquia, different from those who belong to the Valle de Aburrá or who come from another department. In reference to the learning modality, no appreciable differences are observed between the two.

Table 3

Averages of each scale dimension according to sociodemographic variables

	Variable	Motivation 0-16 Range	Perseverance 0-16 Range	Regulation 0-16 Range	Curiosity 0-16 Range
	Total Average Score	8,9	9,0	8,1	7,4
Sex/Gender	Female	8,8	8,9	7,9	7,3
	Male	9,1	9,1	8,5	7,6
Age in Years	16 – 30	9,0	8,8	7,9	7,4
	31 – 45	8,7	9,5	9,2	7,5
	46 -70	8,7	9,2	8,7	8,0
Major	Health Sciences	9,1	8,8	8,0	7,4
	Business	9,4	10,1	8,6	7,9
	Engineering	7,3	8,1	8,5	6,7
	Law School	9,8	9,3	8,5	7,3
	Accounting	8,3	9,3	7,4	7,8
Location	Medellín and Surroundings	9,1	9,4	8,5	7,6
	Department different from Antioquia	9,2	9,3	8,2	7,6
	Other municipality of Antioquia	8,4	7,8 *	7,4	6,9
Learning modality	Face-to-Face	9,0	9,0	8,1	7,4
	Virtual	8,5	8,9	8,6	7,8

* p= 0,029 Anova

Note. Own elaboration

For the evaluation of the results, they are compared with the average value of all participating students. In reference to gender, females show better assessment in all components, especially in self-regulation, compared to males. This finding was derived from questions such as "How often do you set specific goals for your learning?" and "How effectively do you manage your study time?" Female students consistently rated higher on these questions, indicating better self-regulation skills.

The best scores were obtained by the youngest group of students (16-30 years old), particularly those in the 31 to 45 age group, which indicates higher perseverance and regulation. This was evident from questions like "How often do you persist in learning tasks despite difficulties?" and "How regularly do you review and reflect on your learning progress?" These age groups scored higher, showing greater perseverance and regulatory habits. In contrast, students over 45 showed lower scores in regulation and curiosity. This was reflected in responses to questions such as "How open are you to exploring new topics outside your current knowledge?" and "How often do you plan and organize your learning activities?" The lower scores suggest that older students may need more support in developing these lifelong learning skills.

In reference to the areas where students develop their majors, a more positive score stands out in the engineering area in the dimensions of motivation, perseverance, and curiosity, but not in the dimension of regulation. Those in the accounting area have good scores in motivation and regulation, but not in the curiosity dimension. Business students show poorer average values in the dimensions of perseverance, regulation, and curiosity.

Analyzing the origin of the students, the best averages are obtained by those who come from municipalities in the department of Antioquia, different from those who come from the surroundings of Medellín. The positive value in the perseverance dimension (7.8) stands out, which was statistically significant in comparison with the results of students from other backgrounds. The students from Medellín and its surroundings obtained scores indicating a need to improve in perseverance and regulation. Those from other regions of the country should focus on improving perseverance, especially. Regarding the learning modality, no special differences are observed between online and face-to-face modes, except in regulation, which must be improved, particularly in the virtual modality.

These findings illustrate the relationship between gender, age, major, origin, and lifelong learning components. They highlight the need for tailored strategies to support different demographic groups in enhancing their lifelong learning skills, particularly focusing on self-regulation, perseverance, and curiosity. Educational strategies should include more engaging and relevant content, professional development opportunities, and the importance of continuous learning to bridge these gaps.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the majority of the participants were young and pursuing careers in health sciences. Moreover, females constituted a larger proportion of the sample. Additionally, the preference for face-to-face learning over virtual learning may be due to the social nature of learning, which can be better facilitated through in-person interactions (McCarthy et al., 2019). This preference was evident from survey questions such as "How often do you engage in group discussions during your learning sessions?" and "How important is peer interaction to your learning experience?" Respondents who favored face-to-face learning rated these aspects highly, indicating that social interaction plays a crucial role in their learning process.

Furthermore, questions like "Do you find it easier to concentrate during in-person classes compared to virtual ones?" and "How comfortable are you with participating in classroom activities?" also showed higher scores among those who preferred face-to-face learning. These responses suggest that in-person interactions help facilitate better focus, participation, and overall engagement in the learning environment. This underscores the importance of social and interactive components in educational strategies to enhance learning experiences, especially for young and health science students.

The distribution of participants across majors and age ranges may also have implications for academic performance in EFL. For example, participants from the accounting field showed good scores in motivation and regulation, as evidenced by responses to questions like "How often do you set goals for your learning?" and "How effectively do you manage your study time?" However, they did not score well on curiosity-related questions, such as "How frequently do you explore new topics outside of your current coursework?"

On the other hand, those from business careers performed poorly in perseverance, regulation, and curiosity. This was evident from lower scores on questions like "How do you handle challenges in your learning?" and "How regularly do you engage in self-reflection on your progress?" These findings suggest that academic performance may vary according to the major and that specific areas may require tailored approaches to optimize learning outcomes.

Moreover, the finding that younger participants performed better in regulation than older participants may indicate the need for targeted interventions to improve regulation skills among older learners. This is supported by previous studies, such as those by Coskun

and Demirel (2012), which highlight the importance of tailored educational strategies that address the specific needs of different demographic groups to enhance lifelong learning skills.

Now, table 2 presents the average scores of the four dimensions of the scale (motivation, perseverance, regulation, and curiosity) according to different sociodemographic variables. The total average score for all participants was 8.9 for motivation, 9.0 for perseverance, 8.1 for regulation, and 7.4 for curiosity.

In terms of gender, females showed better scores than males in all dimensions, particularly in regulation. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests females tend to be more self-regulated and motivated than males (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Else-Quest et al., 2010). For example, in response to the question "How often do you set specific goals for your learning?", female participants reported higher frequencies compared to males, indicating stronger goal-setting behaviors. Additionally, questions like "How effectively do you manage your time for studying?" and "How regularly do you monitor your progress towards your learning goals?" also saw higher scores from female respondents.

These results align with findings from Eccles and Wigfield (2002), who highlighted that females are often more diligent in self-regulatory practices. Else-Quest et al. (2010) also found that females typically exhibit higher levels of academic motivation and self-regulation, which could explain the better performance in regulation observed in this study. This suggests that educational strategies aimed at enhancing self-regulation skills might benefit from considering these gender differences and providing targeted support to male students to improve their self-regulation practices.

Regarding age, the youngest group (16-30 years old) obtained the best overall score, excelling particularly in motivation and curiosity dimensions. The group aged 31-45 years had the highest scores specifically for perseverance and regulation, indicating strong abilities in maintaining effort and managing their learning activities. However, the group over 45 years old had lower scores in regulation and curiosity, suggesting they may struggle more with maintaining focus and exploring new ideas.

For example, younger participants scored higher on questions like "How often do you seek out new learning opportunities?" and "How interested are you in learning about unfamiliar topics?" These responses indicate a high level of curiosity and motivation. The 31-45

age group, however, showed higher scores on questions such as "How do you persist in tasks despite difficulties?" and "How effectively do you organize your learning schedule?" reflecting strong perseverance and regulation.

These findings suggest that age can have a significant impact on students' motivation and learning outcomes, with different age groups excelling in various aspects of lifelong learning. This aligns with Stevens and Bavelier (2012), who highlight the varying learning needs and strengths across different age groups. Tailored educational strategies should thus consider these age-related differences to enhance lifelong learning outcomes for all students.

In terms of majors, students in health sciences had the highest scores in motivation and perseverance, while those in business had the highest score in regulation. Accounting students showed good scores in motivation and regulation but scored lower in curiosity. Engineering students had the lowest scores in all dimensions, suggesting they may struggle with maintaining motivation and self-regulation. For example, health sciences students reported high frequencies in responses to questions like "How often do you persist with learning tasks despite difficulties?" and "How motivated are you to continue learning new topics related to your field?", indicating strong perseverance and motivation. Business students, on the other hand, scored highly on questions such as "How effectively do you plan and organize your study activities?", reflecting their strong regulatory skills.

These results highlight the importance of considering the unique characteristics of each major in designing effective learning strategies (Meece et al., 2006). Tailored educational strategies can help address specific needs, such as enhancing curiosity among accounting students by introducing more exploratory and innovative learning activities. For engineering students, strategies that boost motivation and self-regulation, such as goal-setting workshops and time management training, could be particularly beneficial. Recognizing and addressing these differences can lead to more effective and personalized learning experiences, ultimately improving academic outcomes across various fields.

Regarding location, students from municipalities outside of Medellín, but still within the department of Antioquia, had the highest scores in all dimensions, particularly in perseverance. For instance, these students rated highly on questions such as "How often do you continue to work on a task until it is completed?" and "How do you overcome obstacles in

152

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

your learning process?" indicating a high level of perseverance.

These findings suggest that students from rural areas may have higher levels of resilience and persistence, which could be attributed to their upbringing and cultural values. Rural students often grow up in environments where they face various challenges, which may contribute to developing a strong sense of perseverance and resilience. This is supported by Raj et al. (2020), who found that rural students tend to exhibit higher levels of these traits due to their exposure to challenging life circumstances and the necessity to overcome them.

Additionally, the sense of community and collective effort often emphasized in rural cultures might further reinforce these traits, leading to higher perseverance and resilience in their academic pursuits. These insights highlight the importance of recognizing and supporting the unique strengths of students from different geographical backgrounds in educational strategies.

Conclusions

In light of the study's findings, it can be deduced that lifelong learning must be a continuous process and that it is crucial to take older students (classified here as 30 years and older, based on the age group distinctions used in this study) into account in order to motivate them to continue their English language studies. This can be achieved through complementary offers taught by the institution to further promote language acquisition. For instance, targeted workshops and mentoring programs can be developed to address the specific needs and challenges faced by older students, as suggested by previous studies (Stevens and Bavelier, 2012).

Additionally, it is crucial to enhance students' capacity for lifelong learning. To do this, the institution and all academic staff must work together by fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment. This can involve regular meetings between faculty members to discuss and share best practices, integrating lifelong learning principles into the curriculum, and providing continuous professional development opportunities for educators. It is pertinent to make changes to the current curriculum by emphasizing lifelong learning skills in both regular courses and continuing education courses, ensuring that all students, regardless of age, are equipped with the necessary skills to continue learning throughout their lives.

In order to encourage lifelong learning in the teaching of English, technology should

also be used more and students should be informed about self-teaching so they can learn using the medium they like and feel most comfortable using. This component is related to the institution's promotion of learning strategies so that students can employ the most effective method to continue their instruction and learning of the English language.

Finally, one of the conclusions that could be drawn is to encourage the use of English for specific objectives so that the student is prepared for both his general education and future employment.

References

Agudo-Peregrina, A. F., Hernández-García, A., & Pascual-Miguel, F. J. (2014). Behavioral intention, use behavior and the acceptance of electronic learning systems: Differences between higher education and lifelong learning. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, *34*, 301-314. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.10.035

Bernal Castañeda, S. (2017) Lifelong learning and limiting factors in second language acquisition for adult students in post-obligatory education, *Cogent Psychology*, *4*(1), 1404699, DOI: 10.1080/23311908.2017.1404699.

Castañeda, S. B. (2016). Methodologies for teaching English to adult students in Spanish vocational education programs. Journal of Professional, *Continuing and Online Education*, *2*(1), 2016.

Coskun, Y.D. & Demirel, M. (2012). Universite ogrencilerinin yasam boyu ogrenme egilimleri [University students' propensities for lifelong learning], Hacettepe Universitesi Egitim Fakultesi Dergisi [*Hacettepe University Education Faculty Journal*], *42*, 108-120

Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) manual*. Psychological Assessment Resources.

Cotton, K. (1998). *From high school student to lifelong learner your route to independence*. Washington: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Cronholm, S. (2021). Lifelong learning: Principles for designing university education. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, *20*, 35-60. https://doi.org/10.28945/4686

154

Reflections on lifelong learning in english as a foreign language
learning: A case study in a colombian university corporation

Cronholm, S., & Göbel, H. (2018, December). Guidelines supporting the formulation of design principles. *Proceedings of 29th Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS)* (pp. 1-11). Sydney, Australia: University of Sydney. https://doi.org/10.5130/acis2018.ak

Cronholm, S., & Göbel, H. (2019). Evaluation of action design research. Scandinavian *Journal of Information Systems*, *31*(2), 35-82. https://aisel.aisnet.org/sjis/vol31/iss2/2/

Dascalu, M. I., Bodea, C. N., Mihailescu, M. N., Tanase, E. A., & Ordoñez de Pablos, P. (2016). Educational recommender systems and their application in lifelong learning. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *35*(4), 290-297. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929x.2015.1128977

Deawele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. (2014). *Enjoyment and anxietyin second language communication*. Sydney: Cape Breton University.

Demirel, M. (2009). Lifelong learning and schools in the twenty-first century. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1, 1709-1716.

Deveci, T. (2013). Promoting lifelong learning. *Asian EFL Journal Professional Teaching Articles*, *72*, 4-19

Deveci, T. (2015). A comparative study of the lifelong learning propensities of English language learners: nationality, gender and length of study. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, *12*(1).

Dimova S (2012). Foreign language for content: Aiming to develop lifelong learning dispositions. [Doctoral Dissertation, Georgia State University].

Dornan, T., Osborn, M., & Bushnell, J. A. (2015). Female medical students: Who are they and how do they perform? *BMC Medical Education*, *15*(1), 84.

Duke C, & Hinzen H. (2011). Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Within UNESCO: CONFINTEA, Education for All, and Beyond. *Adult Learning*. *22*(4), 18-23. doi:10.1177/104515951102200404

Dunlap, J. C., & Lowenthal, P. R. (2013). Learning, unlearning, and relearning: Using Web 2.0 technologies to support the development of lifelong learning skills. In M. Khosrowpour (Ed.), *IT policy and ethics: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications* (pp. 170-193). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-2919-6.ch009g

Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *53*, 109-132.

Else-Quest, N. M., Hyde, J. S., & Linn, M. C. (2010). Cross-national patterns of gender differences in mathematics: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*(1), 103-127.

Gorghiu, M., L., Gorghiu, G., Dogan, Y., Z. & Gerceker, P. (2013). Promoting the Nano - Technology Concepts in secondary Science Education through ICT Tools – the Romanian and Turkish teachers' Perception, *Global Journal on Technology*, 3, 577-583

Gunuc, S., Odabasi, H.F. & Kuzu, A. (2012). Yasam boyu ogrenmeyi etkileyen faktorler [Factors affecting lifelong learning]. Gaziantep Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi [*Gaziantep University Social Sciences Journal*], *11*(2), 309-325.

James, L., Guile, D. & Unwin L. (2013). Learning and innovation in the knowledge-based economy: beyond clusters and qualifications. *Journal of Education and Work*, *26*(3).

Klug, J., Krause, N., Schober, B., Finsterwald, M., & Spiel, C. (2014). How do teachers promote their students' lifelong learning in class? Development and first application of the LLL Interview. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *37*(1), 119-129

Knapper, C., & Cropley, A. (2000). *Lifelong learning in higher education*. London: Kogan Page

Kubota, R. (2011). Learning a foreign language as leisure and consumption: enjoyment, desire, and the business of eikaiwa. *Int. J. Bilingual Educ. Bilingualism*, *14*(4), 473-88.

Lamb, M. (2017). The motivational dimension of language teaching. *Language Teaching*, *50*(3), 301-346. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000088

Lasagabaster, D. (2014). *Motivation and foreign language learning from theory to practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Litman, J. A. (2005). Curiosity and the pleasures of learning: wanting and liking new information. *Cognition and Emotion*, *19*(6), 793-814.

McCarthy, B., Garcia, A., & Heiser, D. (2019). Examining the differences in online versus face-to-face learning: A comparison of degree and certificate programs in homeland security. *Journal of Emergency Management*, *17*(3), 175-183.

Meece, J. L., Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Predictors of math anxiety and its influence on young adolescents' course enrollment intentions and performance in mathematics. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *98*(3), 485- 494.

Muñoz, C. (2010). Age-related differences in foreign language learning. Revisiting the empirical evidence. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *46*, 197–220

O'Callaghan, A., Murphy, J., & O'Connell, R. (2016). Gender differences in medical student career perceptions and related motivations. *Academic Medicine*, *91*(9), 1239-1245.

Özcan, D., & Uzunboylu, H. (2012). Perceptions of Principals towards Lifelong Learning. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, *7*(3), 148-157.

Özdamlı, F., & Özdal, H. (2014). Life-long Learning Competence Perceptions of the Teachers and Abilities in Using Information-Communication Technologies. *4th World Conference on Educational Technology Researches.*

Preece, J. (2013). Africa and international policy making for lifelong learning: textual revelations. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *33*(1), 98-105.

Proulx, J. (2004). *Apprentissage par projet*. Québec : Presses Université Quebec

Raj, R., Arora, A., & Dhar, R. L. (2020). Impact of rural upbringing and demographics on entrepreneurial behaviour: A study of Indian women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, *12*(4), 762-779.

Rovai, A. P. (2003). In search of higher persistence rates in distance education online programs. *Internet and Higher Education*, *6*, 1-16.

Savina, T. (2015). Specificity of English-Language Teaching for Senior Learners within the Lifelong Learning Concept. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*, *8*, 2606-2613. DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-2015-8-11-2606-2613.

Soni, S (2012). Lifelong learning- Education and training. Paper presented in FIG Working Week 2012. Knowing to manage the territory, protect the environment, evaluate the cultural heritage, 6-10 May 2012, Rome: Italy

Todaka, Y. (2020) EFL Learning Motivation: Lifelong Enjoyment. *International Journal of English Language Teaching. 7*(24). DOI:10.5430/ijelt.v7n2p24.