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**“Translation of Three Articles (English-Spanish) from The Modern Languages Magazine and Fabián Elizondo’s full book “Hacia ningún lugar” (Spanish-English)”**

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## **Abstract**

To present an interesting and reliable translation as the graduation thesis from the Post-grad English Translation Program, the author decided to present a thorough translation to Spanish of three articles from the Modern Languages Magazine, besides a translation into English of the book “Hacia ningún lugar”, written by José Fabián Elizondo. In order to do so, the corresponding translation methods for each document is established, besides an analysis on how the translation of each document increases not only the audience for the corresponding authors, but also, the English or Spanish readers’ accessibility of the documents in their native language. Moreover, the original texts are confronted and analyzed against their corresponding translations to ensure that the authors’ meaning and objectives remain true to the initial document.

*Key words:* translation, English, Spanish, articles, Hacia ningún lugar, Modern Languages Magazine, native language, translation methods

## Resumen

Para presentar una traducción interesante y confiable como tesis de graduación del Programa de Posgrado en Traducción del Inglés, la autora decidió realizar una traducción exhaustiva al español de tres artículos de la revista *Modern Languages Magazine*, además de una traducción al inglés del libro *Hacia Ningún Lugar*, escrito por José Fabián Elizondo. Para ello, se establecerán los métodos de traducción correspondientes para cada documento, junto con un análisis sobre cómo la traducción de cada texto contribuye no solo a ampliar el público de los autores respectivos, sino también a mejorar la accesibilidad de los lectores angloparlantes o hispanohablantes a los textos en su lengua materna. Asimismo, los textos originales serán comparados y analizados con sus traducciones correspondientes para garantizar que el sentido y los objetivos de los autores se mantengan fieles al documento original.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introductory Framework**

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Spanish-speaking teachers and public in general cannot access important material and articles created by English-speaking educators due to a language barrier. They are missing a great deal of important information and documents because they do not speak the same language as the creators. Moreover, English-speaking individuals are not able to read documents, books, and information in general that is created by Spanish-speaking instructors; therefore, this creates issues in communication, knowledge sharing, and learning. The use of public-access translation software such as Google Translate and other artificial intelligence tools, even though portrayed as allies for people, do not provide faithful and reliable translations of texts. It would be ideal to have accurate translations of those documents, so both audiences can easily access and obtain important data that can be useful in their life and professions.

#### **1.2 Objectives**

##### ***1.2.1 General Objective***

- To produce accurate and stylistically faithful translations of selected English and Spanish literary texts, preserving their original tone, rhythm, and contextual meaning.

##### ***1.2.2 Specific Objectives***

- To identify and apply appropriate translation strategies to each text type.
- To evaluate the impact of translation on reader accessibility and reception.
- To conduct a comparative textual analysis to assess fidelity to the source material.

##### ***1.2.3 Justification***

This research project presents a bilingual literary translation study, involving the Spanish translation of three articles from *The Modern Languages Magazine* and the English translation of the book “*Hacia ningún lugar*” by José Fabián Elizondo. The study establishes appropriate translation methods for each text and analyzes how translation enhances accessibility and readership. A comparative analysis between the original texts and their translations ensures fidelity to the authors’ intended meaning and stylistic choices.

##### ***1.2.4 Antecedents***

Due to a significant language gap, English and Spanish speakers have been missing a lot of useful information created in either language, which they cannot read and/or speak.

Translation has become the most powerful tool in terms of closing that gap between the two languages, but it has not been easy. Unfortunately, most translation tools are not as reliable as people would like to picture them.

By the early 1980s, large translation organizations started adopting machine-aided translation systems by providing translators with tools to assist their work, rather than replacing them entirely. Hutchins (1990) indicated that “The situation changed in the early 1980s with the appearance of the first machine-aided translation systems. In these systems the translators were clearly in full control; they could accept or reject the versions and the help provided by the systems as they wished.” Having control over machines is desirable since nowadays, translators feel that technological advances have been turning them into a fly in the wall.

As technology evolves, a lot of translation systems, software and tools have appeared. In order to make their lives easier, individuals have relied on these translators to understand another language, but most are inaccurate and end up confusing the users. Steigerwald et al. (2022) mentioned that “Following the introduction of the Internet and the increasing trend of producing texts in digital form, machine translation researchers moved away from linguistic approaches and toward data-driven machine translation, which capitalized on the strengths of computers” (par. 11) This idea has recently been used by many to work on translations, but it is not as precise and accurate as a human translation. The main issue found in translation software is that they lack content understanding since machine translation lacks human intuition.

Artificial intelligence has been expanding rapidly and now people are trusting more and more all these aids, but what cannot be denied is that humans always have to feed machines in order for them to work (Russell & Norvig, 2021). In Costa Rica, translators have used CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools, but even translation apps are continuously refining the ways in which machine learning is applied, the reliability of such software is still a regular topic in conversations.

Spanish speakers look for accurate translations of documents, especially teachers who want to inform themselves better and expand their knowledge based on educators from other cultures and their experiences. Unfortunately, they cannot fully access this knowledge if they do not speak the most widely used language, that is English. The same happens to English speakers who want to read articles and books created by Spanish speakers; they have always needed, and still need, translation. As Venuti (2008) explained, “translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text

that is intelligible to the target-language reader” (p. 18). This process makes cross-cultural knowledge exchange possible, allowing ideas to circulate beyond linguistic boundaries.

### **1.2.5 Scope**

- Analyze the use of all translation procedures and the corresponding criteria learned throughout the post-graduate major
- Assess the use of translation methods during all translation processes
- Examine the translations with color-coding text analysis, glossaries, and translation procedures
- Utilize the different translation levels on the corresponding types of translation in order to generate precise and high-level literary and teaching translations
- Create accurate and useful translations that help people understand documents that are not originally written in their native language
- Expand opportunities to find documents in either English or Spanish for both native non-native speakers
- Make available to the public a viable and truthful translation of the book “Hacia ningún lugar”, increasing the opportunities of finding Costa Rican literature in English
- Help students, professors, and people in general who want to access teaching articles from the University of Costa Rica and do not have English knowledge

## **Chapter II**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1 Text Analysis**

This project is based on the translation of some documents from English into Spanish and Spanish into English, but before examining the different types of translation, it is important to understand what a translation is. Newmark (1988) described it as “Often, though not by any means always, it is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (p. 5). Moreover, current authors like Emad Jasem (2022) see it as “a process of conveying meaning or information from one language to another” (p. 86). It is clear that the essence of translation is conveying the meaning of the original message into the target language. Moreover, it has been stated that, even though many years have passed, the purpose of a translation remains the same.

There are two main types of translations: by method and by subject matter. Translations by method include literal translation, trans-creation, communicative translation, semantic translation, idiomatic translation, faithful translation, and free translation, while subject matter translations encompass literary, legal, technical, medical, and others, all based on the purpose and field of the content. Currently, people can find other types of translation such as machine translation, human translation, and hybrid translation, which are clearly defined by their names.

As Emad Jasem (2022) explains, “Semantic translation is committed to analyzing the meaning of words and sentences in the source language, producing a translation that is semantically and syntactically close to the source language” (p. 89). On the other hand, “Communicative translation focuses more on the social aspect, concentrates on the message and the main force of the text and is always written in a natural and resourceful manner. Basically, semantic translation has to interpret, while communicative translation has to explain” (p. 92). This distinction highlights how translation methods differ depending on whether priority is given to the source text or the target audience.

#### **2.2 Text Styles and Literary Language**

Literary language is the style of language used in works of literature that goes beyond everyday communication to create artistic, expressive, and imaginative effects. It often employs figurative language (such as metaphors, similes, and symbolism) along with carefully chosen vocabulary, rhythm, and sentence structure to evoke emotions, convey deeper meanings, or paint vivid mental images.

Unlike ordinary language, which primarily focuses on clear and practical communication, literary language emphasizes aesthetic qualities, creativity, and emotional impact. It allows writers to explore complex ideas, express subjective experiences, and engage readers in a more immersive and reflective way.

As Jakobson (1960) explained, “the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (p. 358), highlighting how literary language foregrounds form and structure to create aesthetic effect.

### ***2.2.1 Figurative Language***

This characteristic of literary language is a way of using words and expressions to convey meaning beyond their literal interpretation. It involves techniques like metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism to create imagery, emphasize ideas, or evoke emotions. As Newmark (1988) explains, “by metaphor, I mean any figurative expression: the transferred sense of a physical word... the application of a word or collocation to what it does not literally denote, i.e., to describe one thing in terms of another” (p. 104). He pointed out how figurative language allows writers to extend meaning beyond the literal and engage readers’ imagination.

Different from literal language, which states facts directly, figurative language adds depth and richness to writing by appealing to the reader’s imagination and senses. In literature, it is a powerful tool for expressing abstract concepts, highlighting themes, and making language more vivid and memorable.

### ***2.2.2 Imagery***

Refers to the deliberate use of vivid, sensory-rich descriptions to enhance the aesthetic and emotional impact of a text. In literature, imagery goes beyond simple depiction; it appeals to the reader’s senses and imagination to create mental pictures, evoke feelings, and convey deeper meanings.

This characteristic allows authors to make abstract ideas tangible, highlight themes, and immerse readers in the world of the story or poem. By using imagery, literary language achieves a level of expressiveness and depth that distinguishes it from every day, literal language.

### ***2.2.3 Symbolism***

It represents the use of objects, characters, colors, or events to represent deeper ideas, concepts, or themes beyond their literal meaning. In literature, symbols allow writers

to convey complex emotions, social commentary, or philosophical messages in a subtle and layered way.

This characteristic enriches literary language by adding depth and interpretive possibilities, encouraging readers to engage with the text on both a literal and a metaphorical level. Through symbolism, writers can communicate meaning more powerfully and artistically than through direct statements alone.

As Gopinathan (2006) suggests, in creative translation “the re-interpretation of the original work [...] with suitable interpolations, explanations, expansions, summarizing and aesthetic innovations in style and techniques” reveals cultural and aesthetic meanings that would otherwise remain inaccessible in a purely literal rendering (p. 3). This process mirrors how symbolism in literature enriches meaning by operating beyond the straightforward, surface narrative.

#### ***2.2.4 Sound Devices***

They help words enhance the rhythm, mood, or meaning of a text. These include alliteration (repetition of initial consonant sounds), assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), consonance (repetition of consonant sounds within or at the end of words), rhyme, and onomatopoeia (words that imitate sounds).

In literature, sound devices contribute to the musicality of language, emphasize important words or themes, and create emotional effects that engage the reader’s senses. They are especially prominent in poetry but can also enrich prose, making the language more expressive, memorable, and impactful.

#### ***2.2.5 Ambiguity and Polysemy***

They refer to the multiple layers of meaning that words, phrases, or passages can convey. Ambiguity occurs when a word or sentence can be interpreted in more than one way, intentionally or unintentionally, allowing readers to explore different possible meanings and engage more deeply with the text.

Moreover, polysemy refers to a single word having multiple related meanings, which authors can exploit to add richness, nuance, or wordplay to their writing. Both ambiguity and polysemy are valuable in literary language because they create depth, provoke thought, and invite readers to interpret and reflect on the text, making the reading experience more dynamic and intellectually stimulating.

### **2.2.6 Elevated Diction**

This characteristic of literary language conveys the use of formal, sophisticated, or refined vocabulary and phrasing to create a sense of importance, dignity, or artistic quality in a text. This type of language often avoids colloquialisms or everyday speech in favor of carefully chosen words that convey precision, elegance, or rhetorical power.

Elevated diction can enhance the tone, emphasize themes, and contribute to the overall aesthetic effect of literature, making the text feel more serious, polished, or emotionally resonant. It is commonly found in poetry, epic narratives, and literary prose where the language itself is meant to be as expressive and impactful as the ideas being conveyed.

## **2.3 Literary Translation of Books**

After a deep overview of translation types, levels, and their coverage of different aspects of text analysis, it is important to highlight the two main translation types that are covered in this project, literary translation and technical translation. In the case of the book *Hacia ningún lugar*, written by Jose Fabian Elizondo, the translation type used is literary since the use of metaphors is key throughout the text. It requires a deep analysis of the literary characteristics and how they help the reader react to and identify with the written piece.

As Landers (2001) explains, “a style is the idiolect of the ST author” (p. 91), which reflects how literary translation must preserve not only meaning but also the original author’s stylistic voice. This understanding reinforces the idea that translating *Hacia ningún lugar* involves more than literal accuracy, it requires a careful rendering of the author’s artistic and expressive choices.

## **2.4 Technical Translation of Articles**

In the case of the three articles published by Daniela Barrantes in the *Modern Languages Magazine*, the corresponding translation is technical due to the technicalisms used by educators from the University of Costa Rica. As Newmark (1988) explained, “technical translation is primarily distinguished from other forms of translation by terminology, although terminology usually only makes up about 5-10% of a text” (p. 151), making sure that even though technicalities may be used, the essence or gist of a text is key, in this case for instructors. The points to mention here are scientific and technical translation, technical translation and glossaries, and knowing the specific audience for the texts.

### **2.4.1 Scientific and Technical Translation**

Scientific and Technical Translation go hand-in-hand because both deal with specialized knowledge, precise terminology, and clear communication of complex concepts. Scientific translation often involves research papers, journals, and studies that require accuracy in presenting data, hypotheses, and results, while technical translation focuses on manuals, instructions, patents, and technical documentation where clarity and functionality are essential.

Together, scientific and technical translation ensure that knowledge and innovation can cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, enabling collaboration among researchers, engineers, and professionals worldwide. Their importance lies in facilitating global scientific progress, ensuring safety and usability in technical fields, and making specialized information accessible to a wider audience without compromising precision or meaning. For translators of technical and scientific texts, it is key to have access to technical dictionaries and up-to-date databases.

## **2.5 Stylistic Scales and Translation Levels**

Translation levels are the different stages at which translation operates, depending on what aspects of the text are being transformed from the source language into the target language. Each level focuses on a specific linguistic or communicative component, helping translators analyze and render meaning more accurately.

Newmark (1988) mentions that "Translation is pre-eminently the occupation in which you have to be thinking of several things at the same time" (p. 22). This is clearly how we understand the translation levels because many things have to be considered simultaneously during the translation process. These levels are used to categorize translated sentences, phrases, and words. The different categories include phonetics, morphology, syntax, stylistics, lexis, semantics, and mechanics and punctuation. It is important to mention that, even though all categories apply to both English and Spanish, some are named differently and their subcategories are not the same.

### **2.5.1 Phonetic Level**

This level represents all the physical sounds of speaking (phonemes), intonation, accents, and repetition. It checks the relationship between sounds and meanings. Phonetics involves the mapping of sounds during the translation and its objective is to reproduce the original sound effects from the source language. This level subdivides into harmony, cacophony, hiatus, and sonsonete.

**2.5.1.1 Harmony (“*armonía*” in Spanish).** Represents a coherent combination of words; the concordance and balance of sounds for fluidity.

**2.5.1.2 Cacophony (“*cacofonía*” in Spanish).** It is the repetition of sounds or incorrect combination of phonemes with pronunciation difficulty. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in a language that distinguish one word from another.

**2.5.1.3 Hiatus (“*hiato*” in Spanish).** Conveys the separation of two consecutive vowels in different syllables.

**2.5.1.4 Sonsonete.** It sounds musical and soft due to the repetition of consonant sounds or letters with rhythm.

### ***2.5.2 Morphological Level***

This category studies words and their internal structures (called morphemes) as well as the grammatical errors for each type. There are two types of morphemes, free morphemes and bound morphemes; the first can stand alone as a word, and the second, must be attached to other morpheme(s) in order to have an actual meaning.

Catford (1965) explained that “in rank-bound translation an equivalent is sought in the TL for each word, or for each morpheme encountered in the ST” (as cited in Equivalence in Translation, n.d.), referring to how translation equivalence can be sought at the morphological level as part of the broader linguistic structure of languages.

The error subcategories are called barbarisms in Spanish. Barbarisms are linguistic errors that occur when a word is used in a way that violates the norms of a language, usually because it is foreign, misspelled, mispronounced, or incorrectly formed. It occurs when someone introduces an element that does not belong to the accepted vocabulary or structure of a language.

**2.5.2.1 Error of Noun (“*Barbarismo de Sustantivo*”).** It portrays the misuse of a noun, pluralization, addition of the “-s” suffix, or errors in forming irregular nouns.

**2.5.2.2 Error of Adjective (“*Barbarismo de Adjetivo*”).** It represents the incorrect use of word formation or inflection. It is the incorrect writing of an adjective.

**2.5.2.3 Error of Pronoun (“*Barbarismo de Pronombre*”).** When pronouns are used incorrectly, affecting the structure and/or form rather than the grammatical function; it is the misuse of a pronoun.

**2.5.2.4 Error of Verb (“*Barbarismo de Verbo*”).** It happens when the incorrect form of a verb is used in a sentence like issues with the incorrect usage of passive voice.

**2.5.2.5 Error of Preposition (does not exist in Spanish).** It conveys prepositions used, omitted, or added incorrectly.

**2.5.2.6 Error of Article (“*Barbarismo de Artículo*”).** This is the incorrect use of “a”, “an”, or “the” due to a misunderstanding of their function.

**2.5.2.7 Error of Conjunction (“*Barbarismo de Conjunción*”).** It shows a mistake in the form of a conjunction itself, rather than how it is used in a sentence.

**2.5.2.8 Error of Interjection (“*Barbarismo de Interjección*”).** It is the use of an invented, exaggerated, or contextually inappropriate interjection.

### **2.5.3 Syntactic Level**

This category explains how words combine to form sentences and phrases with semantics. In this level, the subcategories are completely different in both languages; for this reason, most be explained separately.

At the syntactic level, translators analyze and adapt the syntax of the original text to fit the grammatical norms of the target language. Because different languages organize their sentences in distinct ways (for example, English follows a subject-verb-object order, while other languages may vary), word-for-word translation often produces awkward or incorrect results.

In Spanish, these errors are called solecisms (“*solecismos*”), which are errors in the structure of a phrase, such as the incorrect usage of word order, wrong use of prepositions, agreement (gender, number, etc.) or verbal regimes. In other words, solecisms are grammatical errors in either writing or speech.

**2.5.3.1 Agreement (English).** It represents the lack of agreement among elements; meaning that the subject and verb must agree, as well as number, gender, and person.

**2.5.3.2 Word Order (English).** This conveys that all words must have the right syntactical order without affecting meaning and clarity.

**2.5.3.3 Coordination (English).** Represents coordinating elements which are not properly linked or if the structure of coordinated phrases violates grammatical rules, such as comma splices or run-on sentences.

**2.5.3.4 Subordination (English).** When dependent clauses (also called subordinate clauses) are used incorrectly. Usage of coordinating conjunctions.

**2.5.3.5 Solecism of Discordance (Spanish).** Same as Agreement in English. It highlights when there is no agreement among elements such as subject and verb, number, gender, and person.

**2.5.3.6 Solecism of Regime (Spanish).** Also known as Solecism of Preposition, marks the incorrect use of a preposition. This option is not found in English.

**2.5.3.7 Solecism of Construction (Spanish).** Here are categorized all errors of structure or element order in a sentence.

#### ***2.5.4 Stylistic Level***

It studies the different styles found throughout the text, especially in literature. This level of translation deals with how something is expressed, not only with what is expressed, making it essential for achieving natural, culturally appropriate, and stylistically consistent translations. Moreover, it focuses on how the style (the author's personal or genre-specific way of using language) is conveyed across languages.

At this level, translation goes beyond conveying meaning accurately; it aims to reproduce the same aesthetic, emotional, and cultural impact that the original text has on its readers. This involves considering aspects such as formality or informality, literary devices, sentence rhythm, lexical choice, and tone.

According to Baker's (2018) framework of equivalence, translation must consider not only lexical and grammatical correspondences but also the expressive and stylistic features of the source text, because these contribute to the overall meaning and effect of the text in a target language (p. 230). This shows how the stylistic level plays a key role in conveying the expressive qualities of the source text.

As a summary, Stylistics ensures that the translated text maintains correct grammar and natural sentence flow while preserving the meaning of the original. It is the level where translators transform the structure of sentences so that they make sense within the grammatical framework of the target language.

**2.5.4.1 Ambiguity.** The information can be interpreted in more than one way due to the way the words and phrases are combined. It is the capacity that certain words have of providing different interpretations to the text.

**2.5.4.2 Originality.** Conveys all the mistakes that deviate from the expected style and tone of a piece of writing, potentially impacting its clarity, impact, and effectiveness. Basically, it is each author's capacity of creating their own style of literature.

**2.5.4.3 Clarity.** Highlights the use of vague language, passive voice, overly complex sentences, and incorrect use of modifiers. Its objective is for the audience to read a text and understand it without any difficulty.

**2.5.4.4 Parallelism.** Happens when the elements within a sentence are not grammatically or structurally consistent. Also, it conveys the repeated use of the same literary structure. This device helps to make writing clearer, more rhythmic, and more persuasive by ensuring that ideas of equal importance are expressed in the same form.

**2.5.4.5 Coherence.** Missing or misused transition words, unclear topic sentences, inconsistent pronoun references, and parts of the essay that are difficult to understand due to poor paraphrasing.

**2.5.4.6 Accuracy (Precision in Spanish).** Use of precise and effective language to convey meaning, appropriate word choice, sentence structure, and paragraphing to achieve the desired outcome and purpose. Do not leave information incomplete or behind.

**2.5.4.7 Colloquialism.** Use of a phrase or word extracted from an adjacent language or culture; also, everyday language used by people of a certain region, used incorrectly. A concise text eliminates unnecessary words, repetition, and filler phrases, making the writing direct, focused, and easy to understand.

**2.5.4.8 Variety.** It represents the different types of styles that can be used in diverse contexts. Moreover, it is the range of forms that a language can take, including dialects, registers, styles, and social dialects.

**2.5.4.9 Conciseness.** Use of essential words, which are not only important, but also relevant; unnecessary information may be deleted such as articles. A concise text avoids unnecessary repetition, filler words, and wordy expressions, allowing the message to be direct and easy to understand.

**2.5.4.10 Monotony.** When writing lacks variety, rhythm, and engagement; the frequent use of the same words and expressions as a result of limited vocabulary may result in a poor and hard-to-understand text.

**2.5.4.11 Naturalness.** Shows the preference for certain grammatical structures that are more easily processed and perceived. It is important that the author has a

wide variety of words in his/her lexicon to create natural and enriched expressions in the target language.

**2.5.4.12 Point of View.** It is the perspective from which a sentence or phrase is analyzed. Conveys the standpoint or angle from which a story is told, for example in literature, it demonstrates who is narrating the story and how much that narrator knows about the events and characters.

**2.5.4.13 Redundancy.** Conveys the repetition and duplication of information in a sentence or in a paragraph; essentially, it is information that does not add new meaning or value to the message. It often makes writing wordy, unclear, or less effective, because the same idea is expressed more than once in slightly different ways.

**2.5.4.14 Run-On Sentences.** Sentences in which two or more independent clauses (complete thoughts) are joined together incorrectly, without proper punctuation or connecting words. A run-on sentence happens when ideas that should be separated into distinct sentences or joined with conjunctions are written as one long, unbroken sentence.

**2.5.4.15 Sentence Fragments.** They are groups of words punctuated as complete sentences; incomplete sentences that are missing a key part, usually a subject, a verb, or a complete thought. Because of this, a fragment cannot stand alone as a full sentence and leaves the reader wondering what is missing.

**2.5.4.16 Unity and Logical Thinking.** The key objective is to focus on one main idea; every part of the text supports that central idea without straying into unrelated topics. Logical thinking helps to organize ideas in a clear, rational, and consistent order so that readers can easily follow the writer's reasoning.

**2.5.4.17 Variety.** Represents the different forms or ways a language is used in order to avoid monotony. It prevents writing from being monotonous or repetitive, and it helps to maintain the reader's attention.

**2.5.4.18 Wordiness.** Includes the use of more words than necessary to express an idea. Wordy texts can be confusing, repetitive, or less effective, because the main point is buried under extra words, phrases, or explanations that do not add value.

### ***2.5.5 Lexical Level***

When covering the lexical meaning of a word, Baker (2018) explained that "the specific value it has in a particular linguistic system and the 'personality' it acquires through usage within that system" (p. 11). Therefore, this translation level involves vocabulary, meaning of words, and how they are organized. Essentially, it considers what words are

used and how they convey meaning. It examines word choice or diction, word meaning or semantics, word frequency and repetition, collocations and lexical patterns, register and style, figurative language, and idioms.

The lexical level has the same categories in both languages, English and Spanish, which makes it easier to explain and understand. The subcategories for this level are: archaisms, foreign words, impurity, neologisms, and vulgarisms. They are explained below.

**2.5.5.1 Archaisms.** Outdated words or phrases that are no longer in common use. In texts, archaisms often appear in literary, religious, legal, or historical writing to give a sense of antiquity, formality, or solemnity.

**2.5.5.2 Foreign Words (“*Extranjerismo*” in Spanish).** These are words adapted from one language to another. They are terms or expressions borrowed from one language and appear in the target language. They stand out because they retain their original form, spelling, or pronunciation from the source language.

**2.5.5.3 Impurity.** Refers to the use of elements that do not belong naturally to a given language, style, or register, that breaks the linguistic or stylistic purity of a text. It happens when a text mixes language, styles, or registers inappropriately in a way that seems unnatural, inconsistent, or unnecessary for the context.

**2.5.5.4 Neologisms.** They convey newly introduced words, terms, or phrases that are become commonly used. Moreover, it also involves an existing word used with a new meaning. Identifying neologisms helps the reader understand cultural context, and which social and technological trends the author could be referring to. Also, it helps understand the writer’s creativity, tone, and style as well as capturing younger readers with “updated” vocabulary.

**2.5.5.5 Vulgarism.** Depicts incorrect expressions that divert from the language. These words or phrases are considered as non-standard, unrefined, coarse, or obscene. These crude or offensive expressions belong to the lowest level of language and show strong emotions like anger or frustration. They are socially inappropriate and generally avoided in formal writing.

## **2.5.6 Semantic Level**

It focuses on how the words are combined to create sentences and phrases; works with syntax, the rules of grammar. In text analysis, the semantic level emphasizes meaning, how words, phrases, and sentences convey ideas, and how those meanings relate to one another within a text.

Newmark (1988) explained that “semantic translation differs from ‘faithful translation’ only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sound of the SL text, compromising on ‘meaning’ where appropriate so that no assonance, word-play or repetition jars in the finished version” (p. 46). This highlights that the semantic level attends both, meaning and linguistic expression in the target language

The semantic level studies the context dependence, the sense and reference, the relationships between words, coherence, and meaning. The subcategories under this level include false cognates, meaning distortion, polysemy, synonymy, and broad and vague words.

**2.5.6.1 False Cognates (False Friends for Spanish).** Words from two languages that share similarities in sound or spelling, but have different meanings. They often confuse readers and even translators since they appear to be related but are not equal in meaning.

**2.5.6.2 Meaning distortion.** Occurs when the original or intended meaning of a text is changed, misrepresented, or lost, often due to errors in word choice, translation, interpretation, or context. The message no longer accurately reflects the author’s real idea.

**2.5.6.3 Polysemy.** Conveys a word or expression which may have several meanings; their spelling and pronunciation are the same, but the meanings are different. The meanings of this word are connected by a shared concept or origin.

**2.5.6.4 Synonymy.** It is the relationship between two words with the same or similar meaning. Even though these words may express similar ideas, they often differ slightly in tone, formality, or context of use.

**2.5.6.5 Broad and Vague Words.** These refer to words that are too general or imprecise, which can weaken clarity and make the message less effective. They often cover a wide range of possible interpretations, which can lead to ambiguity or lack of clarity in a text or in communication.

**2.5.6.6 Impropriety (only categorized in Spanish).** It covers the incorrect use of a word whose meaning does not fit the text, even though it may appear appropriate. Impropriety affects the accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness of a text.

### ***2.5.7 Mechanics and Punctuation***

This level refers to the rules of written language that help to make a text clear, readable, and grammatically correct. They include capitalization, spelling, punctuation

marks, and formatting, all of which guide readers and translators in understanding the structure, rhythm, and meaning.

**2.5.7.1 Word Division or Syllabication.** Encompasses the division of words into syllables, which are the basic units of sound in spoken language. Each syllable typically contains one vowel sound, which helps to determine the punctuation of a word, rhythm, and stress pattern. Understanding syllabication contributes to analyzing a text's sound, flow, and readability.

**2.5.7.2 Punctuation.** This area covers the system of symbols like commas, periods, semicolons, question marks, etc. that organize and clarify the written language. Punctuation helps readers understand the structure of the text, tone, rhythm, and meaning by showing where ideas begin, pause, or end.

**2.5.7.3 Capitalization (“*Uso de Mayúsculas*” in Spanish).** This subcategory covers the use of uppercase letters at the beginning of sentences, proper nouns, titles, and important words to indicate emphasis, importance, or grammatical structure. It helps readers identify names, sentence beginnings, and distinctions between general and specific terms.

**2.5.7.4 Spelling.** This subcategory plays a crucial role in ensuring accuracy, clarity, and credibility of a written text. It refers to the correct arrangement of letters in words according to standard language conventions.

## **2.6 Text Function**

### ***2.6.1 Metaphors in Literature***

Metaphors are a fundamental figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another, often unrelated, thing. Rather than stating something directly, metaphors imply a comparison, allowing the writer to convey meaning in a more vivid, imaginative, or symbolic way. By linking seemingly unrelated concepts, metaphors invite readers to engage their imagination and interpret deeper layers of meaning. Newmark (1988) mentioned that:

The purpose of metaphor is basically twofold: its referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise (p. 104).

This underscores why translators must often adapt or reinterpret metaphors to preserve both meaning and aesthetic effect.

In literature, metaphors serve as powerful tools for expressing complex ideas and emotions that might be difficult to communicate through literal language. They provide authors with a way to evoke mood, create imagery, and develop symbolism within their work. A well-crafted metaphor can transform abstract concepts, such as love, fear, or freedom, into tangible experiences that resonate with readers on a personal level. This ability to connect the abstract with the concrete enriches the reading experience and often makes literary works more memorable and impactful.

Metaphors also play a critical role in shaping the style and voice of a literary work. Writers use them to establish tone, reinforce themes, and reveal character's perspectives. For example, a character who frequently uses dark, violent metaphors may be portrayed as troubled or intense, while a narrative filled with light, natural imagery may evoke serenity or optimism. Through metaphor, authors can subtly influence how readers perceive the world of the story and the inner lives of its characters, adding layers of meaning that literal description alone might fail to achieve.

Finally, metaphors are important because they encourage readers to think critically and interpretively. Engaging with metaphorical language requires readers to recognize connections, consider symbolic implications, and reflect on the broader significance of the text. This active participation fosters deeper comprehension and emotional engagement with literature. In essence, metaphors not only enhance the aesthetic quality of writing but also deepen understanding, making them indispensable to both the craft of the author and the experience of the reader.

### **2.6.2 Types of Metaphors**

Metaphors are a vital literary device that enrich language by comparing one thing to another, often in imaginative or symbolic ways. However, not all metaphors are created equal; writers and linguists categorize them into different types based on their usage, originality, and impact on the reader.

Some metaphors are conventional, commonly understood and used in everyday language, while others are creative or poetic, offering fresh and striking comparisons that evoke vivid imagery. Additionally, there are dead metaphors, expressions that were once vivid but have become so familiar that their figurative nature is largely unnoticed.

Understanding these different types of metaphors helps readers and writers appreciate the range and power of metaphorical language in both literature and everyday communication. In the case of *Hacia ningún lugar*, the language used is a colloquial format of Spanish that Costa Ricans use on a daily basis, in which metaphors are always present.

**2.6.2.1 Conventional metaphors.** These metaphors are the ones that have become widely used and familiar in everyday language. Because they are so common, their figurative meaning is immediately recognized and often goes unnoticed as a metaphor.

Conventional metaphors are effective because they convey complex ideas quickly and efficiently, but they may lack the freshness or emotional impact of more novel comparisons. Their familiarity makes them useful for clear communication, but they are generally less striking in literary or artistic contexts.

**2.6.2.2 Creative or Poetic Metaphors.** They are original, imaginative comparisons crafted to produce a strong emotional or visual effect. Unlike conventional metaphors, these are not commonly used and often surprise the reader with their originality. They are frequently found in poetry and literary prose, where authors aim to evoke vivid imagery or deep insight.

For instance, this type of metaphors invites readers to visualize and feel the intensity of the emotion. Creative metaphors enrich language, offering new perspectives and transforming abstract experiences into tangible, memorable images.

**2.6.2.3 Dead metaphors.** This category represents the metaphors that were once vivid and imaginative but have become so overused that their figurative quality is largely forgotten. They are now perceived as literal or standard expressions rather than striking comparisons.

While dead metaphors may lose their original imagery, they still serve a functional role in language by providing familiar and efficient ways to describe concepts. In literature, their impact is limited, but in everyday communication, they remain practical and widely understood.

### ***2.6.3 Challenges of Translating Metaphors***

Translating metaphors presents a unique challenge because metaphors are deeply rooted in the cultural, social, and linguistic context of the source language. A metaphor that resonates naturally in one language may be confusing, meaningless, or even misleading in another. Translators must carefully consider both the literal and figurative aspects of the metaphor, as a word-for-word translation often fails to convey the intended imagery or emotional resonance.

Another major challenge is balancing fidelity to the source text with readability and stylistic appropriateness in the target language. Some metaphors rely on wordplay, sound,

or cultural associations that cannot be directly transferred, forcing translators to adapt or recreate them creatively.

Adaptation and recreation require not only linguistic skill, but also literary sensitivity, as the translator must capture the essence and tone of the original while producing a metaphor that feels natural and meaningful to the target audience. In some cases, translators may need to replace the original metaphor with a culturally equivalent one, explain it through expansion, or even omit it if suitable option does not exist, all of which involve careful judgment to maintain the integrity of the text.

#### ***2.6.4 Strategies for Metaphor Translation***

One common strategy for translating metaphors is literal translation, where the metaphor is transferred word-for-word into the target language. This approach works best when the metaphor is understandable and culturally relevant in both languages. However, literal translation can sometimes result in confusion or loss of meaning if the imagery does not carry over.

Another strategy is equivalence, in which the translator replaces the source metaphor with a different metaphor in the target language that conveys the same meaning or emotional effect. This method preserves the impact and stylistic function of the original metaphor, even if the wording changes. Both literal translation and equivalence aim to maintain the integrity of the metaphor while adapting it to the target audience.

Paraphrasing is another approach, where the metaphor is explained in plain language rather than reproduced figuratively. This strategy is useful when a metaphor is too culture-specific or complex to be directly translated, ensuring that the reader still understands the intended meaning.

Furthermore, replacing figures of speech is another option; it involves substituting the original metaphor with a completely different figurative expression that serves a similar purpose in the text. This approach is particularly common in literary translation, where preserving tone, mood, or imagery may be more important than maintaining the exact metaphor. By combining these strategies, translators can navigate the challenges of metaphor translation while retaining the richness and nuance of the original text.

Finally, omitting a metaphor in translation can sometimes be an effective strategy when the original expression is too culturally specific, obscure, or untranslatable, and retaining it would confuse or distract the reader. By leaving out the metaphor, the translator ensures clarity and avoids distorting the meaning of the text.

However, omission is generally considered a last resort because metaphors often carry significant stylistic, emotional, or thematic weight in a work. Removing them can reduce the richness, imagery, or nuance of the original text, potentially weakening its literary or rhetorical impact.

Understanding metaphors and their translation is essential because metaphors are key elements of literary expression, shaping how meaning, emotion, and imagery are conveyed in texts. Metaphors do not exist in isolation; they are part of the broader characteristics that define literature, such as style, tone, symbolism, and thematic depth.

By studying metaphors, readers and translators gain insight into the author's creative choices, the text's emotional resonance, and the ways language can evoke complex ideas. This connection naturally leads to an exploration of literary characteristics, such as examining elements like narrative structure, imagery, and figurative language, which provides a fuller understanding of how literature communicates meaning and engages its audience.

## **2.7 Translation Methods**

The translations by method aim to convert the source language into the target language by prioritizing. It all depends on their devotion to the source text, the linguistic structure, the author's original intention, or the text function to make the message easy to understand. Translations by method classify them based on how the conversion is carried out.

These methods are not rigid rules, but essential and flexible tools that guide translators in rendering meaning; as Emad Jasem (2022) mentions below, they help to preserve the original message while making informed choices:

Although, in most cases, a specific type of writing requires a specific translation approach but sometimes, a text may need both semantic and communicative translation, especially when the text relays a general rather than cultural or specific message. This can be true in instances when both the "form" and "content" of the message are equally important. Other than a semantic and communicative approach to translation, translation methods involve word-for-word translations, literal translations, faithful translation, adaptation, free translation, and idiomatic translation (p. 92).

All the mentioned above is discussed shortly in order to understand the differences among them.

### ***2.7.1 Literal Translation***

Some people may call it word-by-word translation, but it actually looks to adapt the source text into a grammatically-correct form in the target language. The most important characteristic of this method is that it prioritizes the form of the original text over naturalness in the language expressions.

### ***2.7.2 Transcreation***

This approach is mostly used in marketing, and not as much in literature translation, but it is key to mention that it recreates the content to encourage the same emotions as objectives in the target language. What is the main difference between translation and transcreation? According to Bolettieri (2010), “transcreation is a manipulative use of English” (p.191) while Gopinath (2006) remarks the term as the “rebirth or incarnation (Avatar) of the original work” (p.236) since the creative translations of Sanskrit were found improper based on the original work. These two authors agree that transcreation is not as broad as translation, and it manipulates the language to its convenience; to them, transcreation is recreating the same, but with a different translation.

### ***2.7.3 Communicative Translation***

The main goal of this translation method is to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original text had on its readers. In other words, instead of focusing strictly on word-for-word accuracy, it emphasizes on how the message is received and understood by the audience in the target language.

Communicative Translation adapts idioms, style, and expressions so that the text sounds natural in the target language. Also, just like in transcreation, it is used for practical texts like advertisements, instructions, political speeches, or any text meant to persuade, instruct, or engage people directly, but with a different objective. In this case, the purpose is to engage the audience.

### ***2.7.4 Semantic Translation***

This type of translation focuses on conveying the exact meaning of the original text as closely as possible, while still producing an easy-to-read version in the target language. It stays close to the original wording, grammar, and meaning; additionally, it preserves nuances such as tone, connotations, and the author’s style. All these characteristics make it less flexible than communicative translation, because it prioritizes accuracy to the source text. Semantic Translation is used in literary works, academic texts, legal documents, and any text where the precise meaning matters more than ease of reading.

### ***2.7.5 Idiomatic Translation***

This is a method of translation where the message of the original text is expressed using natural patterns, idioms, and everyday expressions of the target language, even if this means deviating from the exact wording or structure of the source text. This translation is target-language oriented because it sounds natural to native speakers; it also uses idioms, collocations, and style typical of the target language. The key feature of idiomatic translation is that it focuses on fluency and readability rather than on strict adherence to the source text's structure, and can involve rephrasing or substituting cultural expressions to make the text feel authentic.

### ***2.7.6 Faithful Translation***

In this approach, the translation tries to reproduce the exact contextual meaning of the original text while respecting the grammatical structures and norms of the target language. It is called faithful because it stays very loyal to the source text, even if the result might sound a little less natural to the target reader.

Moreover, faithful translation prioritizes accuracy and detail, and transfers meaning as precisely as possible, including nuances, tone, and cultural references. This concept allows only limited adjustments to make the text grammatically correct and understandable in the target language. In this case, faithful translation is used in academic, legal, or technical translations, where fidelity is more important than fluency.

### ***2.7.7 Free Translation***

This method focuses on the overall meaning of the original text rather than adhering strictly to the original structure and wording, as in literal translation. The positive aspect of this approach is that the translator has a free ticket to move away from the original language's structure and provide a more natural text in the target language. It is creative and flexible, and it can involve paraphrasing, summarizing, or adapting. Moreover, the wording may change a lot, but the core idea remains. This translation prioritizes readability, style, and fluency in the target language.

### ***2.7.8 Localization***

It is a type of translation that goes beyond converting words from one language to another; it adapts a product, content, or service so that it feels natural, culturally appropriate, and relevant to the target audience in a specific region or country. In terms of cultural adaptation, it adjusts idioms, humor, images, colors, symbols, and references to suit the

target culture. Moreover, depending on the targeted audience, it ensures that the content is easily understood and engaging for local users.

Like some other types of translation, it includes technical aspects such as formatting dates, currencies, measurements, and legal requirements, and it is used in common digital products like websites, apps, video games, software, e-learning, and marketing campaigns. According to Pym (2010), “What makes localization a new paradigm is the key role played by internationalization, which is the preparation of material so that it can be translated quickly and simultaneously into many languages.” (p.301) This is mentioned because the way it works may sometimes be extreme due to the use of translation technologies. Even though these technologies are not ideal for localization, they truly help with internationalization and translating to different languages at the same time.

### **2.7.9 Machine Learning**

Mostly known as MT, this process uses computer software or artificial intelligence to automatically translate text or speech from one language to another without human intervention. Its automated translations are generated by algorithms and/or AI models and can be reproduced instantly, which makes it very attractive to users. The only issue with machine translation is that accuracy may be affected due to the lack of human perspective, and it may vary depending on the difficulty of the text.

Steigerwald et al. (2022) comment that “These techniques require developers to provide the machine translation system with many training examples of original source texts and their translations for the system to learn.” (par.9) This shows that machines do not replace humans, but they are built to simplify people’s lives. Furthermore, post-editing by human translators is always required after machine translation is carried since it is not 100% accurate, as mentioned before.

**2.7.9.1 AI Translation.** Modern MT systems (like Google Translate or DeepL) use neural networks to produce more natural-sounding translations. It is an advanced form of machine translation, but with a focus on producing more natural, accurate, and context-aware translations. AI models are trained on massive multilingual datasets to improve translation quality over time and they can consider the meaning of a sentence as a whole, rather than just translating word by word. The use of AI produces translations that sound like a human wrote them, but they are still reviewed by people in critical contexts.

**2.7.9.2 CAT Tools.** Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools are software programs that help human translators work more efficiently by providing resources, memory, and consistency, but they do not automatically translate text like machine translation. One of

the key features of machine translation is Translation Memory (TM), which stores previously translated sentences and/or phrases, so they can be reused. A positive aspect of the usage of CAT tools is that you do not have to worry about consistency, since the system maintains the use of the terms across a project. These tools divide the text into manageable units, making it easier to track and edit translations. Moreover, several translators can work on the same document at the same time, using glossaries for consistency and accuracy. Some popular CAT tools are Wordfast, OmegaT, MemoQ, Memsource, and SDL Trados Studio.

#### ***2.7.10 Human Translation***

As its name states, this process is carried out entirely by humans. Translators use their linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, and judgment. Unlike machine or AI translation, it relies on understanding context, nuance, tone, and cultural subtleties to produce an accurate and natural result. Humans can interpret idioms, humor, metaphors, and cultural references; they can adapt style, tone, register to suit the target audience, and ensure correctness.

As Hutchins (1990) mentioned, “human translators do or do not need to fully understand what they are translating” (p.285) because humans can resolve ambiguities, make judgment calls, and verify facts. Human translation remains the most reliable source for a most accurate translation.

#### ***2.7.11 Hybrid Translation***

This translation combines machine or AI translation with human post-editing to produce a final, high-quality translation. It aims to take advantage of the speed and efficiency of machines while ensuring the accuracy, fluency, and cultural appropriateness that only humans can provide. The process works like this: the first draft is automatically generated using machine translation (MT) or AI translation, and then a human translator reviews, corrects, and improves the output to ensure accuracy and naturalness. This process is more cost and time-efficient because it is faster than pure human translation, but more reliable than machine translation alone. Hybrid translation can be applied to legal, technical, medical, marketing, or everyday documents.

### **2.8 Translations by Subject Matter**

The classification under subject matter is based on the different industries' content and specialized terminology. These translations specialize in a particular field of knowledge or type of content. Since different areas use specific terminology, style, and conventions, translators often need subject expertise to produce accurate and natural results.

### **2.8.1 Literary Translation**

Just like its name conveys, literary translation focuses on literature, such as novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and essays, from one language into another. Unlike technical or legal translation, which prioritizes precision, this approach focuses on capturing not only the meaning, but also, the style, tone, rhythm, and artistic effect of the original text. The main characteristic of this translation is that it preserves the author's voice, style, and emotional impact.

Translators often need to recreate metaphors, idioms, rhymes, or cultural references so they work in the target language. As per Pym (2010), literary translation displays a "keen awareness of the way indeterminism underlies the "stereoscopic" reading of literary texts" (p. 291) meaning that it is important to pay close attention to how uncertainty or multiple possible meanings can affect the way people read and understand literature from more than one perspective at the same time.

There is an important balance needed in literary translation because it must not only stay faithful to the author's intended meaning, but also make the text interesting and natural for new readers and their enjoyment. Even though this may be the most exciting type of translation, it can be the most difficult one since humor, cultural nuances, poetry, and wordplay are always difficult to transfer from one language to another.

**2.8.1.1 Poetry Translation.** This approach is found inside of literary translation. Poetry is a form of literary expression that employs aesthetic qualities of the language; it focuses on rhythm, emotion, meaning, sound, free verse, forms, and imagery. Poetry captures universal experiences and emotions that enhance cultural history. It encompasses dramatic poetry, lyric poetry, narrative poetry, free verse, sonnets, and others.

The main objective of poetry translation is to create culture and history accessible to all. It preserves literary heritage across languages with the use of descriptions; as Chatman (1987) mentioned, "description is, in literature, a reasoned resume; it must be done in such a way that the principal traits' of the object are not omitted and indeed emerge even more evidently". (p.17) Most of the challenges in poetry translation reside in preserving the imagery, rhythm, metaphors, and rhyme intended by the author, besides keeping his/her voice while making cultural references and using wordplay.

**2.8.1.2 Literary Language.** It is a specific and special use of language found only in works of literature. It is meant to arouse emotions, help the readers imagine, and explore deep feelings while differing from everyday speech using a different structure and

style. Literary language uses figurative language, which is the use of metaphors, personification, similes, and other figures of speech. Moreover, the language appeals to senses and helps the reader create vivid mental pictures of the reading. It uses symbols to represent concepts and ideas and adds a deeper meaning to the text. Most of the time, the language is elevated, sophisticated, formal, and serious.

### ***2.8.2 Legal Translation***

This is the specialized practice of translating texts used in the field of law from one language into another. Because laws, contracts, and official documents carry legal consequences, this type of translation requires not only linguistic skills, but also, a deep understanding of legal terminology, systems, and concepts in both the source and target languages.

In this type of translation, precision and accuracy are essential, since even a small mistake can change the legal meaning. Newmark (1988) seconds this thought when stating “Legal translation is especially difficult because legal language is highly conventional, culturally bound, and precise; small changes can have serious consequences” (p. 162).

Also, many legal terms do not have exact equivalents in another language, so translators must find functional or descriptive equivalents. The formal style of the original document must be kept at all costs. In addition, confidentiality is also key in legal translation since the texts often contain sensitive information.

### ***2.8.3 Technical Translation***

In this process, the translation deals with specialized, technical subjects; it requires strong language skills and knowledge of the specific technical field, so that terminology is used accurately. Technical documents often contain precise jargon, formulas, measurements, and industry-specific vocabulary, for this reason, clarity and consistency are essential.

The translation must avoid ambiguity to ensure the correct use of equipment, processes, or instructions. Unlike literary translation, technical translation values precision and consistency more than creative expression, and depending on the audience, some texts are intended for experts (using highly technical terms), while others are for end-users (requiring simplified, plain language). Some of the professional areas that require technical translations more frequently are engineering, chemistry, telecommunications, information technologies, electronics, and construction.

When compared to other types of translation, which have more adaptation freedom, technical translations have to be precise and use the terminology set for every area in their target language. This field represents the widest option of employment for translators, but lexical issues make it hard to deliver. The access to technical dictionaries and databases is of great help.

#### ***2.8.4 Medical Translation***

This approach is the specialized process of translating documents, materials, or communications related to medicine and healthcare from one language to another. Because medical texts involve people's health, safety, and lives, this type of translation demands extreme accuracy, deep subject knowledge, and awareness of cultural and regulatory differences.

As in legal translation, accuracy is critical since even a small error can lead to misdiagnosis, wrong treatment, or legal consequences. Newmark (1988) mentions that "Medical translation is a type of technical translation, where accuracy is crucial, because errors can have serious or even life-threatening consequences" (p. 153). Besides, he stated that translators are not doctors, but still hold people's lives in their hands. Moreover, it requires knowledge of anatomy, pharmacology, diseases, procedures, and medical jargon. In this case, texts are not easy since some texts are written for doctors, in a more technical language, while some documents use a simpler language, especially if it is for patients.

#### ***2.8.5 Financial Translation***

It is the specialized process of translating texts related to finance, banking, accounting, and economics from one language to another. This type of translation requires a solid understanding of financial terminology, practices, and regulations.

Accuracy and clarity are crucial because mistakes can have serious economic or legal consequences. This approach is terminology-sensitive because it includes accounting terms, banking jargon, investment language, and economic concepts. It needs to have accuracy over style because the meaning must be precise.

Financial documents are often needed in the legal environment; for this reason, consistency and confidentiality are key aspects since they contain sensitive information, repeated terms, figures, and formats that must remain consistent across documents. Also, translators must be aware of financial laws, standards, and reporting rules in both source and target countries.

### ***2.8.6 Commercial Translation***

This process translates texts used in business and commerce. It focuses on business communication, marketing, trade, and corporate documents, ensuring that the target audience understands the message and that it is appropriate for the commercial context. Its emphasis is on the audience, and emphasizes clarity and natural language.

Depending on the audience, it may involve cultural adaptation, especially in marketing and advertising materials. Just like other previously-mentioned translation types, its key point is accuracy since it involves contracts and agreements, business, finance, trade, and corporate jargon.

### ***2.8.7 Audiovisual Translation***

Commonly known as AVT, it is the translation of content that combines sound and visual elements like in films, TV shows, video games, advertisements, and online media. Because it involves both spoken and written language in a multimedia context, AVT often requires special techniques beyond simple text translation.

One of the key features of this process is that it deals with dialogue, images, sounds, and sometimes on-screen text all at once. It can be tricky, especially since subtitles must fit on screen within a short time, and dubbing must match lip movements and timing. Also, humor, slang, or references may need adjusting for the target audience.

### ***2.8.8 Certified Translation***

Besides an actual translation, this type of translation provides an official statement or certificate of accuracy signed by the translator or translation agency. This statement certifies that the translation is a true, accurate, and complete representation of the original document.

Certified translations are typically required for academic translations, books and articles, regular company documents, instructions manuals, technical translations, and many more. The certification statement includes the translator's name and signature, a declaration of accuracy, the specific date when the translation took place, and the translator of translation agency's contact information. It is key to mention that certified translation is not the same as sworn translation. In Costa Rica, certified translators would be what people know as "professional translators" and sworn translators are known as "official translators".

### ***2.8.9 Sworn Translation***

In this case, the translations are typically required for official or legal purposes. Sworn translators have already been authorized or licensed by a government or judicial body to

carry out legal and official translations from one specific language to another. The translation includes an official stamp and a sworn declaration giving the translation legal validity, like the one provided by a notary.

Sworn translation in countries like Costa Rica, are used for court documents, immigration documents (passports, birth certificates, diplomas, marriage certificates among others), legal contracts, academic transcripts, and/or VISA applications. Translators must enroll and pass a test from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to become a sworn or official translator.

Different types of translation play an essential role in ensuring that communication among cultures is accurate and appropriate for its specific context. Whether it is legal, medical, technical, literary, or audiovisual translation, each type requires a distinct approach to convey meaning faithfully and effectively. As Holmes (1984) stated,

The translation is then dependent on its function as a text “implanted” in the target culture, whereby there is an alternative of either preserving the original function of the source text “functional constancy”, or have changing the function to adapt to the specified needs of the target culture (par.16).

Translations are definitely science put into words; knowing which translation to use and how to adapt the text is key for translators. However, despite their differences, all forms of translation rely on well-defined translation procedures to brake linguistic and cultural gaps. These procedures help translators maintain both the message and the intent of the original text, ensuring clarity, consistency, and cultural relevance across languages.

## **2.9 Translation Procedures**

Translation procedures are specific and practical steps, techniques and/or strategies that translators apply to transfer meaning from one language to another accurately, and naturally. They handle differences among grammar vocabulary, culture or expression in the source and target languages.

Translation procedures are important because they provide methods that help translators accurately and effectively transfer meaning from one language to another. Each language has its own cultural references, idioms, grammar, and stylistic norms, so direct word-for-word translation is often impossible or misleading. As stated by Emad Jasem (2022),

Language and culture are two aspects that are closely intertwined. Culture as the way of life and all its manifestation is peculiar to a community that uses specific

language as their means of expression. Through language, we can distinguish one culture from the other. Moreover, language provides the key to fully understanding various culture and their literature. (p.87)

Translation procedures offer structured ways to solve linguistic and cultural challenges, ensuring that the message, tone, and intent of the original text are preserved. The importance of translation procedures may rely on different reasons, one of them being faithfulness, because it helps the translator maintain the original meaning and avoid distortions or omissions.

Moreover, consistency is one of the key fields in translation procedures because translators follow defined measures that can keep terminology and style uniform throughout a text or across multiple projects. Also, cultural adaptation is another important reason to utilize adaptation and modulation (which is explained below) because with their use, translators are allowed to make texts understandable and natural for the target audience.

Translation procedures provide a shared framework among translators, improving quality, control, and communication in professional translation. The procedures used by translators are transposition, modulation, omission, amplification, explicitation, literal translation, adaptation, compensation, equivalence, sentence inversion, borrowing, and calque.

### **2.9.1 Transposition**

This translation procedure involves changing the grammatical structure and category of a sentence or phrase when translating from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL), without changing the overall meaning. It means expressing the same idea using a different part of speech or syntactic structure to make the translation sound natural and grammatically correct in the target language.

Transposition is important because it makes translations more natural and idiomatic, helps to maintain fluency and readability, and reflects the grammatical and stylistic norms of the target language. It is one of the most common and necessary translation procedures because languages often differ in how they structure their ideas. It is important to know that there are several types of transposition, the regular one, the crossed transposition, and the *chiasma* or word-order transposition; the only difference is that, the first changes only grammatically, the second changes the grammar and the order of elements when achieving the target language due to the structural changes, and the third, generally has verbs and prepositions that change their role in the sentence to become nouns, adjectives, and verbs, depending on the sentence structure.

### **2.9.2 Modulation**

Vinay & Darbelnet (1995) stated that a modulation is “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view” (p. 36). This means that a modulation represents a change of thought; involves changing the perspective, point of view, or cognitive category of a message in the target language while keeping the meaning and sense of the original intact. In this translation procedure, instead of translating word for word, the translator rephrases the idea to make it sound more natural or logical in the target language. It is not just a change of words, it is a change in how the idea is expressed or perceived.

Modulation is important because it helps to produce a more idiomatic and fluent translation; it also adapts the text to the natural thought patterns of the target language. Additionally, it avoids awkward or unnatural phrasing that would result from literal translation, and it often reflects cultural differences in how ideas are expressed.

People may regularly confuse modulation with transposition because both of them encompass the structural change of a sentence, but the actual type of change is very different. Transposition changes the grammatical form (the part of speech or structure) but keeps the same idea and perspective, while modulation changes the point of view or conceptual angle, expressing the same idea from a different perspective.

### **2.9.3 Omission**

For Baker (1992), “The process of translation sometimes involves omission of information which is not vital to the development of the text and which would distract the reader with unnecessary redundancy.” (p. 40). This can be stated in simple words by saying that it refers to leaving out a word, phrase, or idea from the source text when translating, but only when that element is unnecessary, repetitive, or culturally irrelevant in the target language. The translator, on purpose, removes parts of the source text that do not add essential meaning or that may sound unnatural or redundant once translated.

It is important to understand that an omission is not about leaving out important information; it is about improving clarity, readability, and natural flow in the target language. Omissions are used when the elements are implied by context, when it would confuse the reader due to a cultural barrier, or if it is unnecessary or repetitive in the structure of the target language.

#### **2.9.4 Amplification**

This is the opposite of omission; in this case, the translator adds information or details that are implicit in the source text but need to be made explicit in the target language for clarity or naturalness. In other words, the translator expands the message to help the target reader understand the meaning completely.

Amplification is used when the target language requires more explanation than the source language to show the same idea clearly. It helps to preserve the intended meaning, tone, and cultural sense of the original message. The use of amplification is important because it helps to maintain naturalness and fluency in the translation; moreover, it ensures reading comprehension when cultural or contextual information might be unfamiliar to the audience.

#### **2.9.5 Explication**

In this case, the translator uses information that is implicit in the source text and turns it explicit in the target language. This means that details, relationships, or meanings only suggested or understood in the original language are directly stated or clarified in the translation in order to make the message clear for the target reader.

Explication is used to ensure comprehension, coherence, and precision. According to Blum-Kulka (1986) the “implicit information in the source text is rendered more explicit in the target text” (p. 17-35) because languages may differ in how much they rely on context or cultural knowledge, so what is obvious in one language, might not be so in another one.

The importance of explication is key in translation because it helps to avoid ambiguity or confusion when translating across different cultural or linguistic systems. Furthermore, it allows the target text to be easily understood without requiring background knowledge.

#### **2.9.6 Literal translation**

Also known as word-by-word translation, this could be the most common and easiest translation procedure. Here, the translator turns the source text into the target text word for word or structure for structure, while keeping the original meaning as closely as possible. It aims to preserve the grammatical form, vocabulary, and syntax of the original, as long as the result still makes sense and sounds natural in the target language.

The goal of literal translation is to remain faithful to the structure and wording of the source text, especially when the two languages are close in grammar. It is often used when the exact wording or terminology is important, such as in technical, legal, or academic texts.

If the cultural or language differences differ significantly, it would be better to use other translation procedures like modulation and adaptation.

### **2.9.7 Adaptation**

This translation procedure is used when something in the source text has no direct equivalent in the target language. In this case, the original element is replaced with one that has a similar meaning, function, or cultural impact for the target audience.

Adaptation helps to make the translation culturally relevant and easy to understand for readers. It is often used for cultural references like holidays, food, or traditions, idioms or saying, humor, or literary and audiovisual translations.

In agreement with Newmark when stating that adaptation is “a matter of cultural equivalence,” (p. 46), it should be carefully used and only when necessary. Overusing this translation method can make the text lose its original identity.

### **2.9.8 Compensation**

Similar, but not equal to adaptation, compensation is a translation procedure used when a particular meaning, stylistic effect, or linguistic feature from the source text cannot be directly reproduced in the same place in the target text. Instead, the translator introduces an equivalent effect or nuance in a different place in the translation. Here, the translator makes up for the information in another part of the text to preserve the overall balance of meaning, tone, or style since it cannot be translated directly.

While both adaptation and compensation deal with elements that cannot be translated literally, they differ in where and how the translator adjusts the elements. Compensation involves recovering a lost effect (like tone, humor, or style) in another part of the text, so that the overall impact remains the same.

On the other hand, adaptation means replacing a cultural or linguistic element from the source text with one that is more familiar or meaningful to the target audience. It is often used when the original reference would be confusing or irrelevant to readers in another culture.

### **2.9.9 Equivalence**

In equivalence, the translator reproduces the same meaning, stylistic effect, or communicative function in the target language, even if words or grammatical structures are completely different. Instead of translating literally, equivalence focuses on accomplishing the same impact or effect on the reader of the target language as the original had on its

audience, because the main idea of this translation method, as Nida (1964) expressed “consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message” (p. 166).

Adaptation and equivalence are often confused since both help to ensure a text is both understandable and culturally appropriate for the target audience. While adaptation focuses on replacing cultural elements from the source language with counterparts that have similar significance in the target culture, equivalence seeks to convey the same meaning or communicative effect using natural expressions in the target language.

#### ***2.9.10 Sentence Inversion***

As its name states, it is a translation method in which the translator changes the usual word order of a sentence in the target language to achieve grammatical correctness, naturalness, emphasis, or stylistic effect. This is often necessary because languages differ in syntactic structures, and a direct word-for-word order may sound strange or confusing in the target language.

The main purpose of sentence inversion is to make the sentence sound natural in the target language. Moreover, it highlights particular elements for emphasis and adapts to the grammatical rules of the target language. Last but not least, it also aims to preserve style or rhythm, especially in literary translation.

#### ***2.9.11 Borrowing***

Also known as Transference, Borrowing is a translation procedure where a word or expression from the original language is transferred directly to the target language with no translation, such as software, hardware, pizza, ballet, piano, and kimono, among many others. Borrowing helps to preserve authenticity and cultural identity while introducing new terms into the target language.

The main idea of this procedure is to maintain the precision from one language to the other when there is no equivalent. However, it should not be used all the time since borrowing may difficult the understanding of the text.

#### ***2.9.12 Calque***

In this case, a phrase or expression from the source language is translated literally, word-for-word, into the target language without caring about the cultural equivalence, but using the target language’s own words and structure. It is sometimes called a loan translation, because the idea or expression is taken from another language and recreated using equivalent native elements.

The main objective of calques is to preserve the form and meaning of an expression while adapting it to the grammar and vocabulary of the target language. Calque is important because it helps languages enrich their vocabulary without borrowing foreign words directly while consenting an exchange of terms and ideas among cultures.

Translation procedures are categorized by levels to help translators understand the depth and scope of the transformations that occur in the source and target languages. This categorization allows for a clearer distinction between operations that affect individual words, grammatical structures, or the overall meaning of a text.

By organizing translation procedures according to levels, translators can identify whether a change involves vocabulary choice, sentence structure, or discourse coherence. This structured approach not only improves translation accuracy, but also enhances consistency and stylistic correctness, ensuring that the final text effectively communicates the intended message across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

## **2.10 Glossaries**

Glossaries are essential tools for translators in technical translation because they provide a standardized reference for specialized terminology, ensuring consistency and accuracy across documents. Technical texts often contain field-specific terms, abbreviations, and jargon that require precise translation to maintain clarity and prevent misunderstandings.

Newmark (1988) mentions that glossaries “are indispensable to the translator” (p. 12). He could not be more accurate because, by consulting glossaries, translators can verify the correct usage of terms, align with industry standards, and avoid errors that could compromise the functionality or safety of technical content. Additionally, glossaries save time and increase efficiency, allowing translators to work more confidently and produce high-quality translations that meet professional and technical requirements.

## **2.11 Specific Audience for Texts**

Knowing the target audience of a text is crucial for translators because it influences the language, tone, and level of complexity used in the translation. Different audiences like experts, general readers, children, or professionals have varying levels of familiarity with terminology, concepts, and cultural references.

A translator who understands the audience can adjust vocabulary, explanations, and stylistic choices to ensure the text is clear, engaging, and appropriate. This awareness helps to maintain the original purpose and impact of the text while making it accessible and meaningful to the readers, ultimately ensuring a more accurate and effective translation.

After the explanation of all the aspects related to this translation project, it is important to keep in mind that an accurate translation from either Spanish into English or English into Spanish is of vital importance because it facilitates communication, cultural exchange, and access to knowledge across two of the world's most widely spoken languages. It allows ideas, literature, scientific research, legal documents, and technical information to flow seamlessly among diverse communities, fostering understanding and collaboration.

Furthermore, accurate translations preserve the meaning, tone, and nuances of the original text, ensuring that both linguistic and cultural subtleties are respected. In an increasingly interconnected world, the ability to translate effectively in Spanish and English is not only a practical necessity but also a bridge that connects people, ideas, and opportunities across cultures.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodological Framework**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and comparative research design to examine the translation of English-language articles into Spanish and a book originally written in Spanish, which will be translated into English. The research is situated within the field of Translation Studies and focuses on equivalence, meaning transfer, and contextual adaptation between source and target texts (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988). A bidirectional approach is adopted to provide a comprehensive perspective on translation practices across both language pairs.

The body of this text consists of selected English articles translated into Spanish and a complete Spanish-language book translated into English. Texts were selected based on linguistic complexity, thematic relevance, and suitability for analytical comparison (Baker, 2018). This dual corpus enables systematic comparison across genres and supports the examination of translation strategies used in both informative and literary discourse.

The translation process follows a structured procedure that includes source-text analysis, initial translation, revision, and final editing. During the analysis stage, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and cultural features of the source texts are identified (Newmark, 1988). The translation stage prioritizes semantic accuracy and functional equivalence, while revision focuses on cohesion, terminological consistency, and appropriateness of register in the target language (Nida & Taber, 1982).

Data analysis is guided by established theoretical frameworks in Translation Studies, including equivalence-based models, functionalist approaches, and cultural translation theories (Nord, 1997; Venuti, 2017). Source and target texts are compared at the sentence and discourse levels to identify shifts in meaning, structure, and pragmatic function. Translation strategies such as modulation, adaptation, borrowing, omission, and explicitation are analyzed to assess their impact on the target text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995).

To ensure trustworthiness and methodological rigor, the study incorporates iterative review and systematic documentation of translation decisions. Translation notes, glossaries, and parallel texts are used to support consistency and transparency (Baker, 2018). This methodological approach enhances reliability and supports replicability, aligning with qualitative research standards recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020).

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This graduation thesis employs a qualitative research design to examine the translation of one Spanish-language book into English and three English-language

educational articles into Spanish. The book *Hacia ningún lugar* was written by José Fabián Elizondo González, a graduate of the English Teaching Major at the University of Costa Rica.

The three articles, *Effectiveness of the Use of Graphic Organizers and Summaries: A Case Study of Adult EFL Students in a Reading Comprehension Course*, *Experiences of Teaching an English for Specific Purposes Course to Students with Disabilities*, and *The Increase in Percentage of Students Who Actually Do Homework by Means of Communicative Out-of-Class Tasks instead of Homework Assignments: A Case Study of Adult EFL Students in the Conversation Courses at the University of Costa Rica* were authored by Daniela Barrantes Torres in collaboration with other English teachers from the University of Costa Rica. This study focuses on the analysis and interpretation of meaning, style, and tone in translations, rather than on numerical data, allowing for an in-depth exploration of linguistic, cultural, and stylistic nuances across languages.

The qualitative design of this investigation emphasizes understanding translation as both a linguistic and cultural process. The study explores how meaning, tone, and style are preserved, adapted, or transformed during translation, and how these decisions influence reader comprehension and engagement.

Methods such as text comparison, content analysis, and reflective commentary were applied to assess translation strategies and their impact on conveying ideas accurately and effectively. By prioritizing meaning, context, and cultural relevance, the research highlights the translator's role as both a linguistic mediator and a cultural bridge.

This design also considers the broader significance of translation in facilitating cross-cultural communication and knowledge dissemination. Translating the Spanish book into English seeks to make its literary and cultural content accessible to a wider audience while maintaining the author's voice and intent.

Likewise, translating the English-language educational articles into Spanish allows Spanish-speaking readers to engage with pedagogical ideas that might otherwise be unavailable due to language barriers. By analyzing both the translation process and the potential reception of the texts, the study aims to demonstrate how translation enriches understanding, fosters intercultural connections, and emphasizes the translator's creative and interpretive role in shaping reader experience.

### **3.3 Information Sources**

#### ***3.3.1 Academic Articles in English***

The translation of academic articles from English into Spanish is essential to ensure that valuable educational knowledge reaches a wider audience, particularly Spanish-

speaking teachers and educators in general. Many influential academic studies, research findings, and innovative teaching methods are published primarily in English, which can create a barrier for professionals who are not fluent in that language.

By translating these materials into Spanish, instructors gain access to global perspectives, new methodologies, and evidence-based practices that can enhance their teaching skills and classroom strategies. This process promotes educational equity, allowing teachers in Spanish-speaking contexts to benefit from the same academic resources available to English-speaking professionals.

For Spanish-speaking teachers, access to translated academic articles supports professional development and continuous learning. The field of education is constantly evolving, with new theories, technologies, and pedagogical approaches emerging regularly. Translating educational research helps bridge the gap between linguistic communities, enabling teachers to stay informed about current trends and innovations in teaching and learning.

Moreover, this evolution in education along with the access to new documents and information, empowers educators to apply research-based strategies in their own classrooms, improving the quality of education for their students and fostering a more informed and reflective teaching practice.

From the perspective of the authors, translation into Spanish allows their work to reach a much broader and more diverse audience. Academic researchers often dedicate years to developing studies that contribute significantly to the understanding of teaching and learning processes. However, when their work remains available only in English, its impact is limited to a segment of the global academic community.

Therefore, translating their articles into Spanish gives international visibility to their ideas, promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and increases the relevance and influence of their research within Spanish-speaking educational environments. Even though the authors are Spanish speakers, the original audience was intended to be English-speaking individuals, leaving aside Spanish speaking teachers or individuals who are not able to read and/or write in English.

Translating educational articles into Spanish benefits both authors and readers by fostering the exchange of knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It promotes inclusivity, supports teacher development, and strengthens the global community of educators.

By making academic resources accessible to Spanish-speaking individuals, this initiative not only expands the reach of scholarly work but also contributes to improving educational quality and innovation in diverse contexts. In this way, translation becomes a

powerful tool for democratizing knowledge and promoting collaboration within the field of education.

### **3.3.2 *Storybook Written in Spanish***

Translating the book from Spanish into English is essential to provide English-speaking readers access to a story deeply rooted in Costa Rican culture, traditions, and perspectives. Literature serves as a window into the identity and values of a nation, and through translation, readers from different linguistic backgrounds can explore and appreciate the richness of Costa Rican life.

By making the book available in English, native English speakers have the opportunity to experience the country's customs, history, expressions, and worldview through authentic storytelling. This not only promotes cultural understanding but also allows readers to connect emotionally with experiences that, while foreign, reflect universal human themes.

For the author, translating the book into English represents a valuable opportunity to overcome the language barrier that often limits the reach of Spanish-language literature. English is one of the most widely spoken and published languages in the world, and making the text accessible to English-speaking audiences can significantly increase its visibility and readership.

Through translation, the author can share Costa Rican creativity, perspectives, and literary artistry with an international audience, positioning his work within a broader literary landscape. This step elevates the author's professional presence and contributes to the global recognition of Costa Rican literature.

Furthermore, the translation of the book into English fosters cultural exchange and strengthens the literary connection between Costa Rica and the English-speaking world. Readers in countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have the chance to engage with a story that showcases Costa Rica's identity beyond its natural beauty, revealing its people, values, and everyday realities.

At the same time, the book's translation enriches the English-language literary market by introducing a fresh voice and perspective. Ultimately, this translation serves as a bridge among cultures, expanding the author's reach while giving English-speaking readers access to the beauty, depth, and uniqueness of Costa Rican storytelling.

### **3.4 Analysis Categories**

Translating literary and technical texts requires distinct techniques because each type of translation serves different purposes and audiences. Literary Translation focuses on artistic expression, emotional depth, and cultural resonance, aiming to recreate the author's voice and the aesthetic quality of the original text. Techniques such as modulation,

adaptation, and equivalence are often used to preserve figurative language, style, and mood while ensuring the translation reads naturally in the target language.

In contrast, Technical Translation prioritizes precision, clarity, and consistency. It involves techniques like literal translation, terminology standardization, and paraphrasing to convey information accurately and avoid ambiguity. While literary translation values creativity, technical translation values exactness, both demanding a deep understanding of context, purpose, and audience.

In the translation process, tone plays a crucial role in maintaining the author's intent and emotional impact. In literary texts, tone reflects the writer's attitude and mood, whether it is joyful, ironic, or melancholic, and must be carefully conveyed to evoke the same feelings in the target audience.

In technical texts, tone is often formal, objective, and informative, ensuring the message is professional and clear. A translator must recognize these tonal differences and adapt language accordingly to preserve both meaning and appropriateness. Successfully transmitting tone ensures that the translated text maintains its intended effect and remains true to its communicative purpose.

Equally important are rhythm and meaning, which shape how a text feels and what it conveys. In literary translation, rhythm refers to the flow and musicality of language, especially in poetry or prose with stylistic rhythm, which the translator must recreate without distorting meaning. In technical translation, rhythm is less artistic but still matters for readability and logical organization, particularly in manuals or reports.

Above all, preserving meaning remains the translator's ultimate goal. Whether translating a poem or a technical guide, the translator must balance form and content, ensuring that the essence, intention, and message of the original text remain intact while making the translation accessible and effective for its intended readers.

### ***3.4.1 Procedures and Data Analysis***

Before diving any deeper on the data analysis, it is important to highlight the procedures to perform an assertive and accurate translation. The main procedure to understand and learn how to interpret the text is the literary analysis.

**3.4.1.1 Literary Analysis.** It is the process of examining the literary work to understand its deeper meanings, themes, structure, and artistic techniques. It involves studying elements such as plot, characters, tone, symbolism, imagery, and style to uncover how these components work together to convey the author's message.

Literary analysis goes beyond summarizing a text; it seeks to explain how and why a writer uses language in a particular way and what effect it creates on the reader. This

analytical approach helps to reveal the layers of meaning that contribute to the richness and complexity of literature.

In the context of literary translation, literary analysis is essential because it enables translators to grasp the nuances, emotions, and cultural references embedded in the source text. A translator who thoroughly analyzes a literary work can better understand the author's voice, intention, and stylistic choices.

A good understanding is crucial for recreating the same tone, rhythm, and emotional depth in the target language. Without careful analysis, a translation risks becoming too literal, losing the subtleties that make the original text unique and powerful. Thus, literary analysis serves as the foundation upon which accurate and expressive literary translation is built.

Moreover, literary analysis helps translators identify and interpret figurative language, symbolism, and cultural context, all elements that often present challenges in translation. For instance, metaphors, idioms, or references that are natural in one language may not have direct equivalents in another.

Through analysis, the translator can determine the underlying meaning and find the most suitable way to express it for the target audience. This analytical awareness ensures that the translation maintains the spirit and impact of the original work, allowing readers in another language to experience the text as closely as possible to how it was intended.

Literary analysis enhances the quality and depth of literary translation by ensuring that the translator approaches the text not just as a linguistic task, but as an interpretive and creative act. It bridges, or at least shortens, the gap between understanding and expression, guiding the translator in making informed decisions about word choice, style, and cultural adaptation.

By combining linguistic skill with literary insight, translators can produce versions of texts that are both faithful to the original and resonant within the new linguistic and cultural context. In this way, literary analysis is not only a tool for understanding literature, but also a key to preserving its artistic essence through translation.

**3.4.1.2 Data Analysis.** This aspect refers to the process of examining, interpreting, and organizing the information gathered during the translation process to identify patterns, meanings, and relationships. In a qualitative context, this may involve analyzing textual features, translation choices, and reader responses to understand how meaning is constructed and conveyed across languages.

The goal of data analysis is to transform raw information like notes, comparisons, or interview feedback into meaningful insights that explain how and why certain translation

strategies either work or fail. This systematic examination helps researchers and translators evaluate the effectiveness, accuracy, and cultural relevance of their work.

In translation practice, data analysis is crucial because it allows translators to make informed decisions based on linguistic, stylistic, and cultural evidence. By analyzing both the source and target texts, translators can identify inconsistencies, misinterpretations, or losses of meaning that may occur during the translation process.

This reflective analysis helps ensure that the translated version maintains the tone, intent, and nuances of the original text while adapting naturally to the target language. It also supports continuous improvement, as translators learn from their analytical findings to refine their techniques and enhance the overall quality of their work.

To sum up, data analysis contributes to accuracy and reliability in translation by providing a structured method for evaluating the final product. Through careful examination of linguistic choices and audience feedback, translators can assess whether the translation effectively communicates the intended message and evokes the same response as the source text.

In both literary and technical contexts, this analytical process ensures that translations are not only linguistically correct but also culturally and contextually appropriate. Therefore, data analysis is an essential step in achieving high-quality translations that remain faithful to the original meaning while resonating with the target audience.

**3.4.1.3 Academic Writing and Translation.** Academic writing is a formal style of writing used in universities, research institutions, and scholarly publications to present ideas, arguments, and findings in a clear, objective, and structured way. It is characterized by precision, logical organization, and the use of evidence to support claims.

This style often includes specialized terminology, formal tone, and a focus on clarity rather than emotion or persuasion. Its purpose is to communicate knowledge effectively within a particular field of study, allowing readers to understand, evaluate, and build upon existing research. Because of its emphasis on accuracy and coherence, academic writing demands careful attention to detail and adherence to discipline-specific conventions.

For the accurate translation of an academic article, in this case the three articles published by the Modern Languages Magazine, a translator must combine linguistic proficiency with subject-matter understanding. This involves not only translating words but also conveying the author's ideas, tone, and level of formality appropriately in the target language.

The translator should conduct terminology research, use academic glossaries, and ensure consistency throughout the text to maintain credibility and precision. Additionally, awareness of cultural and disciplinary differences is crucial, as academic writing conventions

can vary among languages. By preserving the logical flow, structure, and academic rigor of the original text, the translator ensures that the translation reads naturally to the target audience while faithfully representing the author's research and intellectual intent.

**3.4.1.4 Translation of a Storybook.** Before analyzing the translation of the book, it is important to understand that there are different types of books. For this project, the chosen book tells the story of a bus driver and his daily activities, the people he meets, the news on the radio, and his personal problems. In this case, the main difference between this story and other types of books resides in its purpose, structure, and content. Stories are narratives that focus on characters, events, and emotions, often designed to entertain, inspire, or convey a moral or message.

Other types of books, like academic, technical, or informational books, are primarily written to inform, explain, or instruct rather than to entertain. While stories evoke emotion and creativity, informational books emphasize accuracy, clarity, and learning. In essence, a story appeals to the reader's imagination and feelings, whereas other books aim to expand knowledge, teach skills, or communicate specialized information. *Hacia ningun lugar* was written in order to evoke deep feelings regarding the world's minorities, which are heavily punished every day and left to be "second-class citizens" as its author calls it.

To successfully carry out the translation of a book about a bus driver and his daily life, the translator must first develop a deep understanding of the story's context, tone, and cultural background. This includes familiarizing with the setting, the social environment, and the nuances of the characters' interactions.

Moreover, since the book reflects everyday experiences, dialogues, and emotions, the translator should pay close attention to maintaining the authenticity of the characters' voices and the natural flow of conversation. Capturing the author's narrative style is essential to preserving the spirit of the original work. Conducting research on local references, idiomatic expressions, and cultural details mentioned in the story also helps the translator create an accurate and relatable version for readers in the target language.

Additionally, the translator must balance fidelity and adaptation to ensure that the translation resonates with the new audience while staying true to the original text. This involves making thoughtful decisions about how to translate culturally specific elements, such as radio news, slang, or social interactions, which might not have direct equivalents in the target language.

Sensitivity to tone and rhythm is important, especially if the author's style includes humor, irony, or introspection. For the book, the translator kind of acts as both, a writer and a cultural mediator, recreating the atmosphere of the bus driver's world so that readers in

another language can experience the story's humanity, daily struggles, and personal reflections as vividly as those in the original version.

### **3.4.2 Translation**

This study adopts a qualitative translation approach grounded in established principles of Translation Studies to ensure accurate and meaningful transfer in the source and target texts. Translation is understood as both a linguistic and cultural process, requiring careful consideration of semantic content, textual function, and contextual factors. The approach prioritizes functional equivalence, aiming to reproduce the intended meaning and communicative purpose of the original texts in the target language.

The translation process involves systematic stages, including source-text analysis, initial translation, and revision. During the analysis stage, lexical choices, syntactic structures, and culturally specific elements are identified to anticipate potential translation challenges. The translation stage emphasizes clarity, coherence, and appropriateness of register, while revision focuses on refining style, ensuring consistency, and resolving ambiguities. This iterative process supports accuracy and readability in the final translated texts.

Analytical decisions are informed by recognized translation theories, including equivalence-based and functionalist approaches. Comparative analysis between the source and the target texts is conducted to evaluate shifts in meaning, structure, and the pragmatic effect.

Translation strategies such as literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and explicitation are applied as needed, and translation choices are documented to ensure methodological transparency and reliability.

### **3.4.3 Translation Methods**

This study applies a range of translation methods to ensure accuracy, clarity, and functional equivalence between source and target texts. The selection of methods is informed by the communicative purpose of each text, its genre, and its intended audience. Rather than relying on a single method, the research adopts a flexible and context-sensitive approach, acknowledging that effective translation often requires the combination of multiple methods depending on linguistic and cultural factors.

Literal translation is employed when the syntactic structure and semantic content of the source text can be transferred directly without distorting meaning or readability. This method is primarily used in technical descriptions, factual statements, and standardized expressions, where precision and terminological consistency are essential (Newmark, 1988). Literal translation allows for close adherence to the source text while maintaining grammatical correctness in the target language.

Communicative and functional translation methods are applied when the primary objective is to convey meaning in a way that is natural and accessible to the target audience. These methods prioritize the communicative effect of the message over formal correspondence, particularly in idiomatic expressions, stylistic features, and culturally embedded references (Nida & Taber, 1982; Nord, 1997). Adjustments in structure and wording are made to ensure that the translated text fulfills the same function as the original.

Semantic translation is used to preserve the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the source text, especially in literary or narrative passages. This method focuses on maintaining nuance, tone, and authorial intent while allowing limited flexibility in form to accommodate linguistic differences between English and Spanish (Newmark, 1988). Semantic translation is particularly relevant in the translation of the Spanish-language book analyzed in this study.

Finally, adaptive translation is employed when cultural references, metaphors, or context-specific elements cannot be transferred directly into the target language. In such cases, adaptation ensures cultural intelligibility while preserving the core meaning of the original message (Venuti, 2017). The use of adaptation is carefully documented to maintain transparency and analytical rigor within the methodological framework.

#### ***3.4.4 Translation Procedures***

In this study, translation is approached as a systematic process that integrates linguistic accuracy with cultural and pragmatic awareness. The methodological framework prioritizes functional equivalence and naturalness in the target language while preserving the meaning, intent, and discourse conventions of the source text, acknowledging structural differences between English and Spanish such as syntax, verb tense, and lexical variation (Nida & Taber, 1982).

The translation procedure is conducted in clearly defined stages. First, a pre-translation analysis is performed to identify lexical challenges, false cognates, idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, and culturally specific references common in English–Spanish translation. Second, an initial translation is produced using procedures such as literal translation, transposition, modulation, and explicitation to address grammatical and stylistic differences, including word order, subject omission in Spanish, and register adaptation. Finally, the translation undergoes revision and editing to ensure coherence, terminological consistency, and fluency in the target language.

Translation decisions are evaluated through systematic comparison of the source and the target texts. Particular attention is given to shifts in meaning resulting from differences in pragmatic usage, discourse patterns, and cultural norms among English- and Spanish-speaking contexts. All translation procedures and decisions are documented

through translation notes and glossaries to ensure transparency, reliability, and methodological rigor within the research framework.

The translation procedures in this study follow a systematic and iterative process designed to ensure accuracy, clarity, and cultural appropriateness in the English and Spanish texts. The first stage involves a detailed analysis of the source text to identify potential challenges, such as idiomatic expressions, false cognates, phrasal verbs, and culturally specific references.

Following the analysis, an initial translation is produced using strategies such as literal translation, modulation, transposition, and explicitation to maintain meaning and readability in the target language. This document is then revised to refine coherence, ensure terminological consistency, and adapt stylistic and cultural nuances appropriate for the target audience. Throughout the process, translation decisions are documented through notes and glossaries to maintain transparency, support reliability, and allow for systematic evaluation of shifts in meaning, discourse patterns, and cultural adaptation between English and Spanish.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

In a qualitative investigation like this one, data collection instruments are used to gather detailed, descriptive, and interpretive information about people's experiences, behaviors, or perspectives. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical data, qualitative research seeks to understand meanings and contexts.

In this case, document analysis is the main data collection instrument since translations require a lot of research on the original and target culture, authors' characteristics and background, time when the texts were written and published, and many other aspects surrounding the original text.

According to Boase-Beier et al. (2014), "Linguistic analysis and theory are thus shown to be practically useful as part of the toolkit of both the translator and the critic, because features of language and style which might otherwise be missed, are made apparent" (p.3). This secures the translations as not only true to the original, but also, as a document that the target audience can read and understand easily while feeling comfortable about the language used and relating to it.

The effectiveness of these instruments depends on how well they align with the research objectives and the context of the study. Qualitative data collection instruments are designed to capture the richness and complexity of human experience, offering insights that cannot be obtained through numerical measurement alone.

### 3.5.1 Text Analysis Chart

The study employs a text analysis chart as a primary instrument for collecting and organizing data during the translation process. The chart allows systematic documentation of linguistic, syntactic, semantic, and cultural features in the source and target texts.

Key elements recorded in the chart include source-text segments, corresponding translations, translation strategies applied (e.g., literal translation, modulation, adaptation), and notes on challenges or ambiguities encountered. By structuring the data in this way, the chart facilitates a detailed comparison of the source and target texts, enabling the identification of patterns, shifts in meaning, and recurrent translation issues in English–Spanish translation.

The text analysis chart also supports transparency and methodological rigor by providing a replicable framework for examining translation decisions. Each entry in the chart captures both the context of the source text and the rationale behind the chosen translation strategy, allowing for systematic evaluation of semantic accuracy, stylistic equivalence, and cultural adaptation. This instrument serves not only as a tool for data collection but also as a reference for iterative revision and reflection, ensuring that translation choices are traceable and analytically sound within the study’s qualitative framework. Table 1 shows an example of the text analysis chart.

**Table 1 Text Analysis**

<b>Text Analysis</b>	<b>Name of the Text</b>	<b>Name of the Text</b>	<b>Name of the Text</b>	<b>Name of the Text</b>
Text Style				
Scale of Formality				
Scale of Generality				
Scale of Emotional Tone				
Text Function				
Type of Translation				

*Table 1 shows the text analysis chart that is used for the translations of this study.*

*Source: Researcher’s own creation*

### 3.5.2 Color Coding

For the translations, a color-coding system is applied to the text analysis chart to enhance the organization, clarity, and visual interpretability of translation data. This system allows the translator to quickly identify patterns, recurring translation strategies, and areas that required greater adaptation, facilitating a more systematic and efficient comparative analysis between English and Spanish texts.

Color coding also supports transparency and replicability within the research framework. Each highlighted segment corresponds to documented translation decisions and notes in the chart, making it easier to trace the rationale behind specific choices. By providing a visual overview of translation patterns, the system aids in evaluating shifts in meaning, consistency of strategies, and the treatment of culturally sensitive material.

This method complements qualitative analysis by making complex textual data more accessible, organized, and interpretable, enhancing both rigor and readability in the translation study. Table 2 shows the translation procedures' color coding that will be used in this study for the analysis of the translations.

**Table 2 Color Coding**

Translation Procedure	Color Assigned
Literal Translation	Green
Transposition	Yellow
Word Order Transposition	Orange
Modulation	Cyan
Amplification	Grey
Explicitation	Blue
Equivalence	Magenta
Omission	Word

Table 2 provides the specific color coding for each translation technique.

Source: Researcher's own creation

### 3.5.3 Glossary

Creating a glossary for every translation project is essential for ensuring consistency, accuracy, and efficiency throughout the translation process. A glossary systematically records specialized terminology, recurring phrases, and culturally significant expressions, providing a reference point for translators to maintain uniformity across the text (Baker, 2018).

In English–Spanish translation, where differences in lexical meaning, false cognates, and register can lead to inconsistency, a glossary helps to standardize key terms and

reduces the risk of misinterpretation. It also serves as a tool for documenting translation decisions, allowing the translator to justify specific word choices and strategies in a systematic and transparent manner.

A glossary additionally supports quality control and facilitates the revision process. Translators and reviewers can cross-check terms and expressions quickly, ensuring that both linguistic and cultural nuances are consistently preserved in the target text (Newmark, 1988). By integrating a glossary into the methodological framework, the study ensures that translation practices are not only accurate and culturally appropriate but also reproducible and methodologically rigorous. Table 3 portrays an example of a glossary:

**Table 3 Glossary**

<b>Source (English)</b>	<b>Target (Spanish)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Grammatical Category</b>

*Table 3 shows the placement of source and target text and further categories in a glossary.*

*Source: Researcher's own creation*

### **3.6 Collection Data Process and Data Analysis**

As stated before, the primary data collection instrument is document analysis, which is applied to both the English articles and the Spanish book. This involves a detailed examination of source texts to identify authorial style, historical and cultural context, intended audience, and genre-specific characteristics. Document analysis provides the foundational understanding necessary for informed translation decisions, enabling the researcher to anticipate linguistic and cultural challenges before the translation process begins.

To systematically record and analyze translation decisions, a text analysis chart is employed. The chart captures each source-text segment alongside its translated equivalent, specifying the translation level (lexical, syntactic, semantic, or cultural), the strategy applied (e.g., literal translation, modulation, transposition, adaptation), and any challenges encountered.

A color-coding system is integrated into the chart, highlighting different types of interventions. This visual tool allows for quick identification of patterns, recurring strategies, and problem areas, enhancing both the transparency and efficiency of qualitative analysis.

Last but not least, a glossary complements the chart by standardizing terminology, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific phrases. Each term includes the source-language expression, the target-language equivalent, and notes explaining context, usage, and translation rationale. The glossary ensures consistency across the text, facilitates revision, and documents methodological choices for transparency.

Together, all the previously mentioned instruments are applied iteratively throughout the translation process. They guide pre-translation planning, support real-time translation decisions, and enable post-translation evaluation of accuracy, coherence, and readability, ensuring that the methodology is both rigorous and replicable.

## **Chapter IV Translations**

This thesis document presents a series of translation projects completed as part of an academic language development exercise. It includes three articles translated from English into Spanish and one book translated from Spanish into English. The translations aim to preserve the original meaning, tone, and intent of the source materials while ensuring clarity, coherence, and cultural appropriateness in the target language.

### **4.1 Translation 1 – Article 1**

#### **El aumento en el porcentaje de estudiantes que realmente realizan la tarea mediante actividades comunicativas fuera del aula en lugar de tareas tradicionales: un estudio de caso de estudiantes adultos de EFL en los cursos de conversación de la Universidad de Costa Rica**

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### **Resumen**

Este estudio investiga cómo los trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase, en lugar de la tarea regular, pueden incrementar el porcentaje de los estudiantes que realizan la tarea en los cursos de conversación de la Universidad de Costa Rica. La revisión de la literatura indica que los trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase facilitan el aprendizaje a través del lenguaje con un propósito definido. La información recopilada apunta a que dichos trabajos mejoran la respuesta de los estudiantes hacia la asignación de tarea. Asimismo, los resultados indican que dichos trabajos, con fines específicos, contribuyen a la reflexión de los estudiantes sobre su propio aprendizaje y que la tarea complementa el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje cuando ésta satisface las necesidades y los intereses de los estudiantes.

**Palabras Claves:** tarea, cursos de conversación, trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase, enseñanza, aprendizaje

La tarea es útil en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, ya que constituye una fuente de información sobre el desempeño de los estudiantes en la materia (Vatterott, 2009; Kumar, 2006). Dado que la tarea se asigna para cumplir diferentes propósitos y necesidades, se ha clasificado en distintos tipos (ej., Hallam, 2004; Kumar, 2006; MacBeath y Turner (1990), citado en Hallam, 2004). No se encontró información sobre la tarea como parte del enfoque comunicativo, tanto la definición como las características de este enfoque se presentarán en la revisión de la literatura (ver Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Nunan, 1989, 1999, 2004; Richards y Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996). Sin embargo, algunas actividades comunicativas presentadas por Nunan (citado en Richards y Rodgers, 2001) y Richards (s. f.) se adaptarán con el fin de cumplir el propósito de este proyecto de investigación. Además, se describirán ejemplos de estudios realizados para practicar habilidades orales fuera del aula, con el fin de reconocer las contribuciones que varios autores (ej., Carralero, 2010; Stannard, 2007; Rance-Roney, 2008) han hecho al campo de la tarea en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL por su nombre en inglés).

Como parte de esas contribuciones, este estudio busca responder cómo las actividades comunicativas fuera del aula, en lugar de las tareas tradicionales, pueden aumentar el porcentaje de estudiantes que realmente realizan la tarea. En otras palabras, este proyecto de investigación intenta determinar si las actividades comunicativas fuera de clase son un medio para mejorar la tasa de cumplimiento de los estudiantes con respecto a la tarea. Tres de los investigadores de este estudio han trabajado en los cursos de conversación por aproximadamente 1 año y han observado que algunos alumnos no entregan sus asignaciones. Una posible razón para esto es que los estudiantes tienden a limitarse a lo que hacen en el aula y practican poco por su cuenta, lo cual afecta directamente la adquisición de una lengua extranjera.

La escasa disponibilidad de hablantes nativos y de hablantes de una segunda lengua fuera del aula también influye negativamente, lo que a su vez impulsa a los docentes a buscar recursos que permitan a los alumnos practicar sus habilidades orales. Esto describe básicamente cómo se llegó a la siguiente pregunta: ¿cómo puede la asignación de actividades comunicativas fuera del aula, en lugar de actividades del libro, aumentar el porcentaje de estudiantes que realmente realizan la tarea? Para responder a la pregunta mencionada anteriormente, la investigación se llevó a cabo con un grupo de los cursos de conversación en la Universidad de Costa Rica.

## **Revisión de la Literatura**

### **Tipos de Tarea y Propósitos al Asignarla**

Las tareas como complemento del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje han sido analizadas por Vatterott (2009) y Kumar (2006), quienes destacan la contribución de las

actividades fuera del aula al aprendizaje y también señalan que los alumnos pueden desarrollar habilidades mentales mediante estas herramientas. Kumar (2006) también subraya el potencial de la tarea para proporcionar a los docentes una visión de las fortalezas y debilidades de los pupilos.

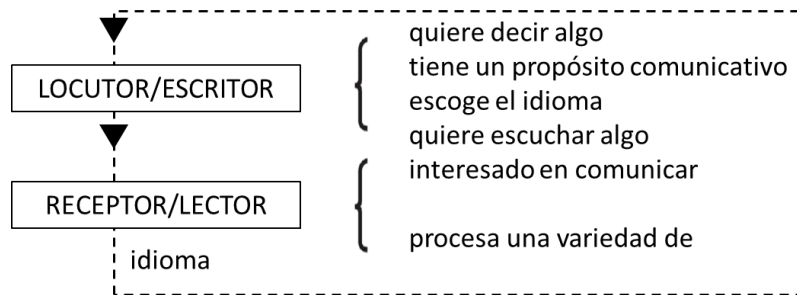
Algunos autores han clasificado la tarea en diferentes tipos. Por ejemplo, MacBeath y Turner (citados en Hallam, 2004) señalan la existencia de cuatro tipos de tarea: “la finalización del trabajo comenzado en clase, la tarea autónoma o paralela (diferente al trabajo en clase), al trabajo espontáneo que surge de un proyecto o actividad en desarrollo, y la lectura o investigación preparatoria realizada antes de una lección” (p. 7).

Adicionalmente, Kumar (2006) indica la existencia de seis tipos de tarea. El primero es la “tarea de tipo práctica”, la cual “busca reforzar el aprendizaje y ayudar al estudiante a dominar habilidades específicas” (p. 35). El segundo tipo es la “tarea de tipo preparatoria”, que se utiliza para “introducir el material que será presentado en lecciones futuras” (Kumar, 2006, p. 36). El tercero es la “tarea de tipo extensión”, la cual funciona como “trabajo continuo a largo plazo, paralelo al trabajo en clase” (p. 36). La cuarta categoría, la “tarea de tipo aplicación”, permite a los estudiantes establecer una conexión entre habilidades y conceptos con nuevas situaciones concretas y abstractas (p. 37).

Luego, la “tarea de tipo creativo” les brinda a los alumnos la oportunidad de “aplicar conocimientos previamente aprendidos de manera creativa o imaginativa” (p. 37). La última se denomina “la tarea de tipo cooperativo”, que permite a los alumnos “trabajar y aprender de manera cooperativa” (p. 37). Se puede observar que tanto las clasificaciones de MacBeath y Turner (citados en Hallam, 2004) como la de Kumar (2006) parecen complementar el proceso de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. También responden a las necesidades de los estudiantes.

### **Actividades Comunicativas**

La palabra comunicación deriva del verbo “comunicar”, que significa “compartir información con otros hablando, escribiendo, moviendo su cuerpo o utilizando otras señales” (Procter, 2005). En otras palabras, existen formas escritas y orales para comunicarse con los demás. Esto es fundamental en nuestro proyecto porque las actividades asignadas incluirán ejercicios escritos y orales para determinar si los pupilos muestran una respuesta positiva en comparación con la que presentan después de realizar ejercicios del libro. La comunicación también puede llevarse a cabo en diferentes contextos y a través de diferentes medios. Harmer (1991) ejemplifica la naturaleza de la comunicación en el siguiente diagrama:



Harmer, p. 48, 1991

A partir del trabajo de Harmer, se puede entender que transmitir y comprender el significado es esencial para que la comunicación tenga lugar. De hecho, esta es una de las premisas de la Enseñanza Comunicativa de Idiomas.

El Enfoque Comunicativo, popular desde la década de los 80s, tiene como objetivo principal la comunicación efectiva; es decir, busca que los estudiantes aprendan cómo responder y entender a otros en diferentes contextos y situaciones. En este sentido, la precisión no es esencial a menos que interrumpa la comunicación (Harmer, 2001 y Finocchiaro y Brumfit (1983), citados en Richards y Rodgers, 2001). Además, ciertas dificultades lingüísticas derivadas de la falta de conocimiento de los estudiantes no deberían impedir su comunicación (Richards, 2001).

Muy similar a este enfoque, el Aprendizaje Basado en Actividades busca un tipo de aprendizaje en el cual las actividades sean significativas para los alumnos y, por lo tanto, fomentar la comunicación (Willis, 1996). Por esta razón, ambos enfoques se combinan, y con frecuencia se habla de “actividades comunicativas” en lugar de ejercicios comunicativos. Por lo tanto, se definirá el término actividad para resaltar su relevancia en este proyecto.

### **Definiendo Actividades**

La mayoría de los autores coinciden en que una actividad incluye el uso del idioma para alcanzar un resultado, especialmente un efecto comunicativo. Willis (1996) afirma que las actividades son siempre acciones que utilizan el idioma meta “con un propósito comunicativo (objetivo) para lograr un resultado” (p. 23). Crabbe (2007) señala que una actividad “es una unidad de acción comunicativa diseñada para facilitar el aprendizaje con un propósito claro” (p. 119).

Para Mori (2002), las actividades son, al día de hoy, las acciones que facilitan el aprendizaje de idiomas mediante el uso intencional del lenguaje y constituyen un elemento central de la pedagogía de idiomas. Sin embargo, existen otros factores que deben tomarse en cuenta cada vez que el docente planifica tareas.

### **Aspectos Generales Sobre las Actividades**

En cuanto al propósito, Shehan (1998, citado en Murphy, 2003) distingue los tres objetivos de cualquier actividad: precisión, fluidez y complejidad. También añade que el estudiante no puede prestar una atención completa a estos tres objetivos; por lo tanto, el papel del diseñador es el de seleccionar la actividad de acuerdo con el efecto pedagógico que se desee.

Para Murphy (2003), los resultados del aprendizaje son el producto de tres factores principales: “la contribución individual del estudiante, la actividad y la situación en la que se realiza” (p. 119). De esta forma, la actividad cambiará a medida que la persona interactúe con ella; por esto, a veces los resultados no son consistentes con los objetivos planteados. Murphy (2003) también sugiere que los diseñadores deben tener en cuenta cuatro aspectos principales al planificar: el objetivo, el contenido, la metodología y el contexto de las actividades (p. 353).

Crabbe (2007) coincide con Murphy y considera que las actividades también son una herramienta significativa para ofrecer oportunidades comunicativas a los alumnos dentro y fuera del aula; pero, para aprovecharlas plenamente en el aprendizaje, el docente debe “involucrar a los estudiantes en entender, identificar y aprovechar las oportunidades de aprendizaje” (p. 124).

Las actividades también pueden centrarse en las formas del idioma o en los significados que se comunican (Littlewood, 2004). Estos dos aspectos (forma y significado) pueden servir no solo como componentes principales de la metodología, sino también como organizadores de curso porque proporcionan “un vínculo entre la realidad fuera del aula y la pedagogía dentro del aula” (p. 324).

De acuerdo con Muranoi (2007), algunos académicos consideran que la práctica de producción es esencial para adquirir una segunda lengua (L2). Este autor concluye que “la práctica de producción (es decir, cualquier actividad diseñada para brindar oportunidades de elaboración a los alumnos de segunda lengua) es efectiva para desarrollar una competencia comunicativa equilibrada en el estudiante de L2” (ibid, p. 76), aunque se refiere únicamente a la práctica del idioma dentro del aula. A pesar de esto, Nunan (1991) destaca un aumento en la autonomía de los alumnos cuando utilizan sus nuevos conocimientos fuera del aula de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL por su nombre en inglés). El afirma que, dado que los estudiantes aprenden un lenguaje útil y real para fines reales en el marco de tareas comunicativas, es pertinente establecer tareas de práctica que sigan esta dirección.

### **Definición de Actividades como Tarea**

En cuanto a establecer tareas comunicativas como actividades fuera del aula, hasta donde sabemos, no se ha realizado ninguna investigación formal. Además, los libros que se revisaron no incluyen ninguna sección sobre la tarea en el marco del enfoque comunicativo

(Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Nunan, 1989, 1999, 2004; Richards y Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996).

Para este estudio se diseñaron y adaptaron actividades comunicativas originalmente pensadas para el aula, con el fin de convertirlas en tareas para realizar fuera de clase. Respecto a los tipos de actividades comunicativas, varios autores presentan diferentes clasificaciones o ejemplos. Para el presente estudio se utilizó la clasificación de Nunan (1989), citada en Richards y Rodgers (2001, p. 231). Para él, las actividades comunicativas se refieren a acciones del mundo real y actividades pedagógicas. Junto con la clasificación de Nunan, también se trabajará con la de Richards (s. f.), en la cual las actividades comunicativas incluyen acciones de precisión y actividades de fluidez.

### **Investigación Actual sobre Actividades de Tarea**

En la literatura revisada, encontramos tres proyectos en los cuales los docentes animaron a sus estudiantes a practicar habilidades orales fuera del aula. El primero fue realizado por una profesora universitaria que comparte su experiencia sobre asignar tareas en las que los estudiantes debían grabarse a sí mismos. Además, el docente preparó actividades de seguimiento para continuar en la misma línea de la tarea asignada, lo que le permitió darse cuenta de que sus pupilos utilizaban los conocimientos adquiridos con la tarea de nuevo. Como resultado de este experimento, el instructor afirma que sus clases “estaban más interconectadas” (Stannard, 2007, p. 12) y finalmente encontró una manera de promover el trabajo oral fuera del aula.

Asimismo, Rance-Roney (2008) utilizó historias digitales con sus estudiantes universitarios como proyecto final del curso. Se les pidió a los alumnos que escribieran un guion de la historia y, después de ser revisado por el docente y grabado varias veces, animaron digitalmente el relato utilizando un software orientado al cine.

El último es un proyecto muy reciente llamado “Talking Heads” (cabezas hablantes). Este plan busca “involucrar a los estudiantes en actividades orales fuera del aula” (Carralero, 2010, p. 16). La idea principal es que los alumnos se graben mensualmente realizando una actividad oral que se haya practicado en clase. El autor menciona que los estudiantes comenzaron a reflexionar sobre su desempeño y a intentar superar sus debilidades (ibid).

Todos estos proyectos tienen en común el objetivo de los docentes de intentar maximizar la práctica oral fuera del aula mediante actividades comunicativas centradas en el estudiante, orientadas a propósitos y que promuevan la reflexión. Estos objetivos también forman parte del presente proyecto de investigación, además de aumentar el número de estudiantes que realizan la tarea, especialmente porque este es un tema que preocupa a todos los docentes ya que existe poca investigación sobre el tema (North & Pillay, 2002, p. 138). De esta manera, nuestra pregunta de investigación es: ¿Cómo pueden las actividades

comunicativas fuera del aula, en lugar de las tareas tradicionales, aumentar el porcentaje de estudiantes que realmente realizan la tarea? De esta pregunta principal derivan cuatro sub-preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál fue la diferencia en la tasa de entrega entre las actividades comunicativas y los ejercicios del libro?
2. ¿Cuáles son las principales razones por las que los estudiantes hacen la tarea?
3. ¿Cuáles son las razones por las que los alumnos omiten o no realizan la tarea?
4. ¿Cuál es la diferencia en el desempeño de los estudiantes entre las actividades comunicativas y los ejercicios del libro?

### **Intervención**

Los investigadores asignaron dos ejercicios del libro y dos actividades comunicativas como tarea. El docente pidió a los estudiantes completar un ejercicio del libro basado en el tema y posteriormente, los estudiantes debían completar una actividad comunicativa tomando en cuenta los temas estudiados en clase. Primero, los estudiantes realizaron un ejercicio del libro, seguido de una tarea oral; ambas actividades se basaron en el mismo tema.

Después de estas dos intervenciones, los alumnos debieron llevar a cabo otra actividad comunicativa escrita, seguida de un ejercicio del libro. El orden se invirtió entre los dos primeros ejercicios y los dos últimos debido al tiempo disponible para asignar tareas (estaban a punto de terminar el curso y era imposible darles una actividad comunicativa después de un ejercicio del libro). Estos dos últimos ejercicios se centraron en un tema específico distinto al de los dos primeros mencionados anteriormente.

El tiempo otorgado a los estudiantes para completar ambos tipos de actividades varió. En algunos casos, los alumnos disponían de solo dos días para completarlas, mientras que en otros se les daba una semana para terminar la tarea o la actividad. La idea era considerar el tiempo asignado por el docente como una posible razón para realizar o no la tarea. A través de estas intervenciones, se esperaba obtener una mayor tasa de cumplimiento al asignar actividades comunicativas fuera del aula en comparación con los ejercicios del libro. La siguiente sección proporcionará información específica sobre los ejercicios y las actividades asignadas como tarea.

### **Descripción de las Actividades**

#### **Actividad 1**

Como primera estrategia, la profesora asignó un ejercicio del libro basado en la unidad #10 del libro Skyline 4. Los estudiantes utilizaron diferentes modales en pasado para completar algunos ejercicios del libro especulando sobre eventos o acciones pasadas. En uno de los ejercicios, se les proporcionaron algunas afirmaciones y, a partir de ellas, debían

escribir oraciones con “no/debería haber”. Para el segundo ejercicio, debían usar “podría haber” en lugar de “no/debería haber”.

El tercer ejercicio pedía a los alumnos comparar a dos personas utilizando “habría” y algunas palabras proporcionadas entre paréntesis. El último ejercicio consistía en un pareo de oraciones: una columna incluía oraciones describiendo una situación y la otra columna incluía oraciones con modales en pasado. Los investigadores hicieron copias de las páginas del libro asignadas como tarea para poder recogerlas y revisarlas posteriormente.

### **Actividad 2**

Para esta tarea comunicativa, los estudiantes debían grabarse a sí mismos dando su opinión sobre una pordiosera que describe su situación en un video de YouTube. Se les pidió responder algunas preguntas utilizando la contracción de los auxiliares en pasado, con el objetivo de practicar el tema estudiado en clase. Los estudiantes hablaron sobre diferentes aspectos del video que consideraron relevantes para el tema y la grabación debía durar entre 1 y 2 minutos como máximo. El docente proporcionó a los alumnos una copia de las instrucciones de la actividad.

### **Actividad 3**

La tercera tarea fue una actividad comunicativa en la que los estudiantes debían redactar un correo electrónico como respuesta a un problema que un amigo ficticio supuestamente le había planteado a cada uno. Los alumnos debían elegir entre dos tiempos verbales según el tipo de acción: definitiva o incompleta. La profesora proporcionó a los estudiantes una copia de las instrucciones de la actividad.

### **Actividad 4**

Para la cuarta estrategia, el docente asignó un ejercicio del libro basado en la unidad #11. Los alumnos debían usar el futuro progresivo (estaré -ando/-iendo) para completar algunos ejercicios relacionados con eventos futuros. En un ejercicio, los pupilos tenían que usar su imaginación para escribir oraciones basadas en las ilustraciones proporcionadas. En el ejercicio siguiente, los estudiantes debían escribir oraciones afirmativas o negativas utilizando la forma correcta del futuro progresivo junto con algunas frases incluidas en un cuadro. También se agregaron otros ejercicios relacionados con pronunciación y vocabulario en las copias del libro que fueron asignadas como tarea. Los investigadores hicieron copias de las páginas del libro asignadas como tarea para poder recogerlas y revisarlas posteriormente.

## **Metodología**

### **Participantes**

El estudio se llevó a cabo con un grupo de 20 estudiantes, 6 hombres y 14 mujeres de los cursos de conversación de la Universidad de Costa Rica (un programa que sigue el enfoque comunicativo). La mayoría de estos estudiantes eran adultos trabajadores con

edades entre los 20 y 45 años. Todos estaban inscritos en un nivel intermedio-alto de inglés, equivalente al nivel 8 de 12 niveles. Los participantes asistían a clases dos veces por semana, 3 horas por día, durante 10 semanas.

### **Procedimientos**

Para recopilar los datos, se diseñaron cuatro instrumentos:

El primer instrumento es el cuestionario previo a la intervención, que incluye ítems de opción múltiple y escalas de Likert para obtener información sobre las experiencias previas de los estudiantes con respecto a la tarea y sus opiniones acerca de la utilidad de diferentes tipos de tarea (ver Apéndice 1).

El instrumento para los estudiantes que realizaron sus tareas consta de ítems de opción múltiple y una escala de Likert para recopilar información sobre aspectos principales, como las razones de los pupilos para realizar la tarea, el grado de esfuerzo que dedicaron para completarla, su nivel de comprensión de las instrucciones y sus opiniones sobre la tarea (ver Apéndice 2).

El instrumento para los alumnos que no realizaron la tarea tiene el mismo formato que el instrumento descrito anteriormente, pero se centra en las razones de los alumnos para no hacer la actividad, sus opiniones sobre las instrucciones dadas en clase y las razones que posiblemente los habrían llevado a completarla (ver Apéndice 3).

Se elaboraron dos listas de cotejo para recopilar datos administrativos, como el número de estudiantes que entregaron su tarea y los que no lo hicieron. Una lista de cotejo se diseñó para los ejercicios del libro y la otra para las actividades comunicativas.

Antes de asignar la tarea, se les aplicó a los estudiantes en el aula el cuestionario previo a la intervención. Una vez que los participantes completaron este instrumento, los investigadores comenzaron a asignar las tareas para recopilar los datos. Para lograr este objetivo, se les entregó a los estudiantes una copia de los ejercicios del libro asignados y las instrucciones para desarrollar las actividades comunicativas.

En cuanto a las acciones comunicativas, la docente recopiló las grabaciones de diferentes maneras: en un CD, en un casete, transfiriendo la grabación desde la memoria USB de los estudiantes a su computadora o por correo electrónico. En el caso de la segunda actividad comunicativa, los participantes debían enviar un correo electrónico a la cuenta de la profesora o podían escribir el correo en una hoja de papel y entregárselo directamente.

La docente encargada del grupo recopiló los datos de las listas de cotejo y de los cuestionarios posteriores a la intervención el día en que los estudiantes debían entregar la tarea. El primer paso, una vez que la profesora había recogido las tareas, fue completar la lista de cotejo. Luego, entregó a los participantes los cuestionarios posteriores a la intervención según su situación (si habían realizado la tarea o no).

Ambos tipos de tarea fueron revisados por todos los investigadores. Esta información, junto con los datos de las listas de cotejo y los cuestionarios, también fue clasificada y analizada por los tres investigadores.

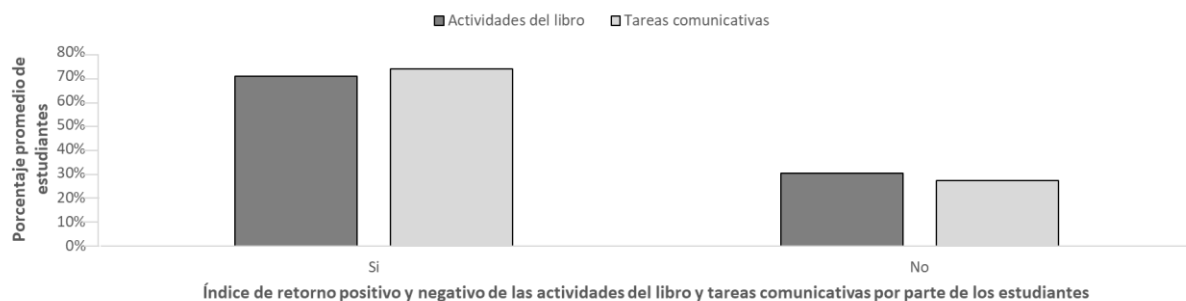
## Resultados y Discusión

### Resultados y Discusión de la Sub-Pregunta Número 1

Aunque hubo una disminución en la tasa de entrega desde la primera tarea comunicativa fuera del aula hasta la segunda, se observa que los porcentajes de entrega de las actividades comunicativas son más altos que los porcentajes correspondientes a los ejercicios del libro. La Figura 1 muestra esto en detalle.

Figura 1

#### Porcentaje de estudiantes que realizaron y que no realizaron los ejercicios del libro y las tareas comunicativas 1 y 2



Este hallazgo coincide con una de las conclusiones planteadas en la revisión de la literatura: cuando a los estudiantes se les asignan tareas del libro, terminan quejándose del carácter monótono y aburrido de los ejercicios y solicitan práctica para mejorar sus habilidades de comprensión auditiva y expresión oral en inglés. Con respecto a este punto, Kumar (2006) considera que cuando los alumnos están involucrados en el proceso de aprendizaje de otra lengua, solicitan actividades complementarias y práctica adicional para poder desarrollar más habilidades que les permitan usar el idioma de manera adecuada.

Además, Littlewood (2004) considera que, debido a que las tareas proporcionan “un vínculo entre la realidad fuera del aula y la pedagogía dentro del aula” (p. 324), ayudan a los estudiantes a encontrar mayor organización y sentido en lo que están aprendiendo. Por lo tanto, con base en los resultados, se puede asumir que los participantes consideraron que las actividades asignadas eran herramientas más significativas para brindarles oportunidades comunicativas fuera del aula. Probablemente por esta razón la tasa de entrega de las tareas comunicativas, en general, fue aproximadamente un 4% más alta que la de los ejercicios del libro.

Otro aspecto relevante es que, antes de la intervención, una de las primeras preguntas que se les hizo a los estudiantes fue con qué frecuencia hacían la tarea. La Tabla

1 muestra que la mayoría de los estudiantes afirmó, en términos generales, que casi siempre hace la tarea.

**Tabla 1**  
**Porcentaje de frecuencia con la que los participantes hacen la tarea de acuerdo al cuestionario previo a la intervención**

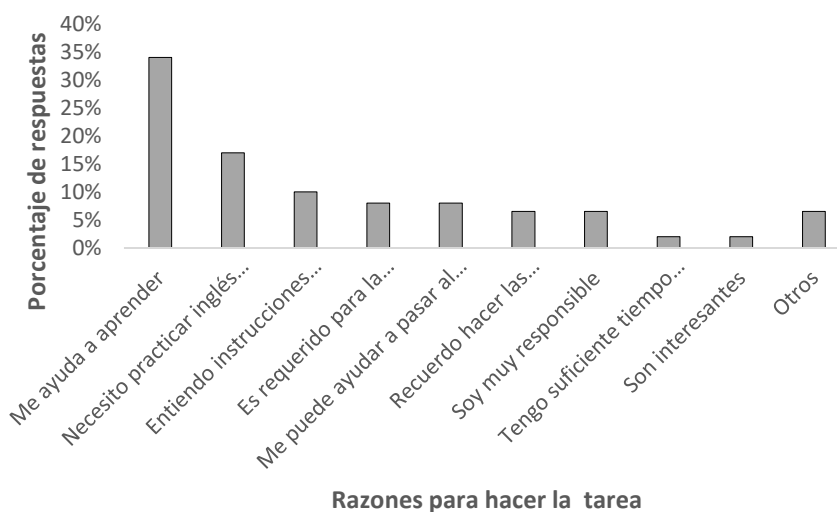
<b>Frecuencia</b>	<b>Nunca</b>	<b>Casi nunca</b>	<b>Casi siempre</b>	<b>Siempre</b>
Porcentaje de estudiantes	0%	20%	65%	15%

Este hallazgo es consistente con los resultados obtenidos después de las intervenciones, como indica la Figura 1. La mayoría de los participantes realizó casi siempre tanto los ejercicios del libro como las actividades durante la intervención. Por lo tanto, existe coherencia entre los datos del cuestionario previo a la intervención y los del cuestionario posterior a la intervención.

**Resultados y Discusión de la Sub-Pregunta Número 2**

Con el fin de determinar las principales razones por las que los estudiantes hacen la tarea, se obtuvieron datos del cuestionario previo a la intervención y de los cuestionarios que los participantes respondieron después de cada asignación. La información se analizó en el mismo orden en que se mencionaron los instrumentos. En el cuestionario previo a la intervención, así como en el cuestionario posterior a la intervención, los alumnos pudieron elegir todas las opciones que aplicaban. La Figura 2 muestra estas opciones en detalle.

**Figura 2**  
**Razones de los estudiantes para realizar la tarea en términos generales, según la información proporcionada en el cuestionario previo a la intervención**



Este hecho demuestra que los estudiantes consideran importante la práctica fuera del aula en el proceso de aprendizaje de un idioma. De manera similar, Nunan (1991) sostiene que poner en práctica lo aprendido conlleva ventajas para los alumnos.

La comprensión de las instrucciones es el último de los tres principales factores que motivan a los estudiantes a hacer la tarea. Por esta razón, se puede inferir que, si las indicaciones son complejas o difíciles de entender, será menos probable que los pupilos completen la asignación.

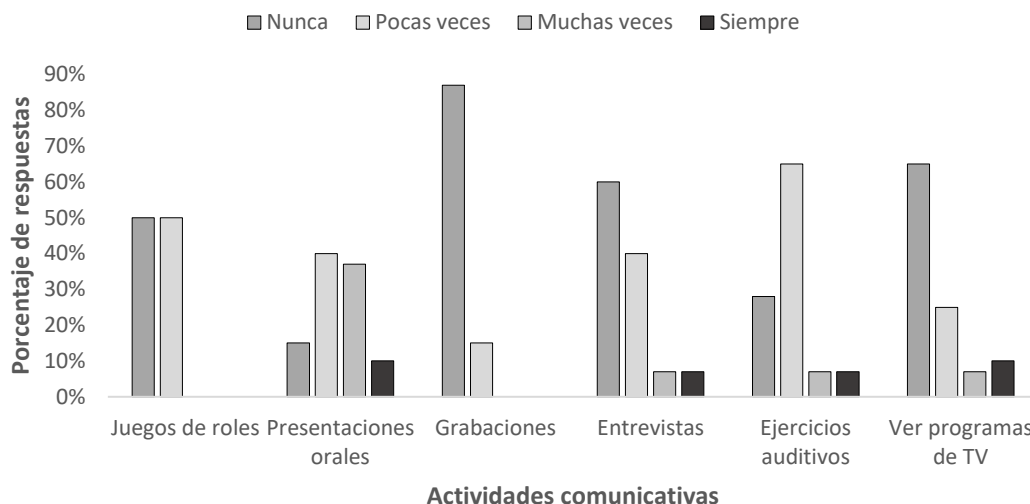
En cuarto y quinto lugar, un 8% de los estudiantes eligió el hecho de que la tarea es obligatoria para la evaluación del curso y que, al final, puede ayudarles a aprobarlo. En efecto, según la Tabla 2, la mayoría de los estudiantes ha cursado entre 4 y 7 niveles en los cursos de conversación. Por lo tanto, el 70% de los participantes sabe que la tarea y la asistencia juntas tienen un valor del 5%. Este porcentaje puede ser decisivo para aprobar o reprobar el curso si no han tenido un buen desempeño en exámenes y/o pruebas cortas.

**Tabla 2**  
**Porcentaje del número de cursos que los estudiantes han cursado en la UCR, obtenido del cuestionario previo a la intervención**

<b>Número de cursos</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>4-7</b>
Porcentaje de estudiantes	0%	5%	25%	70%

Como muestra la Figura 3, las actividades que cumplen fines comunicativos rara vez o casi nunca se asignan a los estudiantes como tarea. Sin embargo, las presentaciones orales no siguen la misma tendencia que el resto de las alternativas.

**Figura 3**  
**Frecuencia con la que se asignan actividades de tipo comunicativo como tarea en los cursos de conversación, según la percepción de los participantes**



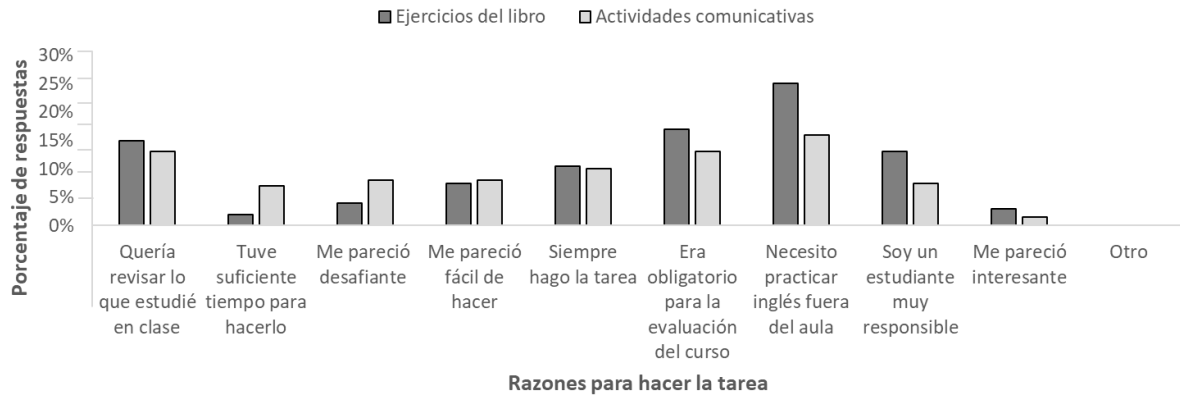
La razón detrás de estas respuestas puede ser que uno de los criterios de evaluación de los cursos son las presentaciones orales y los docentes pueden decidir si los estudiantes preparan su presentación fuera del aula o si la realizan de manera improvisada. Como conclusión a partir de los datos proporcionados por el cuestionario previo a la intervención, se puede afirmar que, aunque la mayoría de las tareas asignadas a los participantes provienen del libro, las realizan porque les ayuda a practicar el idioma meta y forma parte del plan de estudios del curso.

Con respecto a los cuestionarios posteriores a la intervención, el análisis muestra resultados similares a los anteriores. Como se observa en la Figura 4, las razones para que los alumnos hagan tareas del libro y asignaciones comunicativas varían. Para las primeras, la principal razón (con casi el 25% de los estudiantes de acuerdo) es la necesidad de practicar fuera del aula.

La segunda razón, respaldada por alrededor del 17% de los pupilos, es que hacer la tarea es obligatorio para la evaluación del curso, mientras que la tercera está relacionada con el 16% de los participantes que destacaron su deseo de repasar lo estudiado en clase. Es importante subrayar que los alumnos pudieron elegir todas las opciones que consideraran aplicables a lo que ocurría en la realidad.

**Figura 4**

**Razones de los estudiantes para realizar los ejercicios del libro y las actividades comunicativas, según la información proporcionada en los cuestionarios posteriores a la intervención**

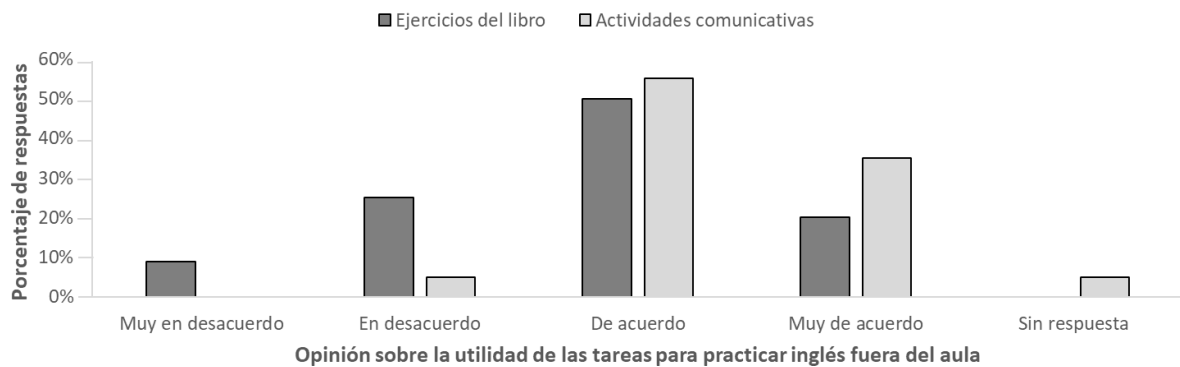


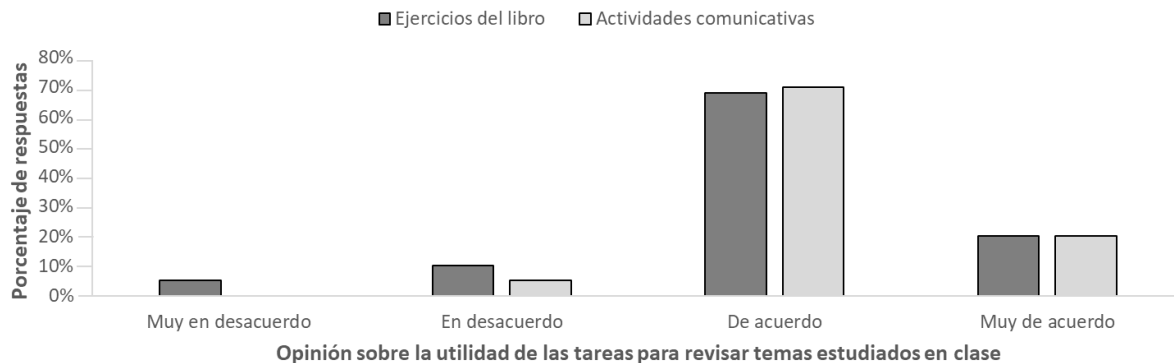
Este resultado coincide de cierta forma con las respuestas de los estudiantes cuando se les preguntó por qué hacían la tarea en términos generales (ver Figura 2). Además, ellos enfatizan que la tarea es parte de la evaluación de los cursos, por lo tanto, están obligados a hacerla.

Una de las razones para realizar actividades comunicativas es la necesidad de practicar fuera del aula, y el tercer lugar corresponde a dos motivos: el deseo de repasar lo estudiado en clase y el hecho de que la tarea sea obligatoria para la evaluación del curso. Las dos primeras opciones se reflejan en las Figuras 5 y 6 respectivamente.

### Figuras 5 y 6

#### Opinión de los estudiantes acerca de la utilidad de las tareas



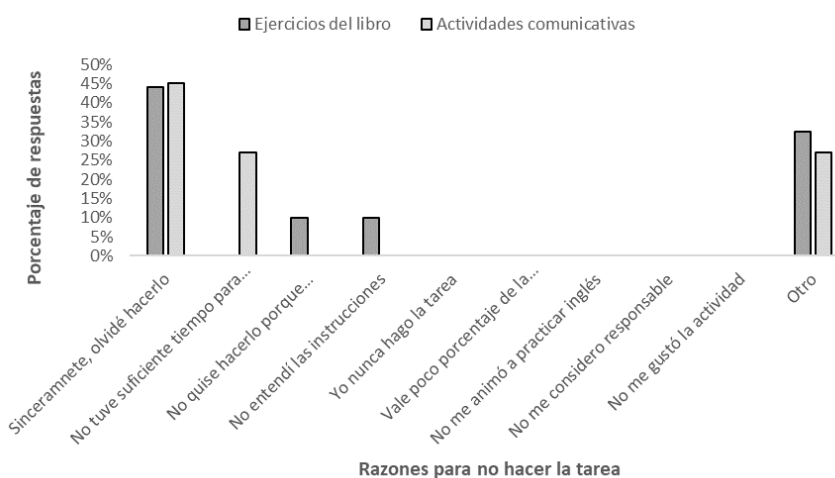


En las Figuras 5 y 6 se observa que no hay una gran diferencia entre los ejercicios del libro y las actividades comunicativas en la respuesta “de acuerdo”. Estos resultados indican que más alumnos consideran que las asignaciones comunicativas sirven para practicar inglés y repasar lo estudiado en clase que los ejercicios del libro. Además, de las opciones proporcionadas a los estudiantes sobre la razón para hacer la tarea, disponer de suficiente tiempo para completarla ocupa el último lugar para ambos tipos de tareas.

### Resultados y Discusión de la Sub-Pregunta Número 3

La Figura 7 muestra en detalle las diferentes razones que los estudiantes eligieron para indicar por qué no hicieron la tarea. Ellos pudieron seleccionar todas las opciones que se aplicaban a su situación.

**Figura 7**  
**Razones de los estudiantes para no hacer las tareas comunicativas ni los ejercicios del libro según la información proporcionada en los cuestionarios posteriores a la intervención**



Como muestra la Figura 7, la primera razón por la que los estudiantes no entregaron su tarea es el olvido, ya que alrededor del 45% indicó que se les había olvidado hacer tanto los ejercicios del libro como las actividades comunicativas. En este caso, al igual que se sugirió en el análisis de resultados del cuestionario previo a la intervención, si los estudiantes consideran que las tareas son irrelevantes, aburridas o poco atractivas, será menos probable que las realicen.

Además, la segunda razón por la que no se completaron las asignaciones comunicativas es que los alumnos no disponían de suficiente tiempo. Un punto interesante es que las dos principales razones reportadas en el cuestionario posterior a la intervención son las mismas que en el cuestionario previo, aunque el orden se invierte y la diferencia es pequeña. Por lo tanto, existe coherencia entre las respuestas de los estudiantes en ambos cuestionarios.

Estos hechos coinciden con Gass, Mackey y Ross-Feldman (2005), quienes afirman que “el tipo de actividades que los alumnos realizan afecta sus interacciones para la negociación del significado, especialmente en el contexto de una comunicación significativa” (p. 597). Por ende, el docente debe ser cuidadoso al elegir la actividad adecuada que se ajuste a los requerimientos y necesidades del curso y de los estudiantes. En este caso, dado que los alumnos no disponen de suficiente tiempo, es necesario un ajuste basado en su situación.

#### **Resultados y Discusión de la Sub-Pregunta Número 4**

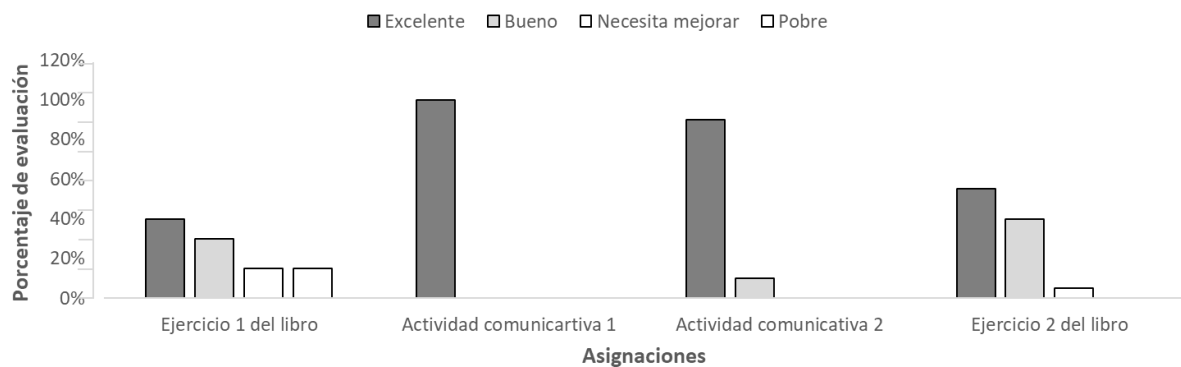
Para determinar cómo estuvo el desempeño de los estudiantes en las tareas comunicativas y los ejercicios del libro, se utilizaron dos escalas de evaluación. Ambas fueron adaptadas del formulario de evaluación utilizado en los cursos de conversación. Estos instrumentos incluyen 4 descriptores (excelente, bueno, necesita mejorar y pobre), los cuales indican la cantidad de errores que los estudiantes podían cometer para obtener una calificación cualitativa específica.

Aun así, la escala para los ejercicios del libro indica que los errores tomados en cuenta son los relacionados con las estructuras gramaticales específicas que se debían practicar, mientras que la escala para las actividades comunicativas fuera del aula detalla que los tipos de errores considerados son los que obstaculizan la comunicación o pueden causar malentendidos. Esta especificación se hizo porque el objetivo de las asignaciones comunicativas es que los estudiantes se comuniquen de forma efectiva, no perfecta (Harmer, 2001; Finocchiaro y Brumfit, 1983, citados en Richards y Rodgers, 2001).

Como muestra la Figura 8, el desempeño de los estudiantes en las actividades comunicativas fuera del aula fue mucho mejor que su desempeño en los ejercicios del libro. De hecho, el 100% de los estudiantes recibió la calificación de “excelente” en la primera asignación comunicativa y aproximadamente el 92% obtuvo un “excelente” en la segunda

tarea, mientras que solo alrededor del 36% alcanzó este resultado en el primer ejercicio del libro y cerca del 56% en el segundo ejercicio. Asimismo, como se observa en la Figura 8, las calificaciones en el primer ejercicio del libro variaron de “excelente” a “pobre” y de “excelente” a “necesita mejorar” en el segundo.

**Figura 8**  
**Desempeño de los estudiantes en los ejercicios del libro**  
**y en las actividades comunicativas fuera del aula**



Como se señaló en la revisión de la literatura, las actividades están diseñadas para lograr un resultado mientras se utiliza el idioma meta (Willis, 1996) y facilitan el aprendizaje (Crabbe, 2007). Esto parece ser cierto ya que los participantes de este estudio cometieron menos errores en las asignaciones comunicativas que en los ejercicios del libro asignados como tarea.

Es importante destacar que los contenidos evaluados en el primer ejercicio del libro y en la primera actividad comunicativa eran los mismos. De manera similar, los temas evaluados en el segundo ejercicio del libro y en la segunda asignación comunicativa eran idénticos. Si se comparan los resultados, existe una diferencia en el desempeño que favorece a los participantes en las actividades comunicativas.

Al principio, se creyó que, en el caso del primer ejercicio del libro y la primera tarea comunicativa, los estudiantes podrían haber tenido un mejor desempeño en la asignación comunicativa porque habían tenido la oportunidad de practicar las estructuras gramaticales evaluadas mediante el ejercicio del libro y las actividades desarrolladas en clase. Esto parecía lógico, porque Muranoi (2007) señala que “la práctica de producción (e.g., cualquier actividad diseñada para brindar a los estudiantes de L2 oportunidades de lograr un resultado) es efectiva para desarrollar una competencia comunicativa bien equilibrada en el estudiante de L2”.

No obstante, una vez que los estudiantes hicieron la segunda actividad comunicativa y el segundo ejercicio del libro (en ese orden respectivo), la explicación anterior no parece estar relacionada con la mejora en el desempeño de un tipo de tarea a la otra. Fue evidente que los estudiantes lograron mejores resultados en la tarea comunicativa que en la tarea del libro.

Como se señaló en la revisión de la literatura, las tareas son siempre actividades que utilizan el idioma meta “con un propósito comunicativo (objetivo) para lograr un resultado” (Willis, 1996, p. 23). Por lo tanto, los alumnos pueden usar el idioma de forma significativa mientras hacen las actividades asignadas. En este caso, dado que los participantes de este estudio pudieron usar el idioma de manera natural, es decir, en situaciones sumamente relacionadas con lo que podrían hacer en la vida real, la naturaleza de la asignación probablemente ejerció influencia en su desempeño.

### **Conclusiones**

Los participantes reconocieron la importancia y la necesidad de practicar inglés fuera del aula. Ellos eran conscientes de que la tarea también les ayudaba a ensayar y repasar lo estudiado en clase; es decir, sabían que era importante para ellos hacer la tarea. Además, mostraron que las actividades de tipo comunicativo eran más útiles para practicar y repasar el material. Esto significa que los docentes de los cursos de conversación deberían intentar adaptar asignaciones comunicativas para convertirlas en tareas que le ofrezcan a los estudiantes actividades enriquecedoras y atractivas. También para aumentar la tasa de cumplimiento de las tareas.

Se observó que los participantes no disponían de mucho tiempo fuera del aula para realizar tareas debido a su condición de adultos trabajadores. Por lo tanto, las asignaciones cortas parecen ser más adecuadas para esta población, considerando que la tarea constituye una herramienta útil para complementar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Asimismo, el estudio reveló que, en los casos en que la mayoría de los participantes no hizo la tarea, fue principalmente porque se les olvidó o porque no tenían tiempo para hacerla.

Otro aspecto a destacar es que, aunque la diferencia se redujo, la tasa de entrega de las actividades comunicativas, en general, fue más alta que la de los ejercicios del libro. Por lo tanto, se alcanzó el resultado esperado del proyecto, pero se debería investigar más para poder generalizar que la tasa de entrega de los estudiantes es mayor cuando realizan asignaciones comunicativas en lugar de ejercicios del libro.

### **Limitaciones**

Una de las limitantes para desarrollar este proyecto fue el tiempo. De hecho, los investigadores pudieron realizar cuatro intervenciones, pero solo dos con actividades comunicativas. Hubiera sido más enriquecedor haber tenido la oportunidad de diseñar y asignar más actividades para obtener una mayor cantidad de datos. Si otros investigadores

intentaran realizar un trabajo similar, se recomienda emplear más de dos tareas comunicativas para analizar también cómo diferentes tipos de asignaciones afectan la tasa de respuesta de los estudiantes.

La asistencia y la puntualidad también fueron aspectos problemáticos. Varios estudiantes llegaron tarde a clase, por lo que la docente no pudo comenzar la sesión revisando la tarea si así lo deseaba. Los estudiantes ausentes, aunque no todos, entregaron su tarea en la siguiente clase o la enviaron por correo electrónico.

Otra limitación fue la naturaleza individual de las tareas comunicativas. Sería interesante conducir un estudio donde los estudiantes interactúen realmente con otras personas, preferiblemente con hablantes nativos. Esto podría garantizar que la comunicación ocurra en el contexto más natural posible.

Además, una limitante y problema real fue que las sub-preguntas se plantearon después de que se prepararon los instrumentos; por ende, algunas de las preguntas y la información recopilada no se utilizaron en la sección de resultados y discusión. Para investigaciones futuras, sería beneficioso plantear las sub-preguntas al inicio del proyecto para favorecer la organización y el análisis del mismo.

Aparte de esto, en todos los cuestionarios hubo estudiantes que no respondieron el documento completo, por lo tanto, hubo datos que no pudieron ser analizados. Esto representa un margen de error en todos los resultados obtenidos a partir de los cuestionarios.

## **4.2 Translation 2 – Article 2**

### **Eficacia del uso de organizadores gráficos y resúmenes: un estudio monográfico de estudiantes adultos de inglés como lengua extranjera en un curso de comprensión de lectura**

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#### **Resumen**

Este estudio pretende responder la pregunta de cómo el uso de diagramas parcialmente completos, así como también los resúmenes pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a obtener la idea principal de diferentes textos. El marco teórico hace referencia a los beneficios de usar diagramas y resúmenes para comprender la idea principal de los textos.

La información recopilada apoya la premisa de que los diagramas deben ser usados como una estrategia de lectura mientras los resúmenes deben ser usados como una estrategia de posterior a la lectura. Los resúmenes son útiles para los lectores que muestran una comprensión real de los textos, así como también para que los docentes evalúen el entendimiento de las ideas principales de diferentes lecturas por parte de sus estudiantes. Además, los resultados muestran que los estudiantes valoran las ventajas de usar ambas estrategias para leer textos en inglés.

**Palabras claves:** organizadores gráficos, resúmenes, ideas principales, estrategias de lectura, textos, comprensión de lectura

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo con un grupo que cursaba la asignatura denominada "Estrategias de comprensión de lectura en inglés II" (LM-1032) de la Sección de Inglés para Otras Carreras (SIPOC por su nombre en inglés) de la Facultad de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica, concretamente en el Campus Rodrigo Facio. En LM-1032, se enseñan estrategias avanzadas de comprensión de lectura a estudiantes que cursan otras especialidades distintas al inglés. Tienen que analizar patrones retóricos y discursos, lo que significa que deben ser más críticos al analizar textos. De hecho, se espera que interactúen con el texto para crear significado a partir de lo escrito.

Identificar las ideas principales de diferentes tipos de textos es un tema que debe revisarse y reforzarse constantemente en clase, ya que es una forma de crear conciencia sobre su importancia a la hora de realizar otros ejercicios que involucren el pensamiento crítico. Sin embargo, a muchos estudiantes les cuesta realizar esta actividad. Algunas de las principales razones de este problema pueden ser la falta de práctica o incluso de bases sólidas en las estrategias que necesitan conocer para inscribirse en este curso y la falta de dominio del idioma extranjero. De hecho, el curso debe impartirse en español para facilitar la comprensión de los estudiantes de las explicaciones proporcionadas por el profesor.

Langdon y Chou (2001) destacan que identificar las ideas principales no constituye una tarea sencilla para los alumnos de diferentes edades (p. 114). Para abordar este problema los profesores deben enseñar diferentes estrategias que ayuden a los estudiantes a mejorar su comprensión de los textos en una lengua extranjera. Una de las estrategias que puede resultar útil para los alumnos es el uso de organizadores gráficos, que Jiang y Grabe (2007) definen como "representaciones visuales de la información del texto" (p. 34). De hecho, la mejora de las habilidades de comprensión de lectura ha sido uno de los beneficios atribuidos a estas herramientas. Jones, Pierce y Hunter (1988) reconocen la importancia de utilizar organizadores gráficos para comprender los textos.

Adicionalmente, algunos investigadores (por ejemplo, Goodnough y Woods, 2002; Griffin, Duncan y Kameenui, 2001; Robinson, Katayama, Beth, Odom, Hsieh y Vanderveen,

2006) han contribuido a proporcionar una perspectiva sobre la utilidad y la eficacia de los organizadores gráficos en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje. Por otra parte, resumir es otra estrategia útil para mejorar la comprensión de los textos de los estudiantes; esta es una ventaja destacada por Griffin et al. (2001), Idris, Baba y Abdullah (2007), Pirozzi (1995) y Singhal (2006). Por esta razón, tanto los organizadores gráficos como los resúmenes fueron las estrategias elegidas en este estudio para ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender las ideas principales de los textos utilizados en clase.

### **Revisión de la literatura**

Los organizadores gráficos han ganado atención por parte de expertos en el campo de la comprensión lectora y la enseñanza basada en contenidos. Por ejemplo, Jones et al. (1988) sostiene que los estudiantes que construyen organizadores gráficos son capaces de comprender las ideas principales y los detalles de un texto, la conexión entre ellos y los aspectos que no están claros (p. 20). También señalan que estas herramientas son importantes porque fomentan la participación de los estudiantes en el procesamiento de un texto y les ayudan a “comprender, resumir y sintetizar ideas complejas” (p. 21).

Este punto de vista positivo sobre el uso de los organizadores gráficos está respaldado por los resultados obtenidos en estudios realizados para determinar sus efectos en los entornos de aula (Goodnough & Woods, 2002; Griffin et al., 2001; Robinson et al., 2006). Asimismo, autores como Griffin et al. (2001), Idris et al. (2007), Pirozzi (1995) y Singhal (2006) señalan el uso de los resúmenes como una herramienta para evidenciar una verdadera comprensión lectora. Por lo tanto, se presentará un análisis de la utilidad tanto de los organizadores gráficos como de los resúmenes con el fin de arrojar luz sobre lo que diferentes autores han afirmado acerca de estas herramientas.

Robinson et al. (2006) condujeron 4 experimentos centrados en las ventajas de utilizar en el aula los organizadores gráficos parciales y completos, en la utilidad de estas herramientas para ayudar a los estudiantes universitarios a obtener un mejor desempeño en las pruebas de comprensión de lectura y en el impacto del rendimiento de algunas tareas de organizadores gráficos parciales en los alumnos, específicamente al tomar notas de los organizadores gráficos por su cuenta. Los resultados obtenidos mostraron que los estudiantes que completaron organizadores gráficos parciales obtuvieron mejores calificaciones en los exámenes y pruebas cortas que cubrían el contenido del curso, en contraste con aquellos que escribieron resúmenes o vieron diagramas completos que contenían las notas que necesitaban para estudiar. Adicionalmente, muchos alumnos pasaron de tomar notas no gráficas a tomar notas gráficas. Para estos autores, las actividades de organizadores gráficos pueden ayudar a los profesores a enseñar a los estudiantes el contenido del curso y habilidades metacognitivas relevantes como identificar la estructura del texto.

Esta investigación se enfoca principalmente en el uso de organizadores gráficos como herramientas de estudio en entornos de aula basados en el contenido, descartando el impacto de su aplicación para otros fines de lectura. Sin embargo, si los alumnos de este estudio mejoraron su rendimiento en diferentes evaluaciones, significa que fueron capaces de comprender bien los textos que leyeron en clase. Aunque estos autores no proporcionan información sobre las opiniones de los estudiantes respecto a la efectividad del uso de diagramas ni sobre las razones por las cuales recurrieron a la toma de notas gráficas en vez de notas no gráficas, se puede sugerir que el formato de la estrategia pudo haber jugado un papel relevante en la mejora de su comprensión de lectura. Como señalan Robinson et al. (2006), las notas de organizadores gráficos ayudan a los estudiantes a enfocarse en la información relevante y a “notar relaciones importantes entre conceptos que no son tan evidentes al observar formas lineales de notas” (p. 103). Por lo tanto, los alumnos deben analizar profundamente la información del organizador gráfico para entender cómo están interconectadas las ideas; esto puede permitirles captar las ideas principales de los textos cuando se implementen en clase como ejercicios durante la lectura.

Goodnough y Woods (2002) se enfocaron en el uso de mapas mentales en clases basadas en contenido para ayudar a los alumnos a comprender conceptos nuevos y difíciles. Llevaron a cabo un estudio monográfico interpretativo de 10 meses, utilizando mapas creados por los profesores, así como mapas generados por alumnos de forma individual y en grupo durante la clase, con el fin de mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de las ciencias. La mayoría de los alumnos, de sexto grado, veían los mapas mentales como herramientas divertidas, interesantes, motivadoras y que mejoraban el aprendizaje. Esta estrategia se consideraba un medio para mostrar su creatividad. Además, estos alumnos fueron capaces de aumentar su nivel de atención, organizar mejor sus pensamientos e ideas, mejorar su memoria, comprender a profundidad el tema, tener un mejor enfoque para compartir ideas durante la evaluación y mejorar la toma de notas.

Por otro lado, algunos estudiantes señalaron que interpretarlos resultaba confuso y que no eran herramientas útiles para el aprendizaje. No obstante, los profesores deben tener en cuenta que satisfacer las necesidades de todos los alumnos es una tarea muy difícil. Así mismo, si encuentran una estrategia que ayude a todos o al menos a la mayoría de los alumnos a alcanzar un objetivo específico, deben enseñarla y crear conciencia sobre la importancia de su uso.

Comparado con la investigación realizada por Robinson et al. (2006), los alumnos de ambos estudios se beneficiaron del uso de estas herramientas visuales independientemente de sus diferentes niveles educativos, lo que indica que los organizadores gráficos y los mapas mentales pueden ser útiles y eficaces para estudiantes de diferentes edades. Sin embargo, mientras que el estudio realizado por Robinson et al. (2006) se centra en la

comprensión de lectura, la investigación realizada por Goodnough y Woods (2002) se enfocó en el uso de la estrategia de mapas mentales "para introducir nuevos temas a través de mapas generados por el profesor y creados antes o durante la explicación" (p. 7). En otras palabras, los investigadores utilizaron esta estrategia como medio para enseñar la materia en vez de como una herramienta para leer textos en clase.

Un tercer estudio que se enfocó en el uso de organizadores gráficos como herramientas de estudio en entornos educativos basados en contenido es el realizado por Griffin et al. (2001). Aunque los organizadores gráficos se utilizaron para enseñar estudios sociales, la comprensión de lectura formó parte del proceso, lo que difiere del uso que se les dio a los organizadores gráficos en la investigación de Goodnough y Woods (2002). Griffin et al. (2001) querían averiguar si "la enseñanza con organizadores gráficos facilitaba la comprensión, la memorización y la transferencia de la información contenida en un libro de texto expositivo" (p. 98) y si "era necesaria una instrucción explícita para que los estudiantes generaran y utilizaran de forma independiente los organizadores gráficos" (p. 98).

Los investigadores descubrieron que los alumnos que recibieron instrucción explícita sobre el uso de organizadores gráficos obtuvieron las calificaciones promedio más altas en una prueba posterior inmediata y en una medida de memoria inmediata. Además, el desempeño de los estudiantes en una prueba posterior diferida y en una prueba posterior inmediata fue similar porque los alumnos de todas las condiciones del estudio recordaban aproximadamente la misma información (p. 105).

No obstante, los que estaban en tres grupos de tratamiento de condiciones, tuvieron un mejor desempeño en una prueba de transferencia que los que estaban en el grupo de condiciones de instrucción básica tradicional, en el que se les pidió "escribir frases utilizando las palabras clave identificadas en cada subsección del capítulo" (p. 102) y responder preguntas hipotéticas en grupos antes de leer el texto, así como a preguntas de comprensión literaria después de la lectura. Además, se les indicó que "leyeran un mapa sin líneas de contorno" (p. 103) y "leyeran un gráfico y analizaran los datos" (p. 103).

Los resultados son significativos porque se refieren a la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos para facilitar la comprensión de texto; sin embargo, debido a que este estudio, al igual que las otras dos investigaciones descritas anteriormente, se enfoca en el uso de esta estrategia en lecciones basadas en contenido, los resultados obtenidos pueden haber estado influenciados por dos factores diferentes. Estos pueden ser las explicaciones proporcionadas por los profesores sobre la materia y las oportunidades que tuvieron los alumnos de repasar la información estudiada en clase, así como de leer los libros de texto para crear diagramas.

También, los estudiantes que participaron en las investigaciones realizadas por Griffin et al. (2001) y Robinson et al. (2006) leyeron textos en su lengua materna, lo que es menos exigente en términos de procesamiento cognitivo que leer textos en una lengua extranjera. De hecho, el éxito de los estudiantes en la comprensión de las ideas principales y los detalles de apoyo en textos escritos en un idioma extranjero dependerá de su propio análisis de la información, de su buen uso de las estrategias de lectura y probablemente de su nivel de dominio del idioma destino.

A diferencia de los autores citados anteriormente, cuyo punto de vista sobre el uso de organizadores gráficos es principalmente positiva, la perspectiva de Pirozzi (1995) sobre esta estrategia es más desalentadora en lo que respecta a la comprensión real de los textos por parte de los estudiantes. De hecho, sostiene que la elaboración de los diagramas no necesariamente ayuda al lector a comprender completamente el texto porque solo sirve para organizar el material del libro de texto e identificar la conexión entre las diferentes oraciones e ideas de un pasaje. Pirozzi sugiere que se debe utilizar el resumen para demostrar la verdadera comprensión del texto. Además, Idris et al. (2007) afirman que "el resumen es una de las mejores técnicas de aprendizaje para evaluar la comprensión de los estudiantes" (p. 530).

Según Gardner (1998), un "resumen es una reformulación breve, en palabras del escritor, de las ideas principales de un pasaje de lectura" (p. 254) con el fin de proporcionar al lector "una idea precisa del contenido y el énfasis del original" (p. 254). Probablemente, los resúmenes ayudan a los lectores a comprender los textos debido al esfuerzo que tienen que realizar para parafrasear las ideas más importantes de la lectura. Sin embargo, un resumen se considerará principalmente una versión breve del texto original con sus ideas principales.

En otras palabras, no importa si los alumnos escriben los resúmenes con sus propias palabras o no; lo que realmente importa es si sus resúmenes incluyen los puntos más importantes mencionados en la lectura. Con base en estos aspectos, se puede afirmar que los organizadores gráficos constituyen herramientas útiles para que los alumnos mejoren su comprensión textual y que los resúmenes son herramientas eficaces para que los profesores midan el nivel de sus alumnos en cuanto al entendimiento de los textos.

Otra conclusión derivada de la información anterior es que parece que los organizadores gráficos deben utilizarse como estrategia durante la lectura y los resúmenes deben implementarse como estrategia posterior a la lectura. Sin embargo, Singhal (2006) considera ambas estrategias por separado, ya que sugiere que ambas pueden utilizarse durante la etapa posterior a la lectura. Ella afirma que los organizadores gráficos son ventajosos por aumentar la comprensión y ayudar a los lectores a recordar la información mediante representaciones visuales.

Así mismo, sugiere que un resumen escrito es una estrategia que ayuda a los lectores a obtener las ideas principales y secundarias de los textos, pero no especifica si ambas estrategias pueden implementarse de manera complementaria o no. No obstante, debido a que ambas estrategias tienen un impacto similar en los lectores, es posible combinarlas para mejorar la comprensión de los estudiantes de diferentes tipos de textos. De hecho, Griffin et al. (2001) concluyeron que proporcionar a los alumnos entrenamiento en la realización de resúmenes, instrucción explícita o en la práctica oral como complemento a la formación con organizadores gráficos puede ser un factor relevante en el diseño de la instrucción con organizadores gráficos. Aunque este comentario se refiere al uso de diagramas en clases basadas en contenido, refuerza el hecho de que tanto los diagramas como los resúmenes pueden utilizarse juntos para ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender las ideas principales de los textos aun cuando leen con otros fines.

Ya que los lectores de inglés como lengua extranjera suelen tener dificultades para comprender las ideas principales de los textos, los educadores deberían encontrar una solución que les ayude a abordar este problema. Al hacer esto, los estudiantes se sentirán más cómodos y seguros al leer diferentes tipos de textos y los profesores podrán motivarlos para que sigan leyendo en el idioma meta.

Por esta razón, el objetivo principal de este estudio es responder a la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿Cómo puede ayudar a los estudiantes a captar la esencia de diferentes textos el uso complementario de organizadores gráficos parcialmente completados y resúmenes? De esta pregunta principal se derivan cuatro preguntas secundarias:

1. ¿Qué factores, según la percepción de los estudiantes, dificultan su comprensión de las ideas principales de los textos utilizados en las intervenciones?
2. ¿Cuál es la opinión de los alumnos, antes y después de las intervenciones, sobre la eficacia de completar organizadores gráficos para captar la esencia de los textos?
3. ¿Cuál es la opinión de los estudiantes, antes y después de las intervenciones, sobre la eficacia de escribir resúmenes para captar la idea principal de los textos?
4. ¿Cuál es la opinión de los alumnos sobre la realización de ambas actividades?

### **Metodología**

#### **Participantes**

El estudio se llevó a cabo con un grupo de 23 estudiantes, 10 hombres y 13 mujeres, que cursaban la asignatura LM-1032 en la Sección de Inglés para Otras Carreras (SIPOC por su nombre en inglés) de la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica (Campus Rodrigo Facio). La mayoría de estos estudiantes eran adultos con edades comprendidas entre los 18 y los 40 años y todos estaban matriculados en diferentes especialidades. Solo una estudiante no estaba matriculada en ninguna especialidad porque

trabaja en la universidad. Los participantes asistieron a clases dos veces por semana, tres horas al día durante 15 semanas.

### **Procedimientos**

Antes de comenzar con las intervenciones, se les entregó a los alumnos el cuestionario previo a la intervención con el fin de obtener información de sus opiniones sobre el uso de organizadores gráficos y resúmenes (ver Apéndice 1). En otra lección, el investigador explicó a los estudiantes qué son los organizadores gráficos y cómo se utilizan. Se les entregó a los alumnos una copia con la información más relevante sobre esta estrategia. También se les entregó otra impresión con un texto breve y su correspondiente organizador gráfico, creado por el profesor, para que lo analizaran en grupos. De hecho, se les pidió que identificaran en el texto la información proporcionada en el organizador gráfico. Una vez que terminaron, el investigador les hizo preguntas para comprobar lo que habían hecho.

Es importante mencionar que no se les enseñó cómo resumir porque se les había enseñado unas semanas antes de las intervenciones cómo hacerlo, en términos generales, y se suponía que lo sabían por un curso anterior (LM-1030 Estrategias de comprensión de lectura en inglés I) que era requisito aprobar para poder inscribirse en LM-1032. Sin embargo, el profesor repasó las características que debe tener un resumen apropiado. Después de introducir ambas estrategias, el investigador realizó tres intervenciones.

En cada intervención, el profesor les hizo algunas preguntas a los alumnos sobre el texto que se les iba a proporcionar, como ejercicio anterior a la lectura para ayudarles a activar sus conocimientos previos. Luego se les entregó una copia de un texto expositivo con un diagrama parcialmente completado. El profesor les pidió que completaran el organizador gráfico y, una vez que terminaron este ejercicio durante la lectura, tuvieron que escribir un resumen del texto como ejercicio posterior. Se recogieron todas las impresiones para revisarlas y sacarles copia antes de devolverlas a los alumnos.

La tercera intervención se realizó una semana después debido a limitaciones de tiempo para devolver la segunda intervención revisada. El profesor no estableció un límite de tiempo para que los alumnos realizaran las actividades en las tres intervenciones; es decir, se les concedió el tiempo que necesitaran para hacer lo que se les pedía. Por último, se les entregó a los estudiantes el cuestionario posterior a la intervención con el fin de obtener información su opinión sobre las dos tareas asignadas: completar organizadores gráficos y redactar resúmenes de los textos que leyeron en clase (ver Apéndice 2).

En relación con las intervenciones, en la primera se les proporcionó a los alumnos una lectura extraída de Pirozzi (1995). La profesora incluyó un diagrama con siete casillas que ella misma había creado; tres de ellas estaban en blanco para que los estudiantes las completaran. Para la segunda intervención, se les entregó a los alumnos un texto elegido

por un estudiante que lo trajo como tarea el segundo día de clase, ya que la profesora quería hacerse una idea de los temas que les gustaba leer. El investigador decidió escoger una de estas lecturas para tener en cuenta sus intereses. Además, se les proporcionó una copia del diagrama con catorce casillas que había creado la profesora, ocho de ellas estaban en blanco.

Para la tercera intervención, el instructor les proporcionó una lectura de la revista Scientific American, que fue una de las fuentes utilizadas para escoger las lecturas que analizaron en clase. Así mismo, se les proporcionó a los estudiantes un diagrama creado por la profesora con 18 celdas. Para esta intervención, los estudiantes solo recibieron cuatro celdas completas. También es importante destacar que siete celdas corresponden a aspectos que se especificaban en el texto, lo que significa que los alumnos no tuvieron que esforzarse por buscarlos en diferentes partes del mismo. Por lo tanto, esas celdas se contaron como una sola para analizar los datos. En otras palabras, en vez de contar un total de 14 celdas, el investigador solo contó ocho para calificar los diagramas.

### **Instrumentos**

Para recopilar los datos, se diseñaron ocho instrumentos: un cuestionario previo a la intervención, un cuestionario posterior a la intervención, tres impresiones utilizadas en cada una de las intervenciones (no se incluyen en la sección de apéndices, pero están disponibles con solicitud previa), una escala de evaluación para cada uno de los tres organizadores gráficos (ver Apéndice 3), una escala de evaluación para los resúmenes (ver Apéndice 4) y una lista para recopilar datos administrativos (por ejemplo, el número de alumnos que participaron en cada intervención, el número de celdas que completaron correctamente en cada organizador gráfico y las calificaciones cualitativas que obtuvieron en los organizadores gráficos y en los resúmenes).

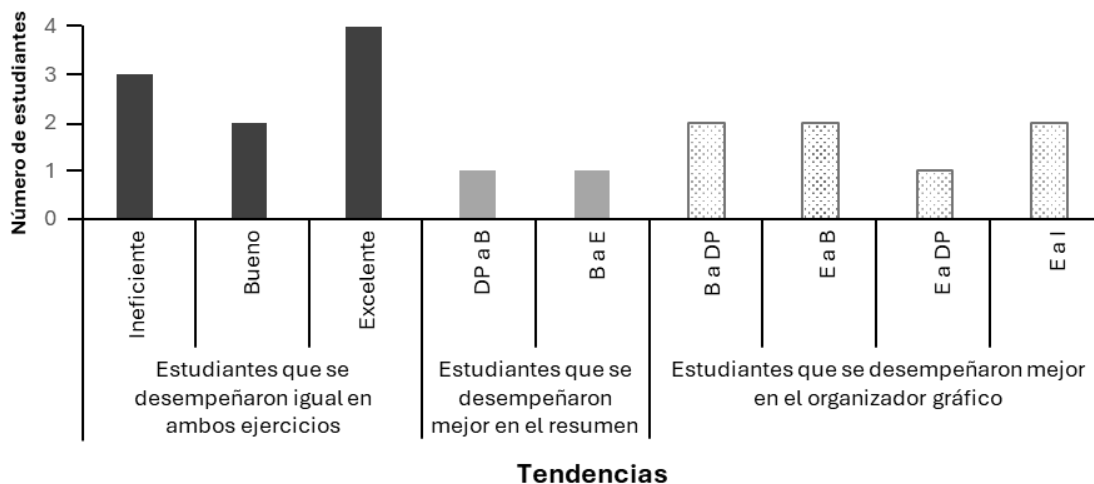
### **Resultados y Discusión**

#### **Resultados y Discusión de la Primera intervención**

Con base en los resultados obtenidos en la primera intervención, se identificaron tres tendencias: estudiantes cuyo rendimiento fue el mismo en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen, alumnos que obtuvieron mejores resultados en los resúmenes y estudiantes que consiguieron calificaciones superiores en el organizador gráfico. La figura 1 muestra en detalle los resultados de cada tendencia.

#### **Figura 1**

#### **Tendencias derivadas de la comparación del rendimiento de los estudiantes en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen**



Como muestra la figura 1, los alumnos que obtuvieron una calificación de "excelente" y "buena" tanto en el organizador gráfico como en el resumen demostraron una comprensión completa o casi completa de la esencia del texto. Sin embargo, tres de los nueve alumnos con esta tendencia tuvieron un rendimiento "ineficiente" en ambos ejercicios, lo que significa que no comprendieron las ideas principales de la lectura.

Es importante destacar que estos tres alumnos tenían un nivel bajo de inglés, lo que pudo haber afectado su rendimiento en ambos ejercicios. De hecho, su falta de vocabulario y comprensión de las estructuras gramaticales en inglés pudo haber dificultado su comprensión del texto, así como su comprensión de la estructura retórica. Esto no les permitió diferenciar las ideas principales de las secundarias para completar el organizador gráfico y escribir el resumen.

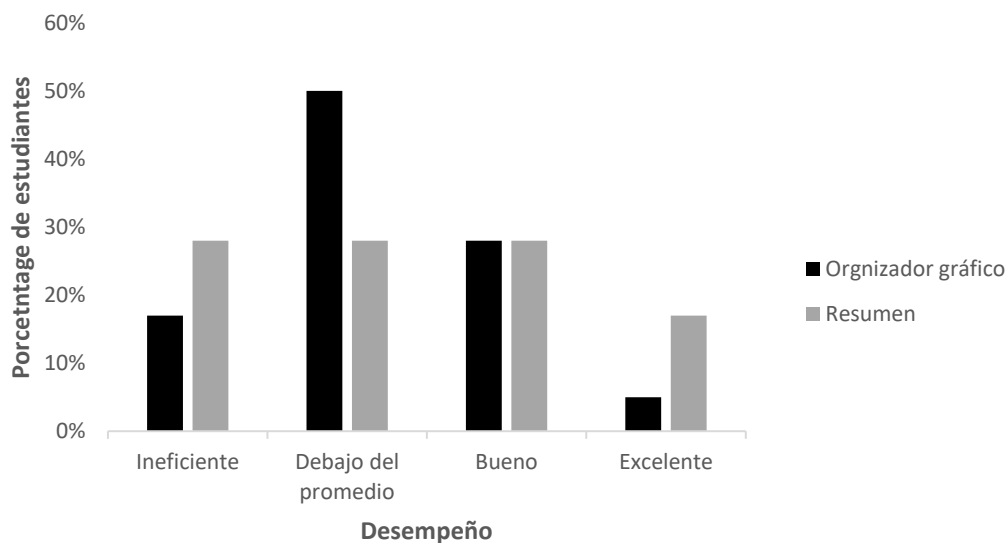
En el caso de aquellos alumnos que tuvieron un mejor desempeño en el resumen que en el organizador gráfico, probablemente aumentaron su comprensión de lectura porque tuvieron que leer el texto más de dos veces para realizar ambos ejercicios. En el caso de los alumnos que tuvieron mejor rendimiento en el organizador gráfico que en el resumen, el caso menos grave fue el de los que obtuvieron una calificación de "excelente" en la realización del organizador gráfico, pero una nota de "bueno" en el resumen porque estos estudiantes fueron capaces de comprender la mayoría de los puntos principales del texto.

Sin embargo, los otros alumnos mostraron una falta de comprensión de la esencia; de hecho, tuvieron diferentes problemas. Uno de ellos fue que malinterpretaron la información proporcionada en la lectura. Además, les faltaron detalles de apoyo y, en algunos casos, brindaron información que no estaba respaldada por el texto. Por lo tanto, los profesores no deben basarse únicamente en los organizadores gráficos para evaluar el grado de comprensión de los alumnos.

Como argumenta Pirozzi (1995), la elaboración de diagramas no ayuda necesariamente al lector a comprender completamente el texto porque sirve principalmente para identificar la conexión entre las diferentes oraciones e ideas de un pasaje. Por ende, recomienda el uso de resúmenes como una estrategia que sirve para demostrar la verdadera comprensión del texto. Los educadores deben tomar en cuenta esta recomendación, especialmente porque parece que los resúmenes son herramientas útiles para evaluar la comprensión de los textos por parte de los alumnos, tal y como afirman Idris et al. (2007).

Un dato curioso surge del análisis de los resultados del organizador gráfico y del resumen por separado. Tomando en cuenta los resultados "excelentes" y "buenos" en conjunto, más estudiantes tuvieron un rendimiento alto en el resumen que en el organizador gráfico. Sin embargo, representan menos del 50 % de los participantes en esta intervención, lo que significa que la mayoría de los alumnos no comprendió bien la esencia del texto. La figura 2 muestra esto en detalle.

**Figura 2**  
**Rendimiento de los alumnos en el organizador gráfico**  
**y el resumen de la primera intervención**



La mayoría de los estudiantes que mostraron una comprensión más profunda del texto fueron aquellos con un buen nivel de inglés o los que obtuvieron mejores calificaciones en las evaluaciones del curso. Sin embargo, hubo algunos que tenían un nivel bajo de inglés y que tuvieron dificultades para aprobar las pruebas cortas y los exámenes, pero aun así tuvieron un alto rendimiento en el resumen.

Esto sugiere que el uso de una ayuda visual como el organizador gráfico podría haber ejercido una influencia positiva en su comprensión de los textos, lo que luego se hizo evidente en sus resúmenes. Por el contrario, los alumnos que tenían poca comprensión de

las ideas principales de la lectura pudieron haberse visto afectados negativamente por su nivel de dominio del inglés, así como por la complejidad de la estructura retórica del texto.

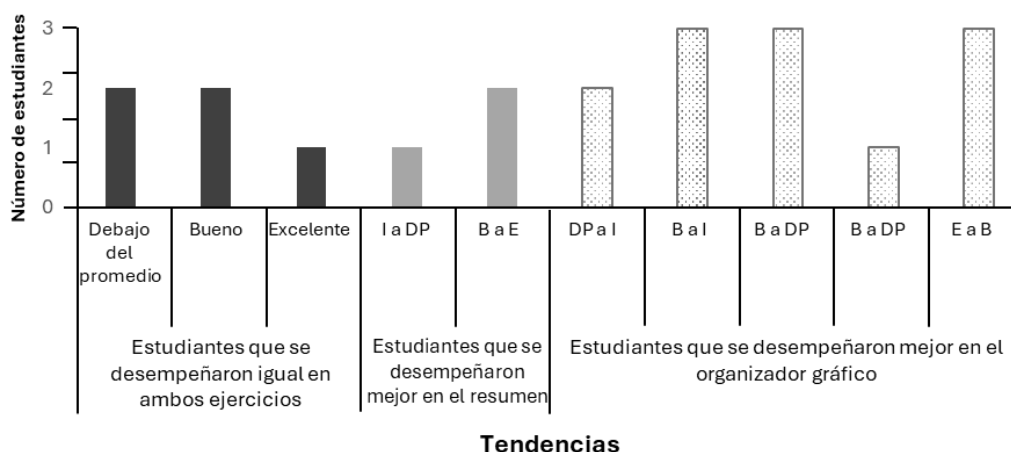
### Resultados y discusión de la segunda intervención

Las tendencias que se analizaron en la primera intervención también se observaron en esta intervención. Sin embargo, hay variaciones en cuanto a las diferentes calificaciones cualitativas que obtuvieron los estudiantes. En cuanto a los alumnos cuyo rendimiento fue el mismo tanto en el organizador gráfico como en el resumen, y en comparación con los resultados de la primera intervención, los resultados de la segunda mejoraron en el sentido de que ninguno de los participantes tuvo un rendimiento "ineficiente" en ambos ejercicios, pero el número de alumnos que consiguieron una calificación "excelente" en ambas actividades disminuyó de cuatro a uno. En cuanto a la segunda y tercera tendencia, al igual que en los resultados de la primera intervención, el número de alumnos que tuvieron un mejor rendimiento en el resumen fue pequeño en comparación con el número de estudiantes que lograron un mejor rendimiento en el organizador gráfico.

Como muestra la figura 3, la mayoría de los alumnos de la tercera tendencia obtuvo resultados "buenos" o "excelentes" en los organizadores gráficos, pero la mayoría de ellos calificaron "por debajo del promedio" e "ineficiente" en el resumen. Esto parece indicar que, aunque eran capaces de comprender las conexiones entre las ideas proporcionadas en el organizador gráfico, no podían aprovechar esta herramienta para escribir el resumen, a pesar de que incluía las ideas principales y los detalles secundarios del texto. En términos generales, demostraron que entendían la idea principal del texto, pero no proporcionaron suficientes detalles secundarios. Los que mencionaron eran irrelevantes, demasiado generales, mal interpretados o no respaldados por el texto.

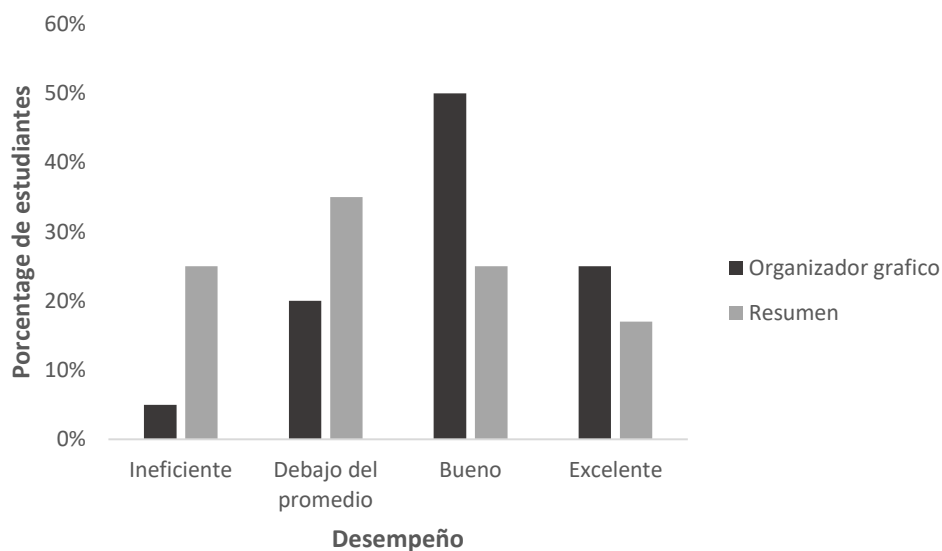
**Figura 3**

### Tendencias derivadas de la comparación del rendimiento de los alumnos en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen de la segunda intervención



Tomando en cuenta los resultados "excelentes" y "buenos" en conjunto, más alumnos tuvieron un rendimiento alto en el organizador gráfico que, en el resumen, contrasta con lo que ocurrió en la primera intervención. Específicamente, el 75% de los participantes en esta intervención tuvieron un rendimiento sobresaliente en el organizador gráfico, en contraste con el 40% de los estudiantes que escribieron resúmenes "buenos" y "excelentes". Esto indica que menos de la mitad de los 20 alumnos que participaron en esta intervención comprendieron las ideas principales del texto con sus correspondientes detalles. La figura 4 muestra esto en detalle.

**Figura 4**  
**Desempeño de los estudiantes en el organizador gráfico y resumen de la segunda intervención**



El resto de los estudiantes que tuvieron un rendimiento "ineficiente" o "promedio" en el resumen fueron capaces de identificar la idea principal del texto, pero tuvieron problemas con los detalles secundarios. Probablemente, el texto era muy complejo en términos de estructura y este factor les causó problemas para proporcionar las ideas secundarias.

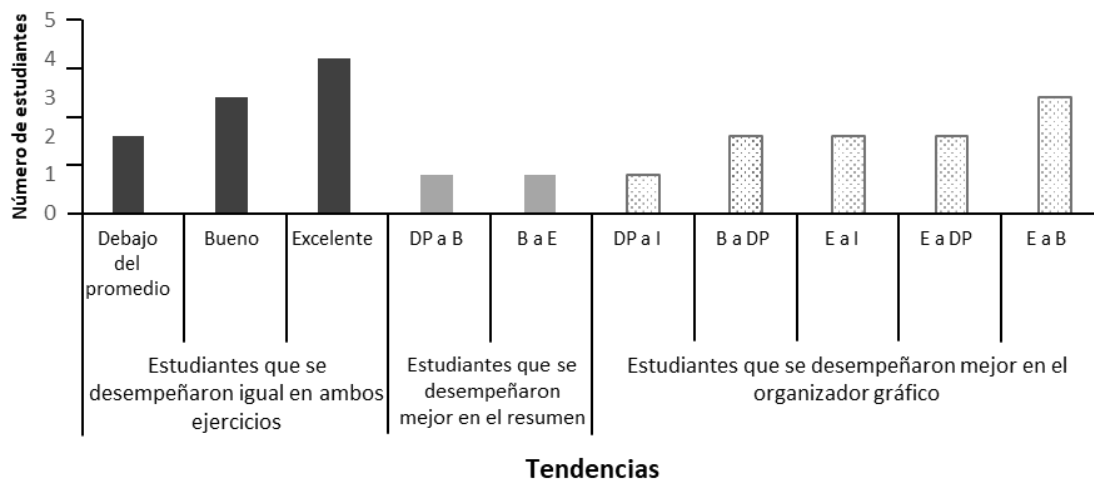
Otro factor que pudo haber influido negativamente en su rendimiento fue el espacio proporcionado en las impresiones para escribir el resumen. Aunque se les dijo que podían utilizar el reverso de la página si necesitaban más espacio, la mayoría intentó escribir el resumen en las ocho líneas proporcionadas. Esta situación constituye un inconveniente porque hay alumnos cuya letra es grande y proporcionaron información demasiado general o excluyeron detalles importantes para poder escribir el resumen en el espacio proporcionado. Como consecuencia, los profesores deben tener cuidado al elegir el diseño de los materiales que crean, ya que es un factor que puede afectar al rendimiento de los alumnos en la actividad asignada.

### **Resultados y discusión de la tercera intervención**

Las tres tendencias que se analizaron en la primera y segunda intervención también se encontraron en la tercera. No obstante, también se observaron variaciones en cuanto a las calificaciones cualitativas que obtuvieron los estudiantes en comparación con las dos intervenciones anteriores. La figura 5 muestra esto en detalle.

**Figura 5**

**Tendencias derivadas de la comparación del rendimiento de los alumnos en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen de la tercera intervención**



En cuanto a los alumnos cuyo rendimiento fue el mismo tanto en el organizador gráfico como en el resumen, al comparar los resultados con los de la segunda intervención, no hubo variaciones en las calificaciones obtenidas; es decir, sus rendimientos se mantuvieron entre "por debajo del promedio" y "excelente". Sin embargo, el número de alumnos que tuvieron un desempeño "excelente" aumentó a cuatro, el mismo número que se obtuvo en la primera intervención.

Probablemente, el tercer diagrama era más claro de interpretar y de completar que el segundo en cuanto a las conexiones entre las ideas y los títulos proporcionados y la lectura les resultó más fácil de entender. Ambos factores pudieron haber contribuido a su rendimiento "excelente" en ambos ejercicios.

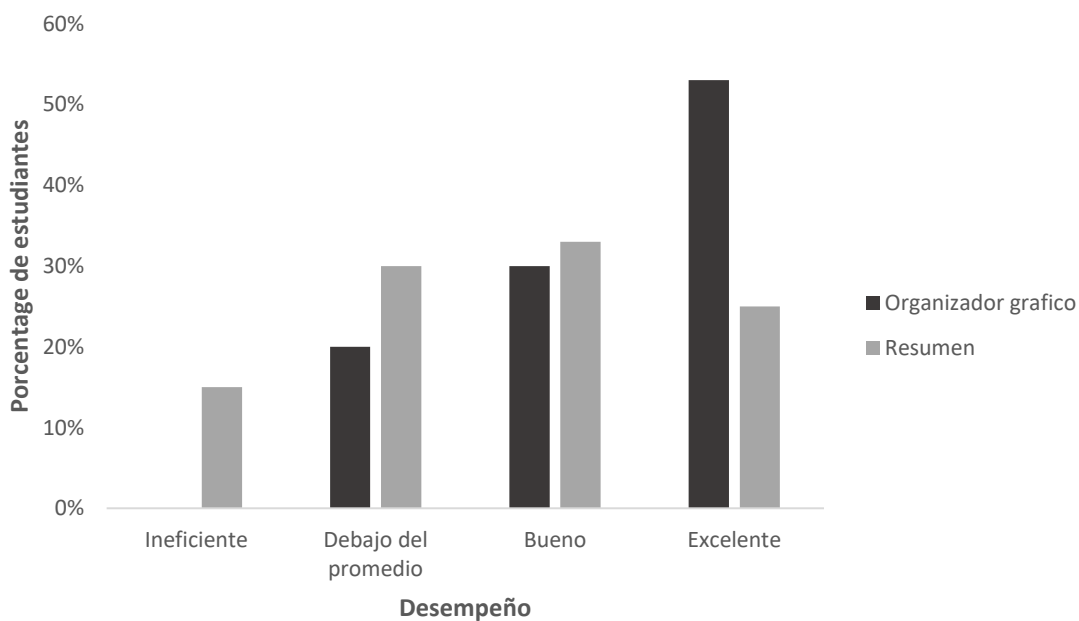
En el caso de la segunda y tercera tendencia, los resultados son similares a los de la primera y segunda intervenciones. De hecho, el número de estudiantes que tuvieron un mejor rendimiento en el resumen fue pequeño en comparación con el número de estudiantes que obtuvo un mejor rendimiento en el organizador gráfico. En el caso de la segunda tendencia, los patrones de mejora fueron los mismos que en la primera intervención; es decir, se mantuvieron entre "debajo del promedio" y "bueno", y entre "bueno" y "excelente".

En cuanto a la tercera tendencia, la mayoría de los alumnos tuvieron un rendimiento "bueno" o "excelente" en el organizador gráfico, pero la mayoría de ellos bajaron a "debajo del promedio" en el resumen. Aunque expusieron la idea principal del texto, no proporcionaron suficientes detalles que la respaldaran, lo que también puede estar relacionado con el espacio limitado que se les proporcionó para escribir el resumen o con sus ganas de escribir un resumen completo.

En otras palabras, es más fácil y rápido escribir ideas muy generales que entrar en detalles, especialmente cuando invirtieron mucho tiempo en completar los organizadores gráficos. Probablemente se sintieron cansados de seguir trabajando en el resumen luego de haber realizado ejercicios de comprensión de lectura para después llevar a cabo las dos actividades de esta intervención.

Otra posible explicación es que muchos estudiantes prefieren hacer ejercicios de comprensión de lectura en los que solo tienen que escoger opciones en vez de escribir, que es la habilidad que tuvieron que utilizar tanto para el organizador gráfico como para el resumen.

**Figura 6**  
**Desempeño de los estudiantes en el organizador gráfico y resumen de la tercera intervención**



Tomando en cuenta los resultados "excelentes" y "buenos" en conjunto, más estudiantes tuvieron mejor rendimiento en el organizador gráfico que en el resumen, como se muestra en la figura 6, lo que es similar al resultado obtenido en la segunda intervención. Específicamente, el 80% de los participantes en esta intervención obtuvieron resultados sobresalientes en el organizador gráfico, en contraste con el 57% de los alumnos que escribieron resúmenes entre buenos y excelentes.

En términos del rendimiento general en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen, se observó una mejora entre los resultados de la primera y la segunda intervención. En este caso concreto, más de la mitad de los participantes fueron capaces de comprender la esencia del texto, contrario a lo que ocurrió en la primera y la segunda intervención.

Pareciera que la práctica constante ayuda a los alumnos a analizar mejor el texto y así diferenciar las ideas principales de la información irrelevante. No obstante, su mejora podría estar relacionada con el nivel de complejidad de la lectura en cuanto a vocabulario, así como en términos de la estructura gramatical y retórica. Otro factor que puede haber influido en su mejora es el tema de la lectura porque muchos de ellos habían experimentado falta de sueño (el texto trataba sobre la privación del sueño), lo que les proporciona conocimiento previo suficiente para interactuar con el texto. Esta situación les permite entender la esencia con mayor exactitud que cuando no pueden establecer una conexión con el tema de la lectura.

Pese a las incertidumbres relacionadas con los factores que influyeron en la mejora del rendimiento de los alumnos en ambos ejercicios, los resultados obtenidos contribuyen a reforzar la relevancia de la afirmación de Idris et al. (2007) sobre el uso del resumen como herramienta para evaluar la comprensión de los estudiantes. Sin los resúmenes, los resultados probablemente habrían sido más dramáticos en términos de comprensión de la esencia de la lectura.

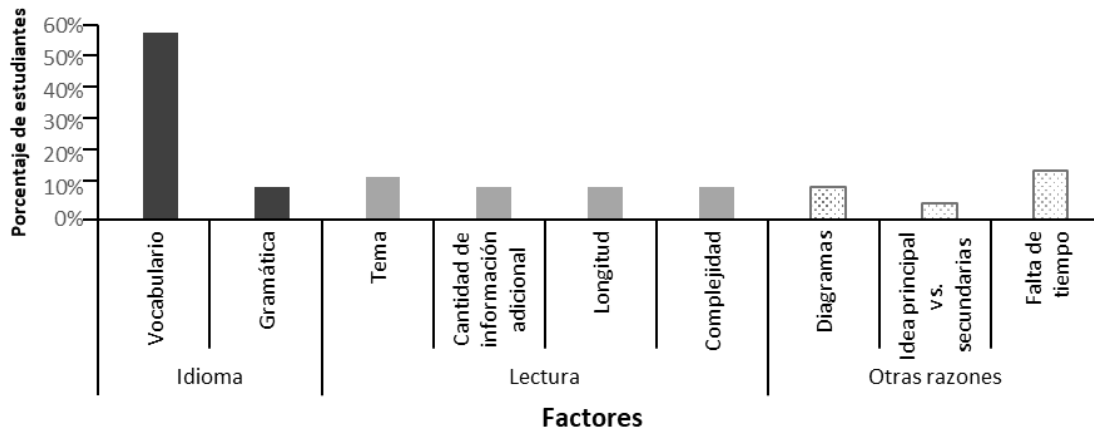
Es aconsejable que los profesores no dependan del rendimiento de los alumnos al completar los organizadores gráficos para medir su grado de comprensión de las ideas principales y los detalles secundarios de los textos utilizados en clase. Por otro parte, los estudiantes que tuvieron un rendimiento ineficaz o por debajo del promedio en el resumen se refirieron a la idea principal del texto, pero el mayor problema que tuvieron fue con los detalles secundarios. En comparación con la segunda intervención, carecían de detalles y los que escribieron eran demasiado generales para ayudar al lector a entender de qué trataba el texto.

### **Resultados y discusión de la pregunta secundaria número 1**

En el cuestionario posterior a la intervención se les preguntó a los alumnos por los factores que habían influido negativamente en su comprensión de las ideas principales de los textos que se les habían proporcionado. Los factores que mencionaron se dividieron en

tres categorías: los relacionados con su conocimiento del idioma, los relacionados con la lectura y otros factores. La falta de vocabulario fue la variable más complicada, como se indica en la figura 7.

**Figura 7**  
**Factores que, según la opinión de los estudiantes, dificultaron su comprensión de la esencia del texto**



No obstante, otros aspectos como el tema de las lecturas y la falta de tiempo representaron limitaciones para que pudieran entender las ideas principales del texto. Aunque no se les dio un tiempo específico para completar los ejercicios, es probable que algunos de los alumnos sintieran que necesitaban más tiempo para traducir la lectura. De hecho, muchos de ellos siguen dependiendo bastante del diccionario porque prefieren traducir la mayoría de los términos desconocidos al español para hacerse una idea sobre el contenido del texto. Además, su frustración por el tiempo puede haber estado relacionada con el hecho de que sabían que tenían que terminar ambos ejercicios porque se iban a recoger las hojas. Cuando saben que el profesor no va a hacer esto, algunos deciden hacer todo lo que pueden, pero no les importa si son capaces de terminar o no.

Como se puede observar en la figura 7, otros factores, como la cantidad de información adicional o irrelevante proporcionada en los textos, así como la incapacidad para diferenciar entre ideas principales y secundarias, afectaron la comprensión estudiantil de la esencia de los textos. También mencionaron que su longitud y complejidad constituían obstáculos para alcanzar este objetivo. Por último, el uso de diagramas tuvo un efecto negativo en la comprensión de lectura por parte de algunos alumnos. Un estudiante en particular mencionó que el diagrama era confuso, por lo que le resultaba aún más difícil entender el texto. Esto es similar a lo que ocurrió en el estudio de Goodnough y Woods (2002). Pese a que a algunos estudiantes les gustaba el uso de mapas mentales en clase, otros tenían una opinión negativa de ellos.

Debido a que todas las personas piensan y aprenden de manera diferente, sería aconsejable que los profesores dejen a sus alumnos diseñar sus propios organizadores gráficos. Sin embargo, los instructores deben tomar en cuenta que el uso de organizadores gráficos puede estar relacionado con los estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Por ende, los educadores deberían enseñar diferentes estrategias para que sus alumnos escojan la que más satisfaga sus necesidades y les ayude a comprender mejor la esencia de los textos en inglés.

Además, los profesores deberían buscar soluciones para abordar el tipo de problemas que mencionaron los estudiantes. Por ejemplo, si el problema es el vocabulario, deberían buscar lecturas más sencillas; si el nivel de dominio del inglés de los alumnos es bajo, o si quieren utilizar lecturas más complejas, una solución para ayudarles a entender la información con mayor precisión puede ser proporcionar un glosario. Este tipo de soluciones deben ajustarse al nivel y a los objetivos del curso y los profesores también deben animar a los estudiantes a buscar sus propias soluciones para que sean más autónomos.

### **Resultados y discusión de la pregunta secundaria número 2**

Esta sección presenta los resultados sobre la opinión de los alumnos antes y después de las intervenciones, acerca de la efectividad de completar organizadores gráficos para captar la idea principal de los textos. El primer aspecto a tener en cuenta es que, aunque la mayoría de los participantes en el estudio nunca o casi nunca utilizan organizadores gráficos para captar la esencia de los textos en inglés, como muestra la tabla 1, más de la mitad de los 22 estudiantes que completaron el cuestionario previo a la intervención se mostraron positivos sobre el grado de utilidad de los organizadores gráficos. La tabla 2 muestra esto en detalle.

**Tabla 1**

**Porcentaje de frecuencia con la que los participantes utilizan organizadores gráficos para leer textos en inglés, según el cuestionario previo a la intervención**

<b>Frecuencia</b>	<b>Nunca</b>	<b>Casi nunca</b>	<b>Casi siempre</b>	<b>Siempre</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	59%	32%	9%	0%

**Tabla 2**

**Opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de los organizadores gráficos según el cuestionario previo a la intervención**

<b>Grado de utilidad</b>	<b>Muy útil</b>	<b>Útil</b>	<b>No muy útil</b>	<b>Inútil</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	59%	32%	9%	0%

Cuando se les preguntó si el uso de organizadores gráficos les ayudaría a comprender las ideas principales de un texto, la mayoría de los alumnos respondió afirmativamente a la pregunta, como se muestra en la tabla 3. En comparación con su opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de esta herramienta, se observa un aumento positivo significativo en su punto de vista con respecto a los organizadores gráficos.

**Tabla 3**

**Respuestas sobre la opinión acerca de la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos para comprender la esencia de los textos según el cuestionario previo a la intervención**

<b>Respuesta</b>	<b>Si</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	82%	18%

Los que respondieron afirmativamente señalaron diferentes factores. Los más destacados fueron la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos como medio para resumir mejor el texto y ordenar sus ideas de forma lógica. Esto concuerda con lo que argumentan Jones et al. (1988) de que existe conciencia de los posibles beneficios que se atribuyen a esta estrategia de comprensión lectora. Adicionalmente, un estudiante también consideró el uso de organizadores gráficos como una forma fácil, entretenida e integral de identificar las ideas principales.

Por último, se afirmó que estas herramientas ayudarían a los lectores a establecer una conexión entre las ideas y a familiarizarse con el texto debido al tiempo invertido en trabajarlo. Sin embargo, para aquellos alumnos que respondieron negativamente a la pregunta, el tiempo fue el problema. De hecho, un estudiante escribió que los organizadores gráficos no le ayudarían al lector a comprender las ideas principales del texto porque toma tiempo encontrarlas. Otra razón en contra de la utilidad de estas herramientas está relacionada con su complejidad y este estudiante en particular mencionó que prefiere resaltar las ideas principales en lugar de crear organizadores gráficos.

En el cuestionario posterior a la intervención, se les preguntó a los estudiantes si el uso de organizadores gráficos les había ayudado a comprender la esencia de los textos. En comparación con los resultados obtenidos en el cuestionario previo a la intervención, su

opinión sobre la utilidad de estas herramientas no varió. La única diferencia se observa en la tabla 4 porque hubo un alumno que no adoptó una postura definida sobre su experiencia al completar los organizadores gráficos.

**Tabla 4**

**Respuestas sobre la opinión acerca de la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos para comprender la esencia de los textos según el cuestionario posterior a la intervención**

Respuesta	Si	No	Más o menos
Porcentaje de estudiantes	85%	10%	5%

Parece que sus expectativas sobre la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos para captar la esencia de los textos se cumplieron, ya que su opinión se mantuvo positiva. Como muestra la figura 8, hubo tres puntos destacados que justificaron sus respuestas afirmativas. En primer lugar, las herramientas ayudan a comprender la lectura en términos generales. En segundo lugar, les ayudan a distinguir entre detalles menores y detalles importantes. En tercer lugar, los organizadores gráficos les permiten organizar las ideas de los textos. Otro aspecto que se destacó es que las herramientas les facilitaron el resumen del texto. Estos aspectos concuerdan con lo que Jones et al. (1988) y Robinson et al. (2006) señalan sobre la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos.

**Figura 8**

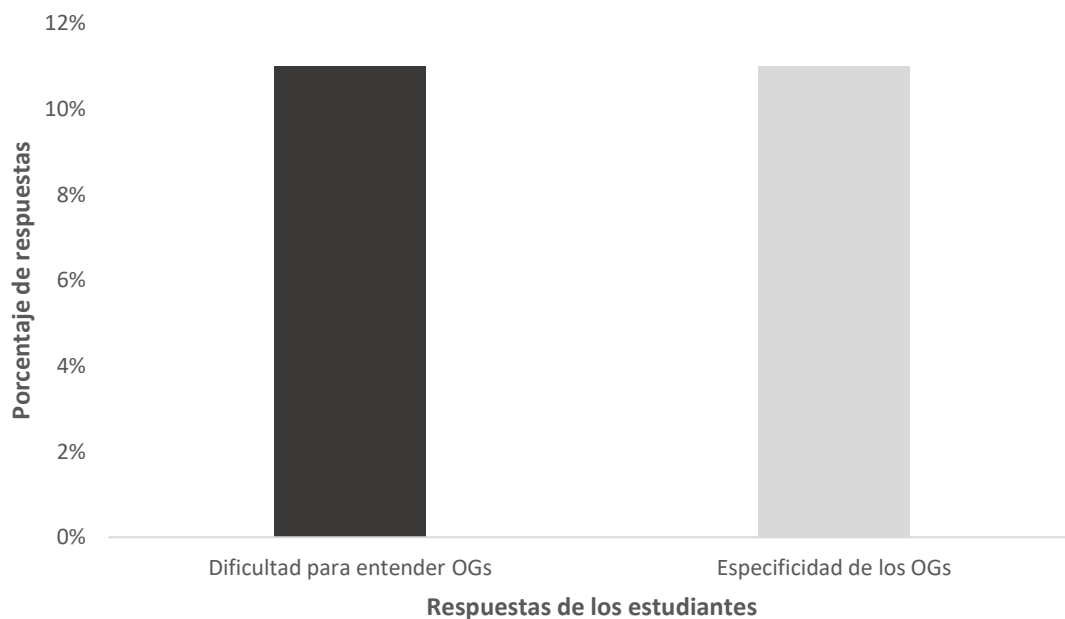
**Respuestas positivas de los estudiantes sobre la utilidad de completar los tres organizadores gráficos**



En cuanto a las respuestas negativas, un aspecto que se enfatizó tanto en los cuestionarios previos como en los posteriores a la intervención se refiere a la dificultad para entender los organizadores gráficos, lo que también dificultó su comprensión del texto.

Como muestra la figura 9, el porcentaje de respuestas es pequeño, pero aun así constituye un recordatorio para los profesores de que satisfacer todas las necesidades de los alumnos es complicado. Por consecuencia deberían enseñar diferentes estrategias para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades de comprensión de lectura.

**Figura 9**  
**Respuestas negativas de los estudiantes sobre la utilidad de completar los tres organizadores gráficos**



Otro factor que los estudiantes señalaron como un obstáculo para comprender la esencia del texto fue el nivel de especificidad de los organizadores gráficos. Algunos de ellos afirmaron que los diagramas eran muy específicos, por lo que tenían problemas para encontrar la información en el texto que completara las casillas en blanco, y esta especificidad los llevaba a cometer errores.

En términos generales, como muestra la Tabla 5, el 86% de los 21 alumnos que completaron el cuestionario posterior a la intervención se mostraron positivos sobre el grado de utilidad de los organizadores gráficos. Se observó una mejora en sus opiniones en comparación con el cuestionario previo a la intervención, ya que ninguno de ellos consideró que esta estrategia fuera inútil y solo un pequeño porcentaje de los alumnos consideró que no era muy útil. Este resultado es significativo porque más alumnos reconocieron el valor del uso de los organizadores gráficos para leer en inglés.

**Tabla 5**  
**Opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de los organizadores gráficos según el cuestionario posterior a la intervención**

<b>Grado de utilidad</b>	<b>Muy útil</b>	<b>Útil</b>	<b>No muy útil</b>	<b>Inútil</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	24%	62%	14%	0%

### **Resultados y discusión de la pregunta secundaria numero 3**

Esta sección presenta los resultados de la opinión de los estudiantes, antes y después de las intervenciones, acerca de la efectividad de escribir resúmenes para captar la esencia de los textos. Al igual que los resultados sobre la frecuencia con la que los alumnos utilizan organizadores gráficos para leer textos en inglés, la cantidad de veces que los estudiantes escriben resúmenes después de leer textos en inglés es bastante baja. De hecho, el 64% de los alumnos indicó que casi nunca utiliza esta estrategia y el 34% de los participantes nunca la utiliza. Aunque se desconocen las razones por las que no utilizan ninguna de las dos estrategias, necesitan más instrucción y práctica sobre cómo utilizar y aprovechar estas herramientas para mejorar sus habilidades de lectura y su comprensión de los textos. Esto especialmente porque su opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de los resúmenes es en su mayoría alentadora. Como indica la tabla 6, la mayoría de los estudiantes consideran que los resúmenes son útiles o muy útiles.

**Tabla 6**  
**Opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de los resúmenes según el cuestionario previo a la intervención**

<b>Grado de utilidad</b>	<b>Muy útil</b>	<b>Útil</b>	<b>No muy útil</b>	<b>Inútil</b>	<b>Sin respuesta</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	41%	36%	14%	4,5%	4,5%

Se les preguntó a los alumnos si resumir un texto les ayudaría a comprender sus ideas principales y el 91% de ellos respondió afirmativamente. La respuesta más destacada mencionaba su utilidad para descartar información irrelevante. Se destacaron otros aspectos, como, por ejemplo, un alumno señaló que, gracias a esta herramienta, podía procesarse y asimilarse la información.

Hubo un alumno que afirmó que simplifica la lectura, pero no desarrolló la respuesta. Quizás con simplificación quiso decir el proceso de interpretar ideas, las cuales pueden presentarse por medio de estructuras complejas y vocabulario técnico, con el fin de expresarlas en términos más simples e incluso coloquiales. Otro estudiante consideró que

resumir ayuda a esquematizar el texto. Por último, hubo un estudiante que indicó que escribir un resumen implica releer el texto, lo cual contribuye a comprenderlo mucho mejor. Al menos, muchos de ellos eran conscientes de los posibles beneficios que la elaboración de resúmenes aporta a su comprensión de los textos. Sin embargo, hubo dos estudiantes que respondieron negativamente. Uno de ellos destacó que prefería resalta los textos, lo cual fue lo mismo que respondió en la pregunta sobre la utilidad de los organizadores gráficos. Parece que está decidido(a) a utilizar esta estrategia en lugar de otras. Además, otro estudiante hizo una pregunta interesante: “Si el resumen incluye las ideas principales del texto y uno no las entiende, ¿cómo puede escribir un resumen?”.

Al menos en clase, se les proporcionan lecturas que son accesibles para ellos en términos de la complejidad del inglés. Este es un recordatorio a los docentes para que sean cuidadosos al elegir los textos. En otras palabras, las lecturas deben ser adecuadas basándose en el nivel de inglés y las necesidades de sus estudiantes. Para obtener este tipo de información, los profesores deberían aplicar una prueba diagnóstica al comienzo del curso y también realizar una encuesta para conocer el campo de estudio y los intereses de lectura de los alumnos. Si los profesores no toman esto en cuenta, probablemente sus estudiantes no lograrán alcanzar el objetivo deseado de entender la idea general de los textos y, sin duda, se sentirán frustrados al leer en inglés.

En el cuestionario posterior a la intervención, se les preguntó a los alumnos si los resúmenes les ayudaban a comprender la esencia de los textos o no. En comparación con los resultados obtenidos en el cuestionario previo a la intervención, su opinión sobre la utilidad de las herramientas no varió. De hecho, el 95% de los 21 estudiantes que respondieron a esta pregunta contestaron afirmativamente. Sin embargo, hubo un alumno que no adoptó una postura firme y respondió “más o menos”.

Este resultado es alentador porque parece que sus expectativas respecto al uso de estas herramientas se cumplieron. De hecho, algunas de sus respuestas refuerzan lo que señalaron en el cuestionario previo a la intervención. Por ejemplo, se indicó que los resúmenes los obligan a ser precisos para poder sintetizar el texto sin omitir las ideas principales. También se afirmó que los resúmenes les permiten tener una visión holística del texto, organizar su información, simplificar sus ideas, establecer una conexión entre ellas y agilizar el proceso de lectura, así como repasar y recordar la información.

En cuanto al estudiante que respondió “más o menos”, señaló que la utilidad de los resúmenes depende de la comprensión general del texto. Probablemente, esto esté relacionado con el nivel de complejidad del vocabulario del texto y con su organización, factores que obviamente influyen en la comprensión según el nivel de dominio del inglés de cada estudiante. El aspecto más importante de estos resultados es que se incrementó la conciencia sobre la utilidad de esta herramienta y que no cambiaron su opinión positiva

acerca de su uso. Lo que cambió fue su punto de vista sobre el grado de utilidad de los resúmenes.

Como se muestra en la Tabla 7, en comparación con los resultados obtenidos en el cuestionario previo a la intervención, el porcentaje de alumnos que consideraban los resúmenes muy útiles disminuyó de 41 a 28; no obstante, se desconoce la razón. La parte alentadora es que el 85% de los 21 estudiantes que completaron el cuestionario posterior a la intervención se mostraron positivos con respecto al grado de su utilidad, lo cual es similar a los resultados obtenidos en el cuestionario previo a la intervención.

**Tabla 7**  
**Opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de los resúmenes**  
**según el cuestionario posterior a la intervención**

<b>Grado de utilidad</b>	<b>Muy útil</b>	<b>Útil</b>	<b>No muy útil</b>	<b>Inútil</b>	<b>Sin respuesta</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	28%	57%	10%	0 %	5%

#### **Resultados y Discusión de la Pregunta Secundaria Número 4**

Después de analizar por separado la opinión de los estudiantes sobre el uso de los organizadores gráficos y los resúmenes, fue fundamental para el investigador conocer su punto de vista acerca del grado de necesidad de utilizar ambas estrategias de manera complementaria. Como lo muestra la Tabla 11, los resultados son alentadores porque reconocieron que era “necesario” y “muy necesario” utilizarlas de forma complementaria para comprender las ideas principales de las lecturas.

**Tabla 8**  
**Opinión sobre el grado de necesidad de utilizar organizadores gráficos**  
**y resúmenes de manera complementaria para comprender**  
**la idea principal de los textos asignados, según el cuestionario posterior a la**  
**intervención**

<b>Grado de necesidad</b>	<b>Muy necesarios</b>	<b>Necesarios</b>	<b>Innecesarios</b>	<b>Totalmente innecesarios</b>
<b>Porcentaje de estudiantes</b>	29%	62%	9%	0%

Parece que utilizar organizadores gráficos como estrategia durante la lectura, seguidos de los resúmenes como estrategia posterior a la lectura, ayuda a los alumnos a comprender la idea general del texto de manera más efectiva. Por ende, emplearlos juntos parece ser una manera eficaz de atender la necesidad de los estudiantes de mejorar su comprensión de los textos, en lugar de utilizarlos por separado. No obstante, deberían realizarse estudios sobre la eficacia de usar ambas estrategias juntas o por separado, con el fin de determinar la efectividad y utilidad de ambas opciones.

### **Conclusiones**

Al parecer, el uso complementario de ambas estrategias ayuda a los estudiantes a comprender la idea general de los textos, especialmente porque mejoraron su desempeño en la tercera intervención tanto en el organizador gráfico como en el resumen, en comparación con su rendimiento en la primera y segunda intervenciones. Parece que la práctica constante ayuda a los alumnos a analizar mejor el texto para diferenciar las ideas principales de la información irrelevante. Sin embargo, hubo estudiantes que tuvieron un alto desempeño en los organizadores gráficos, pero demostraron falta de comprensión de las ideas principales del texto al proporcionar información extremadamente general, información mal interpretada o información que no estaba respaldada por el texto. Además, hubo casos en los que faltaban detalles secundarios. Consecuentemente, la elaboración de resúmenes es una estrategia eficaz para que el estudiantado demuestre una comprensión real del texto y constituye una herramienta útil para que los docentes evalúen la comprensión de sus alumnos.

Se notó la existencia de factores que dificultan el entendimiento de los textos por parte de los estudiantes, como la falta de vocabulario y la incapacidad para diferenciar las ideas principales de la información irrelevante. Además, la extensión, la complejidad y los temas de las lecturas también pueden influenciar negativamente; por lo tanto, los docentes deberían buscar soluciones para abordar este tipo de problemas.

Los profesores podrían comenzar seleccionando lecturas adecuadas al nivel de dominio del idioma meta de los estudiantes. Una vez que enseñen diferentes estrategias de lectura, deberían proporcionar textos más complejos de forma progresiva. La idea es desafiar a los estudiantes para que puedan mejorar sus habilidades de lectura y volverse más autónomos. Para lograr esto, el andamiaje es muy importante.

Dado que el tema de las lecturas también es relevante, los docentes deberían ayudar a los alumnos a activar sus conocimientos previos para que establezcan una conexión con el texto. Adicionalmente, es importante proporcionar suficientes instrucciones sobre cómo utilizar los organizadores gráficos y cómo redactar resúmenes concisos, coherentes y efectivos. También sería bueno darles a los estudiantes el tiempo necesario para llevar a cabo ambas tareas. No obstante, se debe tener en cuenta que es difícil

satisfacer a todos los alumnos y cubrir todas sus necesidades; por lo tanto, los docentes deberían enseñar diferentes estrategias para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades de comprensión de lectura según su estilo de aprendizaje. Así mismo, se recomienda a los investigadores interesados en el tema que realicen estudios en los que haya un grupo de control y un grupo experimental, para poder comparar los resultados del desempeño de los estudiantes en la elaboración de resúmenes, con o sin haber completado previamente organizadores gráficos. Otra sugerencia es pedirles a los estudiantes que completen organizadores gráficos diseñados por los docentes, así como que elaboren sus propios diagramas, para comparar su opinión sobre ambas actividades.

Pese a los problemas que enfrentaron los estudiantes, su opinión sobre la utilidad de ambas estrategias fue altamente positiva, antes y después de las intervenciones. Este resultado es significativo, ya que más estudiantes reconocieron el valor del uso de los organizadores gráficos para leer en inglés. Por esta razón, los profesores deberían crear conciencia sobre la relevancia de utilizar este tipo de estrategias para leer textos en inglés. También sería clave motivar a los estudiantes a emplearlas tanto dentro como fuera del aula.

### **Limitaciones y Recomendaciones**

Una de las limitaciones para desarrollar este proyecto fue la falta de información sobre el nivel real del inglés de los estudiantes. Este es un aspecto clave a considerar al analizar las razones por las cuales los lectores no pueden comprender la esencia de los textos. Además, aunque la elaboración de resúmenes debería abordarse en el curso, este tema se desarrolla muy ligeramente en clase porque se supone que los estudiantes deben aprenderlo en un curso anterior. Así mismo, la falta de tiempo también fue un problema porque no hubo suficiente tiempo para la aplicación de los instrumentos y el desarrollo completo del proyecto. Cuando el investigador condujo el estudio, ya había dado las instrucciones sobre los resúmenes una o dos semanas antes de las intervenciones y los estudiantes estaban aprendiendo otro tipo de discurso que no era la exposición (tipo de discurso de los que trataban todas las lecturas elegidas para las intervenciones).

Nunca hubo tiempo suficiente para darle a los alumnos más explicaciones sobre cómo completar y utilizar organizadores gráficos ni como escribir resúmenes; tampoco hubo un espacio para poder darles retroalimentación después de las intervenciones. De hecho, el investigador únicamente pudo realizar tres intervenciones dándoles a los estudiantes organizadores parcialmente completos como actividades durante la lectura. Por ende, si otros investigadores buscan hacer un trabajo similar, se les sugiere pedirles a los estudiantes que creen sus propios organizadores gráficos después de practicar con diagramas parcialmente llenos y así poder comparar los resultados en las intervenciones en

cuanto a su opinión sobre el uso de organizadores gráficos para entender la esencia del texto y su desempeño en ambas actividades.

La asistencia también fue un problema, ya que era irregular. Esta situación afecta los resultados en el sentido de que hubo alumnos que solo participaron en una o dos intervenciones, y el investigador no pudo medir si mejoraron o empeoraron su desempeño en los organizadores gráficos y en los resúmenes.

Otra limitante fue ofrecerles a los estudiantes un espacio reducido para redactar los resúmenes. Se observó que los alumnos que utilizaron más espacio del proporcionado fueron quienes obtuvieron desempeño “bueno” o “excelente” en comparación con aquellos que solo usaron las líneas disponibles. Hubo casos en los que los estudiantes escribieron resúmenes muy buenos sin exceder el espacio asignado, pero tenían letra pequeña. Para investigaciones futuras, se debería dar a los alumnos más espacio para escribir, de manera que no se sientan tentados a proporcionar ideas demasiado generales para ajustarse al espacio del material, especialmente porque hay estudiantes que tienen letra grande.

### **4.3 Translation 3 – Article 3**

#### **La experiencia de enseñar un curso de inglés para fines específicos a estudiantes con discapacidad**

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#### **Resumen**

Para completar el programa de la maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en la Universidad de Costa Rica, las docentes diseñaron e impartieron un curso de IFE para diez estudiantes en la maestría en Estudios sobre Discapacidad. Tres estudiantes tienen discapacidad visual y uno tiene hipoacusia. Se hicieron diversas adecuaciones curriculares para que ellos fueran autónomos, pero los resultados muestran que algunos no siempre lo lograron. Sin embargo, su actitud hacia el aprendizaje del inglés cambió positivamente. Este artículo presenta los retos y logros de las lecciones y materiales

usados para crear conciencia sobre la importancia de clases inclusivas, así como recomendaciones para trabajar con esta población.

**Palabras Claves:** discapacidades, discapacidad visual, discapacidad auditiva, autonomía, tareas, adecuaciones curriculares, modificaciones curriculares, inclusividad, Inglés para Fines Específicos (ESP por su nombre en inglés)

### **Revisión de la Literatura**

Este proyecto toma en consideración las características de ambos, Inglés para Fines Específicos (ESP) y la Enseñanza de Idiomas Basada en Tareas (TBLT por sus siglas en inglés). El IFE, como menciona, Day y Krzanowski (2011), “implica la enseñanza y aprendizaje de destrezas específicas y el idioma que necesitan estudiantes particulares para un fin en particular” (p. 5). El IFE, de acuerdo con Robinson (citado en Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), “es ‘normalmente orientado a los objetivos’ y los cursos de IFL se desarrollan desde un análisis de las necesidades” (p. 3), lo cual sirve para determinar, tan preciso como sea posible, las tareas que deben llevar a cabo los estudiantes “por medio del inglés” (p. 3). Por esta razón, el enfoque de la enseñanza basada en tareas se utiliza como complemento para el IFE, porque busca alentar a los estudiantes a negociar el significado y a usar el idioma en tareas que son importantes y que implican una comunicación real (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 224). Estas tareas deben ser planeadas cuidadosamente, basadas en el área de estudio u ocupación del estudiante. Por esto se debe definir el concepto de estudios sobre discapacidad, para entender mejor las bases de las tareas académicas y de trabajo diseñadas para la población meta.

Los estudios sobre discapacidad constituyen un “proyecto académico activo, integral e interdisciplinario que analiza la discapacidad desde la perspectiva de las ciencias sociales, las humanidades y el arte” (Rembis, 2010, p. 1). La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS, 2013) define el término “discapacidad” como un fenómeno complejo que involucra deficiencias (problemas encontrados en la ejecución de una tarea o acción) y restricciones de participación (problemas de desenvolvimiento en situaciones de la vida).

La organización mundial de la salud (OMS, 2013) define el término “discapacidad” como un fenómeno complejo que contempla deficiencias (problemas en la función y estructura corporal), limitantes de actividad (dificultades en la ejecución de una tarea o acción) y restricciones de participación (problemas para involucrarse en situaciones de la vida). Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este estudio sobre discapacidades es crear conciencia sobre “las experiencias de personas con discapacidad y para fomentar un cambio social” (Sociedad de estudios sobre discapacidad, citado en Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012, p.71).

De acuerdo con Ferguson y Nusbaum (2012), una de las características clave de los estudios sobre discapacidad es que ésta debe ser interdisciplinaria; esto significa que debe involucrar una variedad de disciplinas académicas. La ventaja del trabajo interdisciplinario

es que permite [a las personas] desarrollar una comprensión más profunda de la discapacidad como parte de su experiencia humana” (p.75).

Otro aspecto esencial es que debe ser tomado en consideración en el campo de estudio sobre esta población está relacionado con la educación inclusiva. La inclusión sirve para combatir la discriminación al acoger la participación de todas las personas en cualquier contexto. Por lo tanto, como Barton (s. f.) indica, la educación inclusiva debe ser tratada como “un medio para un fin, el de la concreción de una sociedad inclusiva” (p. 5). No es “acerca de la asimilación o la adaptación de los individuos a un sistema de suministro y práctica educativa sin cambios” (p.5), pero debería incluir la toma de decisiones sobre los cambios necesarios que deban implementarse y la forma en que ellos deban llevarse a cabo (p. 5). Por esta razón, se deben abordar los conceptos de adaptaciones y modificaciones, así como el rol que desempeñan en el éxito o fracaso de un curso.

### **Adaptaciones y modificaciones curriculares**

Mientras que las adaptaciones son ajustes en las estrategias de enseñanza para ayudar a los alumnos a realizar con éxito diferentes tareas, las modificaciones son cambios realizados en lo que se espera de los alumnos o en lo que se les enseña; En concreto, estos cambios pueden referirse al “contenido, el nivel de habilidad o el número de habilidades requeridas por el programa” (Beech, 2011, p. 13). Tanto las modificaciones como las adaptaciones contribuyen a que el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje sea inclusivo y motivador para los estudiantes.

En Costa Rica, las adaptaciones curriculares se definen como ajustes hechos a la oferta educativa basada en las características y necesidades de cada estudiante, buscando atender las necesidades individuales (CENAREC citado en Meléndez et al., 2012). Existen tres tipos específicos de adaptaciones curriculares. Según el CENAREC (citado en Meléndez et al., 2012) y Rodríguez y Solís (s. f.), las adaptaciones que proporcionan acceso no solo tienen como objetivo crear las condiciones físicas necesarias para que los estudiantes puedan acceder al espacio físico y al mobiliario, sino que también toman en cuenta el suministro de recursos, dispositivos o materiales que ayudan a los estudiantes con discapacidades motoras, visuales o auditivas. Las adaptaciones no significativas son ajustes que se realizan en la metodología docente y en las evaluaciones sin cambiar los objetivos curriculares (Chaverri, 2009; Rodríguez y Solís, s. f.). Por el contrario, las adaptaciones significativas modifican el currículo oficial al eliminar contenidos y objetivos generales para elegir otros que se ajusten a las necesidades de cada estudiante (CENAREC, citado en Meléndez et al., 2012). El conocimiento de este tipo de ajustes es un requisito esencial para ayudar a los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

### **Autonomía del Alumno**

Fomentar la autonomía en una clase es fundamental para ayudar a los estudiantes a asumir una participación activa y responsable dentro y fuera del aula, lo que a su vez conducirá al logro de los objetivos. La autonomía es "la capacidad de hacerse responsable del propio aprendizaje" (Holec, citado en Aliponga, Gamble y Ando, 2011; Dinçer, Yeşilyurt y Göksu, 2010; Reinders, 2010). Como señalan Jacobs y Farrell (2001), el alumno desempeña un rol fundamental en el proceso, y la autonomía del alumno "anima a los alumnos a desarrollar sus propios objetivos de aprendizaje y a ver el aprendizaje como el proceso de toda una vida" (Autonomía del alumno, párr. 2).

Fomentar la autonomía no significa esperar que los alumnos hagan todo sí solos. Reinders (2010) sostiene que los alumnos necesitan instrucción y "apoyo antes de sentirse cómodos y capaces de asumir mayor responsabilidad por su aprendizaje" (p. 42). Por lo tanto, el papel del profesor es hacer uso del andamiaje para promover la autonomía (Lacey, 2007, p. 8) y también debe ofrecer a los alumnos "oportunidades para tomar decisiones y elecciones importantes sobre su aprendizaje" (Nunan, 2003, p. 290). El profesor también debe centrarse en diseñar lecciones basadas en la diferenciación (Turloiu y Sif Stefánsdóttir, 2011, p. 12); en otras palabras, el/ella debe abordar las necesidades de los alumnos reconociendo sus diferencias, capacidades, habilidades y antecedentes (p. 12), porque estos aspectos influyen en la adquisición de conocimientos (Tomlinson, 2001). Sin embargo, para determinar el éxito de un curso, también es importante prestar atención a los comportamientos y acciones estudiantiles que indiquen que están adquiriendo autonomía.

Basándonos en todo lo anterior, se planteó la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿Qué tan eficientes fueron las adaptaciones curriculares proporcionadas por los profesores en formación para aumentar la autonomía de aprendizaje de los alumnos a fin de realizar las tareas del curso?

### **Objetivo de la Evaluación**

#### **Información General**

Inglés para estudios sobre discapacidad era un curso obligatorio de inglés para fines específicos (ESP) para un programa de maestría interdisciplinaria en estudios sobre discapacidad de una universidad pública. El curso de 60 horas constaba de 30 sesiones de dos horas cada una. Era un curso impartido en equipo y cuyo objetivo era enseñar estrategias de lectura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral que pudieran ayudar a los estudiantes a realizar tareas académicas y algunas tareas profesionales.

En este curso se desarrollaron dos unidades. Se dedicaron dieciocho sesiones al desarrollo de la primera unidad, "¡Leer para triunfar académicamente!". Esta unidad se enfocó en ayudar a los alumnos a demostrar su comprensión de lectura en temas relacionados con la discapacidad. Se dedicaron diez sesiones a la enseñanza de la

segunda unidad, "¡Qué interesante conferencia sobre las discapacidades!", que se centró en las habilidades auditivas y orales.

### **Población**

Este curso se impartió a un grupo de diez estudiantes costarricenses matriculados en un programa de maestría en Estudios sobre Discapacidad. Estos estudiantes necesitaban leer textos en inglés de diferentes fuentes para escribir su proyecto de graduación o tesis en español. En este grupo había dos estudiantes con visión limitada, uno ciego y uno con hipoacusia (discapacidad auditiva). Además, había un alumno con autismo y otro con dislexia. Este grupo era muy heterogéneo en cuanto a su nivel de dominio del inglés, así como en cuanto a sus necesidades y preferencias.

### **Metodología**

#### **Procedimientos**

Para diseñar el curso, los investigadores tuvieron que realizar un análisis de necesidades en el que se entrevistó a diferentes interesados para obtener información sobre la población objetivo. Los alumnos participaron en estas entrevistas y también completaron dos cuestionarios para recopilar más datos sobre sus necesidades, carencias, preferencias y otros aspectos que se consideraron necesarios analizar en esta primera etapa del proceso. Basándose en los resultados de estas entrevistas y cuestionarios, los investigadores diseñaron y administraron una prueba de diagnóstico. El objetivo era identificar el nivel de competencia de los estudiantes en diferentes aspectos del idioma, como la comprensión auditiva, el vocabulario, la lectura, la gramática y la expresión oral, con el fin de diseñar tareas y actividades para el curso que se ajustaran a sus niveles de competencia.

Tras esta segunda etapa, la tercera fase correspondió al diseño del programa del curso. Para ello, los instructores utilizaron textos y vídeos sobre temas relacionados con la discapacidad, de acuerdo con los intereses de sus alumnos. En la cuarta etapa, los instructores impartieron el curso. Durante este proceso, los estudiantes completaron dos hojas de autoevaluación y dos formularios de evaluación del curso. Los alumnos realizaron diferentes tareas de lectura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral; también realizaron pruebas escritas y orales a lo largo del curso. Además, supervisores observaron trece de las treinta sesiones; estos eran tres profesores universitarios especializados en la enseñanza del inglés quienes fueron designados para proporcionar retroalimentación sobre los puntos fuertes y débiles de las clases a los profesores en formación. Estos supervisores completaron dos formularios de evaluación durante el desarrollo de cada clase y luego se reunieron con los profesores en formación para darles su opinión.

### **Instrumentos**

Ya que este proyecto se enfoca en los resultados del curso, los únicos instrumentos que se describirán son los utilizados en la cuarta etapa de todo el proceso. Para responder a la pregunta de investigación, se utilizaron siete instrumentos para recopilar datos de los participantes en este estudio: una evaluación a mitad del curso, una evaluación final del curso, dos instrumentos de autoevaluación, dos formularios de evaluación utilizados por los supervisores y un formulario de observación entregado a los supervisores para evaluar la autonomía de aprendizaje. A cada estudiante se le asignó un código para completar sus instrumentos correspondientes. Algunos de los instrumentos se adaptaron para que los estudiantes con discapacidades visuales pudieran completarlos.

**Evaluación de Mediados y Final de Curso.** Estos instrumentos (no incluidos en los apéndices, pero disponibles con previa solicitud) son cuestionarios de tres páginas que constan de cinco secciones destinadas a recopilar datos sobre la percepción de los estudiantes respecto al desempeño de los profesores, los temas y habilidades abordados en el curso, los materiales y actividades utilizados, las evaluaciones suministradas en clase y las recomendaciones generales que los alumnos consideraron podrían adoptar los docentes. Los estudiantes llenaron la evaluación intermedia del curso en clase. La evaluación final del curso se envió por correo electrónico, y los alumnos tuvieron una semana para enviar sus respuestas.

**Instrumentos de Autoevaluación.** Estos instrumentos (también disponibles con previa solicitud) son cuestionarios de cuatro páginas que constan de dos secciones destinadas a recopilar datos sobre la percepción que tienen los alumnos de su rendimiento en la primera y segunda unidad del curso y en clase. Se siguieron los mismos procedimientos que se habían seguido para completar las evaluaciones del curso en los formularios de autoevaluación. La primera autoevaluación no se adaptó a las necesidades de los tres estudiantes con discapacidad visual, ya que dos observadores del programa de máster y un compañero de clase les ayudaron a leer y completar el instrumento.

**Formularios de Evaluación de los Supervisores.** Los supervisores de la práctica diseñaron estos dos formularios. El primero se centró en el trabajo individual del profesor en formación a cargo de la lección observada (ver apéndice A) y constó de una lista de 21 aspectos relacionados con sus características personales, su enseñanza, el manejo de la clase y su interacción con los alumnos. El segundo formulario se centró en el trabajo en equipo (ver apéndice B) y consistió en una lista de 12 aspectos relacionados con la planificación de la lección y los materiales. Ambos formularios incluyeron una escala de calificación que va de "excelente" a "deficiente", y un espacio para que los supervisores escribieran los puntos fuertes y débiles observados en clase.

**Formulario de Observación de los Supervisores Sobre la Autonomía del Alumno.** Este formulario se diseñó para medir la frecuencia con la que los alumnos mostraban 10

características relacionadas con la autonomía en clase (ver apéndice C). Además, tiene una escala de Likert con una opción de "no aplica" y cinco niveles de frecuencia: siempre, normalmente, a veces, rara vez, nunca. Los supervisores completaron el formulario teniendo en cuenta a todo el grupo o solo a los estudiantes con discapacidades (uno de los supervisores escribió el nombre de la persona en la casilla correspondiente, indicando la frecuencia percibida).

### **Adaptaciones Curriculares para Estudiantes con Discapacidades**

Se realizaron varias adaptaciones, especialmente para ayudar a los estudiantes con discapacidades a completar las tareas asignadas en este curso de manera más eficaz e independiente. Los estudiantes sugirieron y mejoraron cada una de las adaptaciones a lo largo del curso. Para ayudar al estudiante con hipoacusia, la reorganización de los escritorios en el aula le permitió leer los labios de sus compañeros y profesores. Sin embargo, este estudiante a veces estaba ocupado leyendo instrucciones o utilizando otros materiales, por lo que se perdió de muchas instrucciones orales. Por lo tanto, era esencial proporcionarle toda la información e instrucciones por escrito. En la segunda unidad, se le entregó el guion de los audios utilizados en clase. Ya que era un alumno de alto rendimiento, los profesores en formación le plantearon retos enseñándole otras estrategias de comprensión de lectura en clase. Fue necesario crear folletos adicionales para que él continuara trabajando a un nivel más avanzado mientras sus compañeros terminaban las tareas. Esta adaptación no se implementó desde el principio del curso porque se tardó unas semanas en descubrir lo que él era capaz de hacer.

Para poder ayudar a tres estudiantes con discapacidad visual, antes de cada clase, se enviaban por correo todos los materiales para que pudieran guardar los documentos en caso de que quisieran estudiar o prepararse de alguna otra forma con anterioridad. Sin embargo, estos alumnos solían recibir los materiales apenas la noche anterior o incluso solo unas horas antes de cada clase debido al tiempo limitado que tenían los profesores en formación para planificar las lecciones. Esta situación redujo la eficiencia de la adaptación porque ellos no siempre podían leer o guardar los materiales antes de la clase. Además, este recurso digital debía tener un formato compatible con los lectores de pantalla que estos tres estudiantes utilizaban para completar los ejercicios. Por lo tanto, se utilizaron símbolos numéricos y asteriscos para ayudarles a encontrar las palabras o frases que estaban resaltadas en los textos u oraciones.

En los ejercicios de complete, para encerrar las palabras o frases que tenían que usar, también se utilizaron estos símbolos en vez de paréntesis. Asimismo, los textos que tenían que leer en la primera unidad y sus ejercicios correspondientes se guardaron en archivos diferentes para ayudarles a pasar fácilmente de un archivo a otro en vez de desplazarse hacia arriba y hacia abajo al leer el texto y responder cada uno de los

ejercicios. De igual forma, no se utilizaron tablas, figuras, viñetas, imágenes ni cajas de texto porque sus lectores de pantalla no identifican esos elementos o proporcionan información confusa e inexacta en ocasiones. Cuando se utilizaron imágenes en un cuestionario para evaluar el vocabulario, los términos buscados se proporcionaron en español para que los tradujeran al inglés.

En cuanto a las dos alumnas con baja visión, una de ellas les dijo a los profesores en formación que no iba a llevar su computadora a clases. Por esta razón, la estudiante solicitó materiales impresos con letra Arial 22 en negrita; esta versión podía incluir tablas, cajas de texto, imágenes ampliadas y líneas para que ella escribiera las respuestas. No obstante, la alumna también tenía acceso a la versión digital descrita anteriormente para utilizarla fuera de clase.

En el caso de los ejercicios de comprensión auditiva, los estudiantes con discapacidad visual tuvieron dificultades para completar los esquemas porque tenían que escuchar el audio y, al mismo tiempo, al lector de pantalla que leía las instrucciones y pistas del ejercicio. Por consiguiente, el formato de los ejercicios se simplificó, dándoles libertad para escribir las ideas principales y los detalles extra. Esta adaptación también se llevó a cabo para la estudiante con baja visión que necesitaba documentos impresos en Arial 22 porque leía a un ritmo lento.

El estudiante ciego necesitó más adaptaciones curriculares por su bajo nivel de inglés. Los profesores decidieron cambiar e incluso eliminar algunos de los ejercicios preparados para el resto de los estudiantes con el fin de ayudarlo a completar las tareas asignadas en clase. Además, todas las instrucciones de cada ejercicio impreso estaban escritas en inglés y español para que no tuviera que depender de los instructores.

### **Adaptaciones Curriculares para todos los Estudiantes**

En cuanto a las adaptaciones curriculares generales, hubo otras realizadas para todo el grupo, como dar tiempo extra para terminar los ejercicios y las pruebas cortas, eliminar y simplificar ejercicios, reducir la carga cognitiva. También se podía elegir compañeros para trabajar en parejas y desarrollar actividades grupales con el fin de ayudar a los estudiantes con discapacidad visual a jugar o leer información que de otro modo no les resultaría accesible. Las instrucciones y explicaciones eran simples y directas (por ejemplo, describir imágenes en las presentaciones, así como ser claro y específico al dar explicaciones en vez de utilizar términos ambiguos como demostrativos). Estas adaptaciones se proporcionaron porque la mayoría de los alumnos tenían un bajo nivel de inglés y necesitaban más apoyo para completar las tareas del curso.

### **Resultados y discusión**

**Opinión de los Supervisores sobre las Adaptaciones Curriculares para los Estudiantes con Discapacidades.** Para conocer la opinión de los supervisores sobre la

autonomía de los estudiantes con discapacidades, se utilizó un instrumento en la última sesión supervisada. Sin embargo, el uso de este instrumento una sola vez reduce la validez de los resultados, ya que se necesitaban más datos de los supervisores para comparar los logros de los estudiantes en diferentes sesiones de clase. La tabla 1 muestra que los dos estudiantes con baja visión eran los alumnos más autónomos de este subgrupo. Ellos trabajaron de forma independiente, participaron e hicieron preguntas, escucharon las explicaciones de los instructores y cooperaron con los profesores en formación y sus compañeros de clase. Sin embargo, una de ellas era más autónoma que la otra. La alumna que trabajó durante todo el semestre con su computadora asumió más riesgos y mostró confianza al comunicarse en inglés. Con base los datos recopilados por el supervisor. La otra estudiante asumió riesgos y, en ocasiones o habitualmente, mostró confianza; esto ocurrió durante la mayoría de las clases de este curso, según observaron los profesores en formación. Estos docentes coincidieron en que el hecho de no tener acceso a su ordenador le impedía ser tan autónoma como su compañera porque el lector de pantalla podría haberle ayudado a completar las tareas más rápidamente y sin fatiga visual.

**Tabla 1**

**Opinión de los supervisores sobre la autonomía de los estudiantes con discapacidad en una clase supervisada, noviembre, 2013**

El estudiante:	Frecuencia y estudiante				
	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	Usualmente	Siempre
1. Trabaja de forma independiente sin solicitar la ayuda del profesor.		Estudiante disléxico	Estudiante ciego		Estudiantes con visión reducida <b>Estudiante sordo</b>
2. Participa activamente en las actividades.		Estudiante disléxico Estudiante ciego	<b>Estudiante sordo</b>		Estudiantes con visión reducida
3. Hace preguntas cuando es necesario.	Estudiante disléxico Estudiante ciego				Estudiantes con visión reducida
4. Presta atención a las explicaciones proporcionadas por los profesores.		Estudiante ciego	Estudiante disléxico <b>Estudiante sordo</b>		Estudiantes con visión reducida

5. Se arriesga a comunicarse en inglés.		Estudiante disléxico	Estudiante con visión reducida	Estudiante con visión reducida
6. Coopera con los profesores en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.		Estudiante disléxico <b>Estudiante sordo</b>		Estudiantes con visión reducida
7. Coopera con otros compañeros al trabajar en las actividades de clase.	Estudiante ciego	Estudiante disléxico	<b>Estudiante sordo</b>	Estudiantes con visión reducida
8. Muestra confianza al compartir ideas en inglés.	Estudiante disléxico	Estudiante ciego		Estudiante con visión reducida <b>Estudiante sordo</b>

Como muestra la tabla 1, el estudiante ciego rara vez era autónomo en la clase de inglés para fines específicos. Esto se debe a que pocas veces participaba en las actividades, prestaba atención a las instrucciones orales, se arriesgaba a comunicar lo que pensaba, cooperaba con los instructores o mostraba confianza al compartir sus pensamientos. Todas estas situaciones se repitieron a lo largo del curso. Como se mencionó anteriormente, su nivel de dominio lingüístico era muy bajo y prefería no participar ni cooperar con sus compañeros de clase. Rara vez trabajaba de forma independiente.

Aunque los profesores en formación intentaron simplificar el trabajo para el alumno ciego y ayudarlo en todo lo posible, su rendimiento no siempre fue el óptimo. En varias ocasiones, los supervisores recomendaron animar a este alumno a participar, tomarlo en cuenta en más de una actividad y pedirle que hablara en inglés. Sin embargo, su actitud hacia el idioma meta no siempre fue positiva y trabajaba a un ritmo más lento en comparación con sus compañeros. Por lo tanto, no fue fácil integrar a este estudiante en las actividades de clase tal y como sugirieron los supervisores.

En comparación con este alumno, había otra estudiante que se enfrentaba a diferentes retos para aprender inglés; esta estudiante era una persona adulta mayor con

dislexia. La diferencia es que su actitud era positiva, lo que le ayudaba a participar más en algunas actividades de clase. Ella era muy estudiosa y comprometida, pero su nivel de dominio del idioma era muy bajo; por esta razón, rara vez era autónoma. En cuanto al estudiante con discapacidad auditiva, según los datos de la tabla 1, ese día no fue muy autónomo. Sin embargo, el no asistió a clases por dos semanas, y esa es probablemente la razón por la cual su rendimiento no fue el mejor. Como era el alumno más competente del grupo, entendió y terminó los ejercicios muy rápido y, en la mayoría de los casos, correctamente.

**Opiniones de los Supervisores sobre las Adaptaciones Curriculares para todos los Estudiantes.** Para analizar el rendimiento general y la autonomía de los estudiantes, otro supervisor utilizó un instrumento similar en una sola clase. Incluyo información general sobre los alumnos. En la tabla 2 se puede observar que los estudiantes solían ser autónomos durante el desarrollo de la clase.

**Tabla 2**

**Opinión de los supervisores sobre la autonomía de todos los estudiantes en una clase supervisada, noviembre, 2013**

<b>Los estudiantes:</b>	<b>Frecuencia</b>
1. Trabajan de forma independiente sin solicitar la ayuda del profesor.	Usualmente
2. Participan activamente en las actividades.	Siempre
3. Hacen preguntas cuando es necesario.	Usualmente
4. Prestan atención a las explicaciones proporcionadas por los profesores.	Usualmente
5. Se arriesgan a comunicarse en inglés.	A veces
6. Cooperan con los profesores en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.	Siempre
7. Cooperan con otros compañeros al trabajar en las actividades de clase.	Siempre
8. Muestran confianza para compartir ideas en inglés.	Usualmente
9. Dan sugerencias para mejorar las actividades.	Rara vez
10. Utilizan las estrategias enseñadas en clase.	Usualmente

No obstante, el supervisor sugirió que la tarea oral que estaban realizando debería haber combinado la lectura y la expresión oral porque la mayoría de ellos estaba únicamente leyendo la información impresa en vez de expresar sus ideas de forma espontánea. De hecho, el supervisor señaló que estos alumnos podrían haber sido más

autónomos si hubieran desempeñado sus tareas sin leer. Sin embargo, el nivel de dominio de la mayoría de ellos no les permitía participar de esa manera porque necesitaban guía para expresar lo que pensaban o para dar una respuesta de forma eficiente.

Debido a que los datos sobre la autonomía de los alumnos se recopilaban en solo dos observaciones, también es importante analizar los resultados obtenidos del formulario de evaluación que los supervisores utilizaron regularmente. La tabla 3 muestra en qué medida las lecciones de este curso llevaron a la autonomía de los participantes.

**Tabla 3**  
**Opinión de los supervisores sobre la autonomía de los estudiantes en 13 clases supervisadas, 2013**

<b>La clase llevó a la autonomía del estudiante</b>	
Número de observaciones	Puntos obtenidos
<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
2	8.5
2	8
1	7

Como se muestra en la Tabla 3, los estudiantes en formación obtuvieron nueve o diez puntos en ocho de las 13 clases supervisadas; es decir, la mayoría de las calificaciones son "excelentes" o "por encima del promedio". La calificación promedio de todas las observaciones es de nueve; esto sugiere que la mayoría de las lecciones diseñadas para el curso se planificaron adecuadamente para fomentar la autonomía de los estudiantes. Algunos de los comentarios de los supervisores fueron los siguientes: "no tienen miedo de hablar inglés en clase", "la mayoría de los alumnos fueron capaces de trabajar individualmente", "gran esfuerzo por ayudar a los alumnos adaptando los documentos impresos e incorporándolos en clase" y "los alumnos parecían más cómodos con la lección y se comunicaban más". Estos comentarios positivos parecen indicar que los profesores en formación les proporcionaron a sus alumnos herramientas útiles para ayudarles a trabajar de forma individual y con confianza.

Sin embargo, hay otros aspectos que obstaculizaron la autonomía de los alumnos. Por ejemplo, los supervisores sugirieron en numerosas ocasiones que los profesores en formación tenían que esforzarse por "equilibrar la carga cognitiva", ya que, al comienzo del semestre, se les pedía a los estudiantes realizar muchas tareas en poco tiempo y no

estaban preparados en ese momento para completar ejercicios complejos y desafiantes. Asimismo, se les aconsejó a los docentes en formación que "siguieran trabajando en simplificar las instrucciones de los documentos impresos" al igual que las instrucciones orales. También, era necesario "seguir trabajando en hacer inclusivas las actividades" y "darles tiempo suficiente para completar las tareas". Sin embargo, el grupo era muy heterogéneo y algunas veces resultaba muy difícil que todos los alumnos interactuaran con los demás, que participaran activamente y que terminaran su trabajo a tiempo. Estas recomendaciones se tomaron en cuenta para mejorar la calidad del curso de inglés para fines específicos y ayudar a los participantes a alcanzar los objetivos del curso y a aprender de la forma más eficaz posible.

No solo se tomaron en cuenta las sugerencias anteriores, sino que también se siguieron las recomendaciones de los alumnos para ayudarles a ser más independientes. Esta información se recopiló en la evaluación de medio curso, y también algunos estudiantes la facilitaron verbalmente durante el curso. Por ejemplo, en esa evaluación del curso, solo tres estudiantes con discapacidades visuales pidieron a los profesores en formación que "explicaran más lentamente los temas desarrollados en clase", "dedicaran más tiempo de acuerdo con el nivel de dominio de cada estudiante y pedirles que trabajaran con otra persona con un nivel similar al suyo" y "mejoraran el manejo del tiempo porque había mucho material que completar y las personas con discapacidad visual no lograban terminarlo a tiempo". Los alumnos añadieron estas sugerencias en la sección "Rendimiento del profesor". Aunque este apartado no estaba relacionado con la autonomía de los alumnos, se trataba de aspectos que debían mejorarse para ayudar a los alumnos a volverse más autónomos.

Las sugerencias más importantes que ofrecieron los estudiantes se muestran en la Tabla 4. El manejo del tiempo fue un problema en el desarrollo de este curso. Muchos estudiantes consideraban que no había tiempo suficiente para completar las tareas, las actividades posteriores y las pruebas cortas. Por lo tanto, los profesores en formación decidieron simplificar las lecciones. Sin embargo, cuando se activaba el vocabulario para leer un nuevo pasaje o escuchar un audio nuevo, estos alumnos tardaban más tiempo del esperado.

#### **Tabla 4**

**Recomendaciones de los alumnos para que los profesores en formación incluyan ajustes que puedan fomentar la autonomía de los alumnos durante el aprendizaje del inglés. Evaluación final del curso, noviembre de 2013**

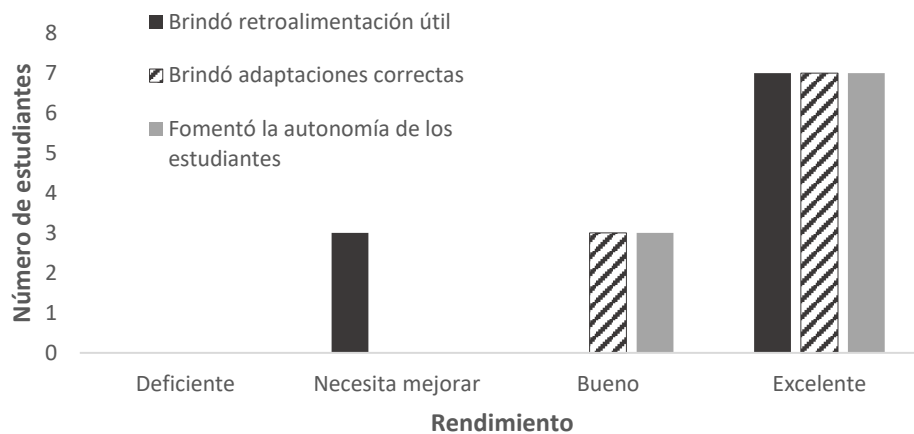
Recomendaciones	Número de estudiantes	Ejemplos
Mejorar el manejo del tiempo y dar tiempo adicional si es necesario.	4	<p>Dar suficiente tiempo para completar las tareas en clase.</p> <p>Comenzar las clases realizando las pruebas cortas.</p> <p>Dar tiempo para interactuar y aclarar dudas entre los estudiantes.</p>
Dar instrucciones más claras y en español para los estudiantes con un bajo nivel de inglés.	2	<p>Escribir las instrucciones de los materiales de apoyo en español.</p> <p>Dar las instrucciones de manera lenta.</p>
Mejorar la accesibilidad para que los estudiantes con discapacidad visual comprendan y se desempeñen mejor en clase.	2	<p>Describir las imágenes con detalle.</p> <p>Tener en cuenta la cantidad de luz en el aula.</p>
Considerar el nivel de competencia de cada estudiante en cada clase.	2	<p>Ayudar a los estudiantes muy competentes porque parecían aburridos esperando a los estudiantes más lentos.</p> <p>Ayudar a los estudiantes con un bajo nivel de inglés porque parecían confundidos.</p>

Asimismo, algunos de los participantes afirmaron que querían realizar las pruebas cortas al comienzo de la clase; sin embargo, esto no fue posible porque muchos de los alumnos solían llegar tarde. El problema para algunos estudiantes era que los compañeros que necesitaban una adaptación o tenían un bajo nivel de dominio del inglés dedicaban mucho tiempo a completar el cuestionario, quizás 30 minutos más que el resto de sus compañeros. Esta situación generaba molestia entre algunos estudiantes porque dedicar más tiempo al final de la clase significaba tener que esperar otro autobús y, por lo tanto, llegar más tarde a casa.

**El Desempeño de los Profesores a la Hora de Fomentar la Autonomía.** Como se muestra en la figura 1, la mayoría de los estudiantes consideraron como "excelente" el desempeño de los profesores a la hora de fomentar su autonomía. Tres aspectos relevantes

y necesarios para ayudar a los estudiantes a trabajar de forma independiente mientras aprenden inglés son: proporcionar retroalimentación de forma útil, ofrecer adaptaciones adecuadas y promover la autonomía de los estudiantes.

**Figura 1**  
**Rendimiento de los profesores en formación en el fomento de la autonomía de los alumnos**



Evaluación de final de curso, noviembre, 2013

En cuanto a la retroalimentación, al principio del curso era muy difícil para los profesores en formación proporcionar a los alumnos retroalimentación inmediata. La razón principal era que los docentes se sentían presionados para terminar todas las actividades previstas para la clase, por lo que, cada vez que sus alumnos tardaban más tiempo del previsto en hacer los ejercicios, los profesores continuaban asignando otras tareas en lugar de hacer correcciones. Los profesores en formación trabajaron en ello a lo largo del curso, corrigiendo palabras o frases mal utilizadas y pidiendo a los estudiantes que repitieran y practicasen cuando era necesario. Sin embargo, como se muestra en la figura anterior, no fue suficiente. Tres alumnos de cada diez consideraron que el desempeño de los profesores a la hora de proporcionar retroalimentación necesitaba mejorar.

autónomos, sino también su paciencia y esfuerzo, el desempeño de los instructores y las estrategias enseñadas en clase.

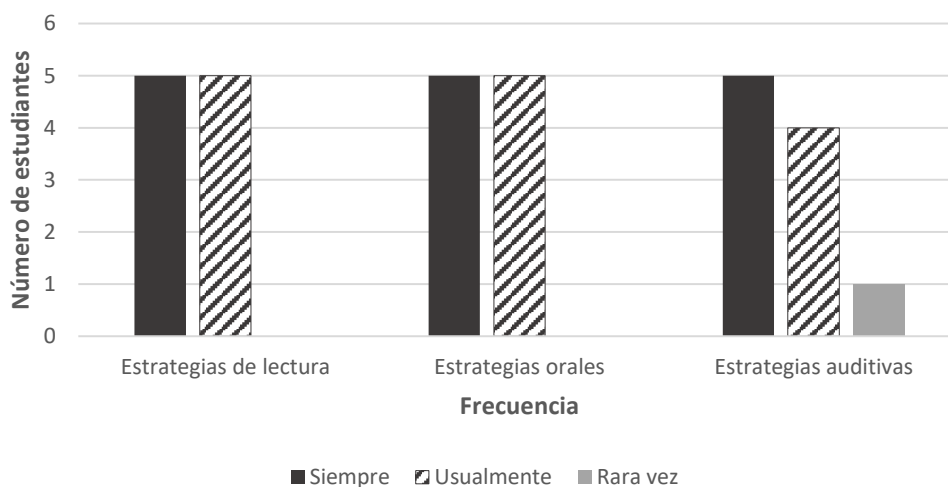
**Estrategias que Ayudaron a Fomentar la Autonomía.** Enseñar estrategias de aprendizaje y comunicación es fundamental en el inglés para fines específicos (ESP) porque los estudiantes necesitan herramientas y técnicas para aprender y entender una lengua extranjera. Los estudiantes están mejor preparados para un debate, leer un texto de forma más eficiente, comprender una conversación o un audio más fácilmente y expresar lo que

sienten o piensan con mayor libertad al aprender diferentes estrategias. Por esta razón se animó a los profesores en formación a incluir estrategias en cada clase y a practicarlas varias veces hasta que todos los alumnos fueran capaces de comprender cómo y por qué debían utilizarlas.

En la primera unidad, que era la más larga, se les enseñaron a los alumnos siete estrategias (activación de esquemas, predicción, uso de cognados, escaneo, resumen, atención a las colocaciones e identificación de referentes) porque era fundamental que los alumnos leyeran de forma efectiva y comprendieran cada uno de los pasajes sobre temas relacionados con la discapacidad. Luego, en la segunda unidad, se enseñaron cinco nuevas estrategias (retroalimentación, pedir aclaraciones, pedir repetición, pedir confirmación y toma de notas). También se reciclaron dos estrategias (activación de esquemas y predicción) para ayudar a los alumnos a identificar la información relevante y a expresar sus ideas sobre el contenido de los audios. En la evaluación final del curso, se les preguntó a los alumnos sobre la frecuencia con la que fomentaban su autonomía durante el aprendizaje del inglés por medio de las estrategias de comprensión de lectura, de comunicación oral y de comprensión auditiva impartidas en el curso. Como muestra la figura 2, sus opiniones son positivas en general. Solo una estudiante afirmó que las estrategias de comprensión auditiva rara vez fomentaban su autonomía; esto podría estar relacionado con la complejidad de las actividades de toma de notas.

**Figura 2**

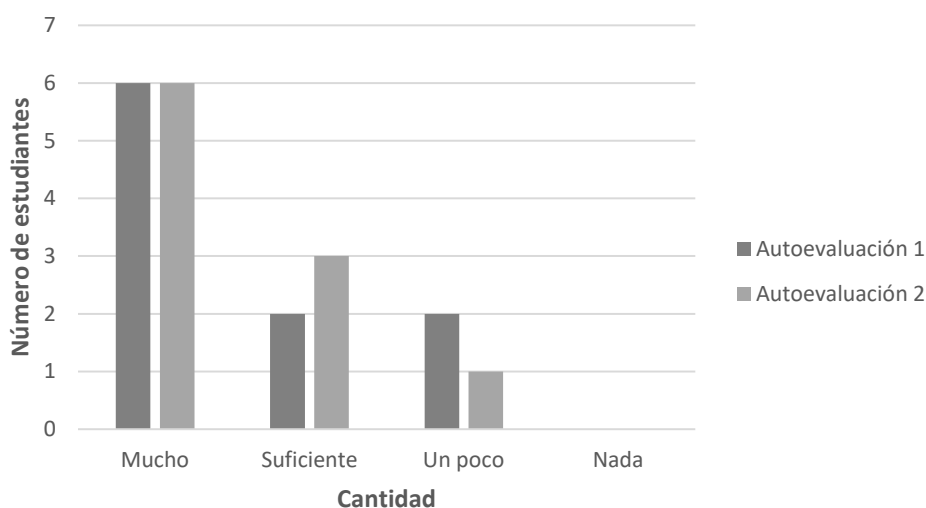
**Opiniones de los estudiantes sobre la frecuencia con la que las estrategias de lectura, expresión oral y comprensión auditiva fomentaron su autonomía en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés**



En los instrumentos de autoevaluación, se les preguntó a los estudiantes qué tan seguido estaban utilizando las estrategias enseñadas en el curso para trabajar de forma independiente. La figura 3 muestra que más de la mitad de los alumnos afirmaron que utilizaban las estrategias mucho o lo suficiente como para trabajar de forma independiente.

**Figura 3**

**Opinión de los estudiantes sobre cuánto utilizaron las estrategias enseñadas en el curso para trabajar de forma independiente**



Formularios de autoevaluación, 2013

Tras analizar la información sobre las opiniones de los estudiantes respecto a su rendimiento general en el curso y los comentarios de las observaciones de los supervisores y los formularios de evaluación, se podría concluir que las estrategias enseñadas en el curso y las adaptaciones curriculares ayudaron en ocasiones a los alumnos a realizar las tareas de forma autónoma. Sin embargo, debido a la falta de información recolectada, no se pueden sacar conclusiones definitivas sobre la efectividad de las adaptaciones curriculares para fomentar la autonomía del alumno. De hecho, el escaso número de observaciones de los supervisores en este respecto puede constituir una limitación para la validez de estos resultados. El problema fue que cuando los profesores en formación plantearon la pregunta de evaluación sobre la autonomía y comenzaron a buscar información para diseñar los instrumentos para los supervisores, más del 75 % de las sesiones ya se habían impartido. Para cuando se creó la hoja de observación, sus profesores ya habían observado la mayoría de sus clases porque tenían que supervisar a otros grupos que también estaban realizando las prácticas. Es importante resaltar el hecho de que ninguno de los grupos sabía las fechas específicas en las que iban a ser supervisados. Por lo tanto, los estudiantes den

formación no sabían que sus supervisores ya habían completado el número requerido de observaciones para esta población en particular.

### **Conclusiones y Recomendaciones**

En cuanto a la efectividad de las adaptaciones curriculares para aumentar la autonomía en el aprendizaje, el análisis de las opiniones de los alumnos sobre su rendimiento general en el curso, así como las observaciones de los supervisores sobre la autonomía de los estudiantes para realizar las tareas en clase, parece indicar que las estrategias enseñadas en el curso y las adaptaciones curriculares realizadas fueron útiles en algunos casos. No obstante, como se señaló anteriormente, la falta de información por parte de los supervisores constituye una limitación significativa en este proyecto.

En el caso de alumnos con y sin discapacidades físicas cuyo nivel de competencia lingüística es muy bajo, las actividades y los materiales deben simplificarse para ayudar a estos estudiantes a superarlas con éxito. Además, las instrucciones deben ser claras y concisas para ayudarles a completar las actividades asignadas. Los profesores también deberían planificar las lecciones teniendo en cuenta el tiempo que estos estudiantes puedan requerir para completar el trabajo. Esta sugerencia también aplica a la hora de aplicar pruebas y exámenes. También, si hay alumnos que son más competentes que otros, es necesario plantearles retos, para que puedan participar más en clase. Se debe proporcionar retroalimentación constantemente para que los estudiantes conozcan cuáles son sus fortalezas y debilidades. De lo contrario, ellos seguirán cometiendo los mismos errores y es probable que no tengan la oportunidad de experimentar la sensación de logro que recompensa el esfuerzo realizado durante el aprendizaje.

Si los profesores tienen la oportunidad de enseñar a un grupo de alumnos con discapacidades, la mejor sugerencia es que establezcan una buena comunicación con estos alumnos. No obstante, cada estudiante tiene necesidades diferentes, e incluso cuando los profesores hacen un gran esfuerzo por satisfacer las necesidades de cada persona, es poco probable que se pueda lograr una clase totalmente inclusiva. Además, el instructor debe ser claro con los alumnos acerca de sus derechos y deberes para evitar malentendidos porque pueden quejarse de ciertas adaptaciones, especialmente de las relacionadas con el tiempo.

Cuando se trabaja con estudiantes con discapacidad visual, hay que tener en cuenta algunas recomendaciones al utilizar presentaciones multimedia. Por ejemplo, todo lo que se incluya en las diapositivas debe describirse durante la presentación, especialmente las imágenes, tablas y figuras. Además, los profesores deben prestar mucha atención a lo que dicen. No pueden utilizar lenguaje impreciso como "cómo pueden observar" o "ese es un ejemplo de..." al señalan algo. Ellos tienen que especificar lo que quieren que la gente vea. Si los alumnos tienen visión limitada, el fondo de las diapositivas debe de ser negro y el

texto debe ser blanco. Los instructores deben preguntarles sobre el tipo de letra y el tamaño que pueden leer. Además, la información proporcionada en ese formato se puede guardar en un documento de procesamiento de texto. Esta recomendación fue muy útil porque el estudiante ciego no podía leer la información de las cajas de texto de las presentaciones de PowerPoint. La iluminación de la clase también es importante; los dispositivos del área donde se proyecta la presentación deben apagarse.

Los profesores deben esforzarse por aprender y comprender cómo funciona el software de conversión de texto a voz. Esto para encontrar soluciones efectivas que les permitan adaptar y diseñar documentos adecuados para este tipo de estudiantes. Las adaptaciones no consisten solo en eliminar elementos que pueden confundir a los estudiantes, sino que requieren una planificación cuidadosa. Además, si se utilizan archivos PDF, no deben guardarse como imágenes, ya que el lector de texto a voz no escanea la información en ese formato. Otro aspecto importante a tomar en cuenta es enviar los materiales que se utilizarán en clase por correo electrónico al menos uno o dos días antes de la clase, para que los alumnos puedan descargarlos y estudiarlos. Si no se les da esta oportunidad, los profesores deben invertir tiempo en el aula para permitirles guardar los documentos en su computadora; de lo contrario, los estudiantes se quedarán atrás en comparación con sus compañeros. Este retraso podría afectar a su rendimiento en las actividades de clase.

En el caso del estudiante con hipoacusia, una de los interesados que fue entrevistado para diseñar el curso destacó que las profesoras debían llevar el pelo recogido y evitar usar pintalabios de colores vivos porque son elementos distractores. Sin embargo, nuestro estudiante dijo que estas recomendaciones eran irrelevantes porque los accesorios y el maquillaje no le distraían. Por ende, los educadores siempre deben preguntarles a los alumnos sobre las recomendaciones que se pueden implementar en clase para que realmente satisfagan las necesidades de sus estudiantes. Además, los instructores deben dar explicaciones mirando a los alumnos con discapacidad auditiva, para que ellos puedan leer los labios del profesor; los escritorios pueden organizarse en forma de media luna para que la persona pueda leer los labios de todos. Es necesario utilizar guiones cuando se utilizan vídeos en clase.

También es útil proporcionar instrucciones y otra información relevante impresa a los alumnos con discapacidad auditiva para así asegurarse de que puedan seguir al profesor. Cuando se deben realizar actividades de comprensión auditiva en clase, los profesores pueden adaptar los ejercicios pidiendo a los alumnos que realicen ejercicios de comprensión de lectura que vayan más allá de la información literal y que contribuyan a su crecimiento académico y profesional. Por ejemplo, los profesores en formación enseñaron a su alumno la diferencia entre los tres tipos de inferencias que pueden hacer las personas. Él

estaba contento porque se sentía desafiado y estaba adquiriendo nuevo conocimiento. De hecho, el análisis del discurso era un tema muy útil e interesante para él debido a su nivel de dominio.

Para ayudar a los estudiantes a volverse autónomos, no basta con adaptaciones curriculares. Los profesores deben ser sensibles a la diversidad y flexibles para hacer cambios cuando sea necesario, sobre todo si las adaptaciones no funcionan bien. Una actitud negativa hacia las dificultades que se enfrentan en el proceso es un obstáculo cuando se trabaja con estudiantes con discapacidades. Cada clase es una oportunidad de prueba y error para crecer personal y profesionalmente haciendo mejoras.

Los profesores no deben limitarse a planear sus lecciones. Si, por ejemplo, tienen alumnos con discapacidad visual, podrían intentar utilizar materiales como ayudas visuales o juegos, porque otros alumnos pueden beneficiarse de estas herramientas. Todos los estudiantes son igualmente importantes y cada persona aprende de forma diferente. Por ende, la variedad y el dinamismo son necesarios para captar su interés. Además, el uso de diferentes técnicas de agrupación es útil para que los alumnos con menor rendimiento desempeñen un rol más activo en clase y completen las actividades de manera eficiente. Algunas investigaciones e incluso el intercambio de ideas con otros colegas pueden ser muy útiles para diseñar actividades inclusivas. La paciencia y la creatividad también son esenciales para abordar los retos profesionales a los que se enfrentan los instructores al planear para un grupo de alumnos heterogéneo. Aunque todas las vivencias y grupos son diferentes, estas recomendaciones podrían contribuir al éxito de un curso.

#### **4.4 Translation 4 – Book**

##### **Chapter 1**

##### **The Reckoning**

*“Good morning! Welcome to the morning edition of Us First, today, Sunday February 29 of 2023. We begin with the news.*

*Two undocumented immigrants have been found with fatal wounds to their necks and abdomens. Apparently, both bled to death on the spot. A suspected settling of accounts may have ended the lives of these individuals. Later on, we will go live with the director of the police and the OIJ to determine the motive behind this violent incident. Esperanza Beating is on the scene. We will connect with her shortly”.*

*“That is right, colleague. Additionally, we begin with the fires of the year. A blaze has taken over eight homes in Loma Linda of Los Ángeles. The relentless fire is being fought by the*

*Fire Department and the Red Cross. There are reports of people whose whereabouts are currently unknown. Soon, we will go live to learn the details of this tragic Sunday morning”.*

“Fucking shit! As soon as you wake up, you hear that kind of news. Give me a break! Dude, I have enough on my plate to be thinking about how trashy human beings are.”

And so, in an outburst, Gerald Gerardo turned down the radio volume while adjusting the patch over his left eye. In the background, Esperanza Beating could be heard anchoring from the crime scene. The report about a baby found in the trash was also audible, describing how the infant was now in a critical condition at the hospital. Had it not been for the garbage collectors, the baby would have died within hours.

Gerald Gerardo was not paying much attention to any of this. It was already time for his first bus route of the day. The bus was ready to depart, but at 5 a.m., Gerald still felt as he did not belong in this world. A couple more hours of sleep would have made the difference between wanting to live and being a slave to his needs. Gerald knew that a driver’s schedule was unforgiving, but working fifteen-hour days for several months was draining the humanity out of him. Nevertheless, it was far too late to get philosophical. Gerald started the bus engine and glanced in the rearview mirror.

With disgust, all Gerald could see was a monster—a face disfigured against its own will. It had been four years since, on this very same bus, he had been brutally attacked during his last route on a Tuesday night.

Every time he saw what remained of this face, he remembered the image of a sickly-thin young man with bloodlust in his eyes, who lunged at his face the moment he set foot on the bus. Even though Gerald tried to defend himself, the bloodthirsty ghost succeeded in his goal: injuring Gerald as much as he could and then taking possession of the only ten thousand colones that had been collected.

Gerald could relive the moments when blood, saliva, his own forearms, possessed laughter, and people crying blended together into a single memory. A moment that tasted of pain and fury, a memory that tasted of injustice.

Gerald could feel the red. The red in his eyes. The red in his hands. The red in his mouth. The red in his fear.

Gerald could do anything but to stop the bus and cry timidly, while a teenage girl, the only witness, called 911 in amidst screams and gasps.

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Today marks four years since Gerald's attack. February 29, 2028, was the day he stopped believing in humanity. And today, Gerald unconsciously hoped that this new leap year would be entirely different.

However, today Gerald's worries centered on three things in particular. First, a sixth call from "Paco le presta"<sup>1</sup>; second, an audio message from his wife saying that they could not go another day without rice and beans at least; and third, a bold passenger paying with a ten-thousand-colón bill.

On a secondary level, Gerald still felt guilty about what had happened the day before. Since he had come up short on Friday night, on Saturday he did not return the change properly change to most passengers. In fact, he made sure that the missing amount came out of the pockets of all the careless passengers who never checked their change. This practice was not usual for him; in this case, it was an extreme measure. If he did not cover the shortfall, the boss would deduct it from his salary at double the amount—a luxury Gerald simply could not afford.

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The whole day went by as usual: the mid-morning hunger, the little plantain chips with chili for lunch, the forgotten elderly man who did not know where he was going or which bus he needed to take, the teenage mother who handed over incomplete fare, the immigrant construction workers smelling nice and embalmed in hair gel, the buddy driver who was not working that Sunday and was going to see his daughters before they took away the only day he had with them, the lost tourist who only dealt in dollars and did not understand why he could not pay with top-up transit cards, the woman who woke up at dawn to go bring a little token of affection to her innocent son who is in jail, and the ultra-fit yogi who traveled by bus to Cahuita for an astral, vegan, cruelty-free, zero-emissions retreat with an tiny carbon footprint—an entire scene that even Saint Thomas More would have envied.

It was a Sunday like any other; however, Gerald Gerardo—who at times reflected on how distinguished his name sounded—knew that something was not right. Through the mirror, behind the monstrous, disfigured face, Gerald noticed something he had never seen in his twenty years of experience as a driver: for more than an hour now, eleven passengers had been accompanying him on his route. Without speaking. Without complaining. Without

1. Reference to a money-lending company.

Gerald knew that this route was unusual. They called it the "Ahead to Nowhere" route. It was said that it had this name because you could only get on the bus by following the destiny of

those who boarded it at the exact day and moment. But Gerald did not believe in cheap gossip. A route could never be defined by its passengers. What would happen if there were none? In which direction should he go if no one knew where they were headed? Would his route be defined by strangers? Could he even dream that he might have the chance to take control of his own destiny? Deep down, Gerald knew the route was real, and yet, the collective hysteria made him doubt.

For this reason, Gerald thought that this route was not used very often, nor was it something the other drivers talked about. Nevertheless, all the drivers knew that at some point they would have to take the “Route to Nowhere,” and that was a fact. There was a rumor that many of those who drove this route ended up quitting their jobs. It was also said that it was better to leave everything behind than to go “to Nowhere.” However, for Gerald, this was his first time on the route, and in his mind the worst had already happened. Nothing could be worse than four years ago.

Not knowing his destination was far better than traveling towards violence, injustice, and inhumanity.

Gerald thought about all of this while ignoring the monster in the mirror. Yet, doubt overtook him. Between disbelief and weariness, Gerald removed his eye patch to wipe the sweat from his face—an eye patch he looked at with contempt, since it clearly needed to be replaced. For a fraction of a second, Gerald let his guard down and innocently glanced into the rearview mirror.

That was the worst decision Gerald could have made on Sunday, February 29, 2032.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Agent Ernesto Leal Hurtado**

Gerald Gerardo realized that he had not asked anyone at the bus depot about his route for that afternoon. He had been driving for more than an hour without direction; more than an hour without knowing his destination. Between tears and sweat, Gerald understood that the eleven passengers had now realized who was driving the bus: a replaceable, faceless ogre. Gerald had been discovered.

Faces of disgust and panic took control of the steering wheel. In that moment, in an act of desperation, Gerald made an unexpected turn and took the nearest entrance onto the highway. The highway on the route to “Nowhere.” But neither he nor the passengers were in any condition to grasp what was happening. By the time they realized it, Gerald had driven over traffic signs, green areas, and supernatural laws. In fact, for a moment, he thought he

saw his starving wife in the middle of the highway, carrying two obese children in her arms, only to drop them into two flaming trash bins. Had it all been a product of his imagination?

Although the macabre scene happened in fractions of a second, it seemed to last a guilt-ridden eternity for Gerald. Yet, what he saw, remained only in his mind as harrowing smudges on a canvas diabolically-crafted centuries ago. The massive shape of the eyes on his wife's face was unforgettable. They had no pupils: sin and hunger had consumed what remained of them. At the same time, among the shadowy brushstrokes, Gerald was struck by the image of a pair of morbidly-disfigured children. Their little heads were crushed by forceps marks and permanently pierced by hangers, which caused incessant bleeding from their ears. Their swollen feet did not end in toes and heels; instead, thousands of worms choked on skin, pus, and blood, falling into the fire and turning into ashes.

Just as Gerald came to his senses, he heard all the passengers shouting in unison: "Police!" And so, Gerald reacted just in time. A few meters ahead of the bus, a government car had stopped. From it, an OIJ officer had hurriedly gotten out. While Gerald tried to return to reality, the officer extended his hand in front of the bus, signaling to stop. For a moment, it seemed that the officer did not care about the speed at which the bus was traveling, nor did he flinch when he saw that the driver wasn't reacting or attempting to stop the vehicle. With his hand held high at face level all the time, more than stopping the bus, he seemed to be drawing it towards him.

"Good afternoon. I am Special Agent Ernesto Leal Hurtado," he said, showing his credentials. "We have been informed that someone on this bus has committed a crime. I need to see your IDs. I will check them one by one to verify your personal information. Please do not make any sudden moves during this inspection. I ask that you remain in your seats, do not use your cell phones, and do not speak to one another."

Through it all, Gerald could pay little attention. He was still processing the images in his head. Yet, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a murky badge and a pair of empty eyes moving closer and closer to him. One step. Two steps. Three steps. Gerald felt as if the weight of the badge sank the bus with each step the agent took. For brief moments, he could have sworn that the bus tires collapsed under the arrival of those heavy, sorrowful eyes. Tremendously unlike the horrifying image of himself in the mirror, the new passenger had an immaculate face: high cheekbones, full, sculpted lips, and a caramel-colored complexion that appeared smooth, a skin still touched by youth. Unlike Gerald, the antagonist had a memorable face.

However, there was no time to dwell on the officer's enviable face. In a tone somewhere between impatience and paranoia, the agent whispered:

“ID, please.”

While Gerald, in his desperation and disbelief, searched for the ID card he knew he hadn't brought —because he stayed behind talking with colleagues at the depot— Agent Leal, with a single glance, counted the passengers on the bus.

There seemed to be twelve people, including the driver. Right behind the driver, the seats were empty. But on that same side of the bus, in the last seat of the row, there was a young man who could not stop bouncing his right leg. He did not look like a cast student, but quite the opposite. His feet were up on the seat, and he was listening to his music at full volume. Leal noticed that the young man's face resembled that of a bus robber in the area. Could he be the same one who had attacked a bus driver four years ago? Leal knew that swallows always fly back to their nests.

Similarly, the officer noticed a man standing near the rear door, even though it was obvious that there were empty seats throughout the bus. He kept staring at his phone, despite the instruction of not doing so. Additionally, almost completely hidden by the man, there was a young woman with a submissive gaze fixed on the floor, which caught Agent Leal's attention. Did she have something to hide? Why was she avoiding eye contact?

Towards the center of the bus, Leal identified two couples. One appeared tormented. It was evident that the young woman had been crying. Her head rested on a young man's shoulder, who stared out the window without blinking. The other couple was people in their fifties who reminded him of his own parents. Leal easily noticed the helplessness and anger in their eyes. While the woman clung to her rosary and mumbled something, her eyes seemed to be about to burst into tears. Her companion simply stared straight ahead, almost challenging Leal to search them first.

In the seats in front of each of the couples, Leal identified two young men, possibly in their thirties. Each of them showed panic in their eyes. He was already accustomed to this type of reaction. People in Costa Rica were certainly not used to seeing officers on their public transportation, much less being involved in an actual raid.

Finally, seated one behind the other at the front of the bus on the right side, Leal counted two elderly women —one perhaps in her sixties, almost seventies, and the other around eighty. They were very different from each other. It was obvious that one had just come from mass, while the other might need to attend one. The first wore an aristocratic shawl brought from Morocco; the second wore a simple outfit from TJ Max.

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It was in these seconds that Gerald remembered his crime —a crime that had kept him from sleeping for decades. Yet, only upon understanding this strange vision did he realize why nothing had ever been the same again.

For him, life with his wife and two children was practically prohibitive. Since his salary was the only thing keeping them afloat, they lived on the edge of extreme poverty. In Gerald's gaze, one could see the countless nights he went to bed hungry, as well as the faces of loan sharks demanding interest on every debt he had incurred. At times, Gerald regretted bringing children into the world under these conditions, yet he believed that real men did not use anything associated with those *gender-related ideologies*, such as condoms.

Mainly —because of these reasons— when he heard his wife say, "I'm pregnant," Gerald wished he possessed a magic lamp with three wishes. The first would have been a six pack of beer to help him cope with the news. The second, that he had listened to his mother and studied in order to get a better job —one where the salary would be enough to support one more child. But in the middle of his fantasy, his wife, Kymberlyn —teary-eyed and holding a bottle of poison with her left hand— interrupted him:

"Gera, they're twins. And now, what are we going to do?"

It was at that moment that Gerald thought of his third wish: that his wife miscarried the children. However, for weeks, none of his wishes came true. Desperately, Gerald turned to the neighborhood witch —the one who could make anything disappear. For three hundred thousand colones, the witch took care of fulfilling the third wish.

Gerald and his wife never spoke of the matter again —or of anything else. Something in them vanished that day. On top of the burden of a new loan, the nonexistent future of the twins weighed heavier than any debt that Gerald and Kymberlyn could have imagined.

Now, while Gerald was still searching for his ID, all he wanted to say was, "IT'S ME! PLEASE, ARREST ME, END MY TORTURE." Yet, just as he was about to confess his crime to himself and to the world, he noticed in the rearview mirror, to his surprise, that someone was standing up.

Of all the people on the bus, there was someone else who could no longer endure Agent Leal's presence any longer. It was time to confess. This person knew the bus had been stopped because of her, and there was no turning back.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Invaluable**

Before boarding the bus, Fatima had been working, as usual, at the Loveday household in Santa Ana. Although she had to travel from Desamparados to get to her new job, it was a great opportunity. These days, it was increasingly difficult to find work under her circumstances: an undocumented woman in her fifties. No one wanted to hire a domestic worker who did not have the “right” attitude—a mix of someone daring for the sake of her future and her descendants, combined with the submission of someone who could be deported with a single phone call.

Moreover, every respectable lady, every homeowner, knew that domestic workers at that age usually began to feel empowered in the homes where they served—and this was the reason Fatima had lost her job.

After thirty years of working for the same family, they could no longer tolerate the disproportionate demands Fatima was making: her deserved paid time off for thirty years of service and a salary increase. But for a family accustomed to paying for disguised slavery, workers’ rights were inventions of radical socialists (chancletudos<sup>1</sup>).

For Fatima, being fired in such way was devastating. After giving her life to that family, her reward had been abandonment. She honestly did not feel anger or rage. For Fatima, her heart had been flooded with disbelief, disappointment, confusion, betrayal, and melancholy—exactly in that order, and then all the opposite. Fatima honestly could not understand what kind of people had hearts so cold as to love her and make her feel like a member of the family—so long as she was the “good” Fatima: the one who accepted pay far below what the

1. Costa Rican term used for people who always take part on the resistance.

no bathed

who came

on Saturdays and Sundays to clean the house after birthday parties she was never invited to, and the one who, no matter how many needs she had, never spoke of a raise.

But Fatima had grown emboldened. Once she began listening to the lawyers on the morning show “Good Morning, Continent”, she became increasingly convinced that a small raise and an (even symbolic) payment for her vacation were minimal demands that her employers might grant—not only because it was her right, but also as a reward for the dedication and effort she had shown them over three decades of being their most loyal friend. Or at least, that is what she believed.

So, this new job meant everything to Fatima. Her mother and father in Nicaragua depended on her salary to buy the medications for chronic pneumonia caused by years of using a wood stove, as well as the soothing drugs for multiple heart conditions.

Although Fatima had four other siblings in Nicaragua, she carried the burden of her parents' health and well-being. From Costa Rica, she always called them daily and made sure they had everything they needed. For Fatima, it was frustrating to see that no one seemed to care about her parents, and in her mind, this was partly because her father had already divided the land and inheritances among his children and grandchildren. Therefore, for those who did not love him, he was already dead. The grandfather had lost all his value.

Fatima was not alone on this bus. Modesto López sat beside her. However, upon seeing the agent, Fatima completely ignored Modesto. Modesto was her partner—a “Mr. Fix It”. There was nothing Modesto could not do. Always with a smile that revealed the flash of gold in his teeth, he never said no to anything. With an enviable attitude, he did the impossible to please everyone—a trait that did not make Fatima happy, especially when it came to working on days of worship.

Modesto had been in Costa Rica for only a short time, but because of his line of work, he had found employers willing to help him obtain his work permit, which had been in process for six years. Coincidentally, he had an appointment at Immigration tomorrow. Finally! Modesto had waited for this moment his entire life. Afterwards, he wanted to help Fatima with all the paperwork so that, eventually, they could get married in Costa Rica and live on a piece of land he had spotted—and almost secured—in San Rafael of Desamparados.

Modesto lived on dreams, and that was what kept him radiant. He could hardly wait for the moment when both of them could be happy—legally happy—in Costa Rica. Despite having been swindled by three Costa Rican lawyers in the past, Modesto was just one day away from the first step towards his happiness: an appointment... twenty-four hours. That was all that separated him from his life plan. Modesto really had nothing tying him back to Nicaragua. His parents had already passed away, and the rest of his family had immigrated to different parts of Costa Rica over the past ten years. Costa Rica was his home. What Modesto did not know was that today he would have to leave his job, ask for early leave, abandon everything, and borrow a car after a terrifying phone call—a call from Fatima.

In the morning hours, Fatima was finishing her first month with the Lovedays. What they did not know was that Fatima had spent six hours searching for a ring that was supposed to have been brought from England by Mrs. Loveday's great-great-great-great-grandmother. And today, the couple had returned from their trip to Southeast Asia.

As if it had been yesterday, Fatima heard Mrs. Cristal Loveday clearly giving her the following instruction on her first day of work:

“Lastima, sorry, Fatima, I still have not learned your name. This is the Loveday family’s millenary shelf. There is nothing or no one more important under my roof than this shelf. Is that clear?”

Without giving Fatima a chance to understand the situation, Mrs. Cristal continued:

“Rumor has it, these two hundred English pieces you can see here (please do not get too close) could easily be worth over one hundred million dollars. Of course, we have not had them appraised for fear of exposing our name and legacy. I have always thought that thieves, jewelry shops, and pawnshops work together, so I would never trust my life to a criminal. There could not be anything worse. I mean, the worst nightmare anyone in this family could have is for any of these pieces to go missing. In other words, for someone to steal them. Especially the wedding ring from my great-great-great-grandmother. Do you see it above the sapphire tiara and necklace? Well, better not look at it too much. Unfortunately, the last six maids who worked here had to be let go because of their obsession with this shelf. Let me explain so you understand. Every time I came to the house —of course, after spending a few weeks abroad— I always saw the maids running towards the shelf. I mean, had they put something in their bag and, when they heard me coming, ran to return it? I would rather not know. By the way, I should tell you that this shelf must be cleaned twice a day. Please make a note: CLEAN SHELF THIRD MEZZANINE FIFTH LEVEL. TWICE A DAY. But anyway, back to the topic. I am telling you all this so that you do not become obsessed like the others. In fact, I do not even remember their names. They did not last long, honestly.”

With all of this playing over and over in her mind, Fatima counted and recounted the number of pieces on the shelf: 30, 50, 100, 150, 180, 199. 15, 25, 50, 100, 125, 150, 175, 199. This couldn’t be happening today. TODAY, when Mrs. Cristal was back. TODAY, when she had cleaned the shelf for the second time. TODAY, when she was going to eat “pupusas” with Modesto to celebrate payday and the work permit.

Fatima went over everything she had done that day in her mind. She needed to find the moment when that piece had been lost. The question was *which* piece was missing. However, within seconds, Fatima knew what the missing element was. As if a sack of cement had fallen into her stomach, she felt the weight of her family and her parents’ illness gnawing at every millimeter of her body. The missing piece was the wedding ring of the “something something moder”; Fatima never understood what that was, but she knew it was Mrs. Cristal’s favorite piece.

Unfortunately, at the very moment Fatima was searching every inch of her pompous and intricate uniform, now untied and lying on the floor, and taking off her shoes to see if the ring

had fallen by accident, Mrs. Cristal walked through the door to the third mezzanine of the fifth level and saw Fatima practically naked in front of the shelf.

Before Mrs. Cristal could say anything, Fatima ran to the front door and left the house, never looking back. The only things she was able to take with her were her rosary, which always hung around her neck; her cellphone, snugly secured to her ill-fitting bra; and her shoes.

Fatima knew it was only a matter of seconds before Mrs. Cristal realized her favorite ring was missing. And this was going to cost her life. She knew the lady would not hesitate to call the police. As Fatima ran along the highways of Santa Ana in her underwear, she could picture entire police squads and immigration officers chasing her, tackling her in the middle of the road, and then taking her to prison to be deported back to her native Nicaragua.

Fatima could only cry and run, clutching her rosary, but even God seemed to have abandoned her. Why, if she had committed no crime, did she feel so guilty?

When Fatima could not run any longer, she realized she still had credit on her prepaid card. With the few colones she had left, she called Modesto and, as best she could, left him the following voicemail message:

“Modesto, my love. Pick up! I am doomed! And you too. We are doomed. That damn silly ring of that old lady is gone. Modesto, it is gone. I am furious! I swear I did not even touch it. I had to run away. Here I am, on the street in my underwear. My goodness, I do not even know where I am. Please, help me! We have to get to Nicaragua before we get caught by the pol...”

“You have run out of balance. Please recharge at your nearest convenience store or use our top-up platforms on our website.”

### ***Click.***

When Modesto heard this message, the smile vanished from his face —along with every single one of his dreams, but for Fatima, he was willing to give up his own life. So, he borrowed a car from one of his employers and searched for Fatima all over Santa Ana. When he found her crying while trying to cover herself with a municipal trash bag, Modesto embraced her, and in silence, they mourned everything they would leave behind. On the way to return the borrowed car, Fatima made the mistake of turning the radio on. Esperanza Beating was on its midday edition, reporting a possible theft of ancient pieces, valued at millions of dollars, in the Santa Ana area. At this, Fatima and Modesto reacted in one way: they turned off the radio. They knew the police would find them sooner or later. Now it was up to them to reach the border as quickly as possible. So, Modesto bought Fatima some

comfortable clothes at the first outlet clothing store they found, returned the car, and got on the first bus they came across —the “Ahead to Nowhere” bus.

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When Fatima saw the officer climbing the steps of the bus, she knew her journey had come to an end. Mrs. Cristal had been able to find her and charge her. On what charges, she did not know. She was not capable of stealing anything —not even the insignificant two-thousand-colón coins scattered around the house. So, upon seeing the officer, Fatima took out her rosary. This was her last chance for her god to help her. He knew Fatima was good and did not deserve any of what was happening to her. With all her strength, Fatima held her rosary out in front of her —her final prayer. However, as she did this, something unexpected tinkled on the floor of the bus, right between Modesto’s shoes.

As if in slow motion, Fatima and Modesto’s eyes were captivated by the unexpected shine of their worst nightmare.

Modesto was speechless when he saw what had fallen between his construction boots: the most opulent ring he had ever laid eyes on. He immediately knew that the ring was worth more than him and his entire lineage, if it were quantified and then humiliated.

Modesto could not admire the cursed object for long, as he was forced back to reality by an otherworldly voice saying: “Special agent... crime... identity... sudden movements...” Desperate, Modesto pressed Fatima’s knee firmly, signaling both alarm and a plea for help. Their god had not heard them; he had forgotten them, and worse, he was punishing them.

At that moment, eight cell phones belonging to different passengers began to ring. With the chime of the ringtones, Fatima remembered the exact moment when the ring could have slipped into her underwear. It was then that she clung to her rosary even tighter, and her tears of anguish and injustice seemed to plead her innocence.

Fatima remembered cleaning several pieces at once to finish quickly, since it was payday and excitement consumed her. After so many months of unemployment, today she could celebrate and maybe buy some of the groceries. What a thrill!

However, her concentration dissipated when she heard eight phones ringing at the same time: it was Mrs. Cristal warning Fatima that she and her husband would arrive in just a few hours. In the moment Fatima lost her focus, she remembered having dropped a few pieces —but she never imagined one would want to go with her.

Now that the officer was there, the ring had appeared —at Modesto’s feet. Slipped out from Fatima’s body. She realized that now there would be evidence to have them arrested: her for

theft and him for being an accomplice. Everything was lost. Therefore, there was only one thing to do: confess. Fatima had always seen in Dr. Polos' cases that those who confess receive a lighter sentence. Or at least, that was what she had learned from television.

As she stood up to confess, before saying a word, the bus was filled with a chilling scream:

"NOOOOOOOO MORE!"

## **Chapter 4**

### **No More**

At the sound of such a thunderous scream, Modesto did only one thing: while everyone's attention was drawn to the young woman near the bus door, he crouched down, took the ring in his hands, placed it in the sheath of his portable knife, and pulled Fatima by her right hand toward her seat. Fatima, for her part, did not know what was happening, but at the same time, deep down, she felt relieved. Someone else needed the attention, and she could pass it to whoever wanted it.

The scream had come from the girl almost hidden by the only man unnecessarily standing. Once she screamed, the stranger froze in the middle of the aisle.

As he stepped back, his erect penis was exposed. In his shock, his cell phone fell to the floor, revealing pornographic images of minors engaged in sexual acts on the screen. It was clear that the images came from a *WhatsApp* group and were accompanied by suggestive emojis of eggplants and sweat drops.

When the girl, Belen, finally had had enough and let out her outburst. Ever since the sexual predator had boarded the bus, she had noticed him staring at her as if she were a target he was somehow aiming at. And that is exactly what happened. Oscar Domingo, the harasser, did not hesitate to stop in front of Belen the moment he saw her. Since he sat down in front of her, Oscar began to swing his penis toward Belen's shoulder. While he tried to hide his actions by covering what he was doing with his other hand, which was holding his phone at the height of the girl's shoulder, she undoubtedly noticed the erection Oscar was having against her body.

As a protective measure, feeling panic and fear for her life, she pretended to fall asleep at certain times of the journey, hoping the harasser would leave her alone. At one point, Belen pulled her legs up and pressed them against the seat in front of her, allowing her to hug her knees and curl into a fetal position as a defense against the predator. However, this had the opposite effect. With her eyes half-open, she noticed that Oscar took advantage of the fact that she was not looking and took his erect penis out of his fly and rubbed it directly on her

forearm, her shoulder, her hands, her clothes. At times, Oscar even rubbed Belen's ear and her hair.

And although this experience was definitely traumatizing for Belen, it was nothing compared to what she endured at home.

Ever since Belen was about four years old, she hated every time her mother went out to work—or even when she went for coffee with her friends in the neighborhood. She hated it because she knew she could not go with her and she despised being left alone at home with her siblings and her father. Especially with her father. Even though she had told her mother several times that she did not feel safe alone at home with her father, her mother would simply say that life was not always about games and fun. She needed to help with the housework, and Dad was strict about that. However, Belen's mother never managed to read her cries for help correctly. Belen did not mind helping with the chores. At four years old, she felt that cleaning her room was the best way to help her mother. What she truly hated with all her soul was when her father called her into his room.

The first few times, Belen ran to her father's room. She thought she would receive some kind of reward for arranging her stuffed animals or making her bed neatly. But the reality was different. Her father, who swore to her that what they were going to do was something between the two of them and that no one could ever find out about it because it was super special, showed Belen how to masturbate him until he was satisfied. At first, it seemed like an honor for her to share something so unique and special with her dad. He had made her believe that this was the most intimate expression of affection between a father and his daughter.

However, as the months and years went by, Belen began to notice that her father was becoming more violent and was starting to touch her in places that she had been told at school were special and that no one should ever touch. Not if she did not want them to, and she was realizing that she definitely did not want her father to touch her in any way. Belen began to feel used and violated. She tried to say no to her father on several occasions, but every time she did, he would grab Belen's hand forcefully and masturbate roughly. Things escalated for the worse when, on one of these occasions, Belen's father took her by surprise and forced his penis into her. No matter how hard she tried to hit, bite, and scratch him, her father subdued her with a knock to the temple. Belen, unconscious, felt the burning in her body and soul.

That day, when her mother came home from work, Belen had no voice. She had nothing left. Everything had been taken from her. At twelve years old, Belen found hell. And even though she wanted to tell her mother everything, guilt ate away at her. Maybe it was her fault that

she had been violated. Maybe if she had not resisted, everything would be fine now. She imagined her other schoolmates masturbating their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers, and thought that maybe none of them would be naive enough to rebel and say, “NO MORE.” But she did. And the consequence was far more severe than she could have ever imagined. Perhaps if she had done it with more courage and more often, things might be different today. Perhaps if she had let her father caress her wherever he wanted, he would not have had to resort to violence.

In short, Belen thought that everything had been her fault. And telling her mother or grandmother might be worse, as they might blame her for not letting him do everything he wanted. Perhaps they had experienced the same thing, but they knew how to handle it properly —how a woman was supposed to handle these things. However, deep down, Belen felt that everything was wrong. So wrong that it was better not to talk about it and try to block out her vague and enduring episode of abuse by the person who claimed to love her most in this life.

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“CLICK! CLICK!” went the camera on a passenger’s phone. —¡Oh yeah, doggie! That dick is going to be famous. “¡A cachete con popi, bro!” Said the passenger in the last seat of the bus, while sharing the photo of the erect stalker in the middle of the bus.

Oscar Domingo, who strangely did not lose his erection, did not think this could be happening to him today. At least not to HIM and certainly not TODAY.

Today, Oscar was coming from work. It was unusual for them to be called to the company’s warehouses to dispatch merchandise on a Sunday. Nonetheless, work was work. It was not as if Oscar had any say in when or how many hours he had to work. Despite the sacrifice this entailed, Oscar liked going to work on Sundays. Especially because on those days, at the end of the month, the accounting interns from technical schools stayed late to do the monthly closings.

The “girls”, as he called them, were between fifteen and sixteen years old and were in their final professional internship module. A situation that required the company —and the interns’ families— to ensure and safeguard the interns’ safety against any abuse. Oscar was always very careful when taking photos of them in the hallways and spying on them in the bathrooms. He knew that another warning letter for sexual harassment at work would not be well received by the Human Resources Department, nor by his wife. The last time Oscar was reprimanded, he convinced her that there was a cleaning girl who would sweep her hair to one side, exposing her neck whenever she bent down. In Oscar’s words, she was a

troublemaker whose only goal was to get money from him through a lawsuit. But he knew the tactics of these women well and never —absolutely never— laid a finger on her. His wife, in a state of denial, chose to believe this story before even considering the possibility that her husband was a harasser. The reality, however, was very different from the fiction Oscar had told his wife.

Oscar, in his eagerness to torment his victims, became obsessed with one of the cleaning girls. Although she was not that young, he considered her an easy target to catch. Little by little, Oscar began his attack by calling her unflattering names, such as princess, my little queen, doll, mommy. Clearly, to Magaly, the girl in charge of cleaning the warehouse, these names seemed repulsive. However, given her position and the short time she had been working for the company, she knew she was completely replaceable. Therefore, she chose to say nothing and endure such harassment, no matter the consequences.

Since Magaly seemed to ignore Oscar's inappropriate attention, he decided to take more extreme measures and devised a plan. After spending some time harassing her, he learned how to break her. Magaly was the type of employee who left nothing for tomorrow. Always proactive, she tried to complete the warehouse cleaning no matter how many extra hours it took; in her mind, this dedication might one day be recognized as "going the extra mile" for the company, and perhaps she would be assigned to a better, less hidden workspace. Knowing this "weakness" about Magaly, Oscar tried to manipulate situations to take advantage of her diligence and predictability. Oscar would take advantage of the situation by spilling any liquid from the products they were transporting in places where he could see her bend over in front of his face or fly. More and more frequently, Magaly began to notice that many of the spills were not from liquid products transported by the company, but semen.

After several incidents, Magaly had understood Oscar's scheme, but she could not do anything about it. This was her job, and even though these kinds of things happened, she felt she could not complain; this was essentially what she was being paid for. However, Oscar was so ecstatic with what he saw, that he took his plan to the next level. Oscar was turned on by seeing Magaly's hair loose, but because of her job, she usually wore it tied back in a ponytail or bun. Oscar, then, remembering his adventures when he was in school, began to steal Magaly's hair ties, both from her locker and directly from her hair, in order to masturbate with them and finish in them, turning them into a worthy trophy for such an impressive hunter. But it was during this great furtive stage that several of Magaly's colleagues realized what was happening and filed a complaint on her behalf.

Before this warning, his wife had also forgiven Oscar for sending a series of pornographic photographs to the family *WhatsApp* chat. All members, including girlfriends and boyfriends,

“better than nothing”, even the cousins’ exes saw an Aserrí public school student’s “pack”. Oscar's wife was the last to find out about this family event. It was her mother who told her to tell her pig of a husband not to set foot in her house again and to please delete the evidence from a group where children were part of, and who saw what a dirty uncle they had.

However, today everything was happiness at the Domingo household. Everyone was waiting for Oscar to come back from work. It was his wife’s birthday, and he was in charge of bringing the birthday cake. What they did not know was that Oscar was not bringing a cake, but a termination letter and news of his newfound notoriety on social media. Due to a staff restructuring, Oscar was being let go. What he did not know was, that the real reason behind his dismissal, was the countless complaints from the young interns who felt unsafe and threatened by the presence of Mr. Dispatcher, Oscar Domingo.

“CLICK! CLICK!” went the camera on the same passenger’s phone again.

“Hey, my man! If you’re not going to show anything, better cover it up!” And just like that, Oscar snapped back to reality, only to realize that all eyes were on him. From the driver, who had lifted his eye patch because he could not believe what he was seeing with his suspicious right eye, to the eighty-year-old woman who kept crossing herself. Oscar did not know how much time had passed, but he knew it had been enough to ruin his life.

Just as he was zipping up his fly, Belen collapsed onto the bus floor between the rows of seats.

Faced with this situation, Agent Leal could not stand idly by. He ignored the fact that Gerald had not been able to provide identification and walked towards Belen, passing by Fatima and Modesto, who were simply holding hands and gripping the rosary with an unbreakable hold.

However, several seats before reaching the spot where Belen had collapsed, Agent Ernesto Leal noticed something unusual.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Moravia, the capital of the world**

On the verge of desperation, Soledad, who was accompanied by her boyfriend, had a secret to confess. With tears in her eyes and a lump in her throat, she whispered:

“Flaco, the baby won’t stop crying.”

“Gorda, don’t say that.”

“I’m serious, listen! Are you going to tell me that’s not a baby?” Soledad said, as the car horns blared on the highway.

“My love, that’s not a baby. Those are just cars and people in the distance. Act normal. We don’t want anyone hearing us talk about this here.” Although Armando spoke these words aloud to calm Soledad, they were more for himself than for her.

“And what if they hear us? I’d rather have that than live hiding it all the time,” Soledad said without blinking. At this, Armando could only stare out the window and wish he could go back in time —specifically to that morning, before they got on the bus.

However, Armando and Soledad’s day was about to change. When these two prisoners of the past noticed a police officer trying to stop the bus on the highway, they did not shout “Police!” to get Gerald to stop. Their cry was one of panic. The last thing they wanted today was to have an encounter with an officer.

If it had been up to them, they would have hit the accelerator even harder to avoid stopping. In any case, the officer did not seem fazed by the speed or the potential impact of the bus. In fact, both Soledad and Armando might have said that, if it were possible, the officer seemed to be pulling the bus forward with some magnetic or supernatural force —but the bus appeared simply to crash into and (re)encounter him.

Hearing Agent Leal’s words, Soledad could only rest her head on Armando’s shoulder and pretend to be asleep, though her tears and red nose betrayed her. Soledad was the kind of person who, when she cried —whether from happiness, laughter, or sorrow— developed large red patches around her eyes and nose, which was why her boyfriend called her “little raccoon.” Armando, on his end, could only think about avoiding the agent’s gaze, who at that moment seemed to be searching erratically for a face in the crowd.

Just when they thought that by ignoring the officer their crime would disappear, eight phones from different passengers —including Soledad’s— rang in unison, which she interpreted as eight babies’ cries for being taken from their mothers. At first, Soledad did not want to pull her phone out of her pocket. She did not want to say anything because Armando would probably tell her there were no babies crying, that it was just the car horns blaring on the highway. However, a few seconds later, Armando asked her:

“What does the message say, Gorda? A lady is getting up and everything. Look! Could it have something to do with the message everyone got? Let’s see the phone.”

Curiosity —and the chain of strange events— was too strong to resist, so Soledad pulled her phone from her pocket, unlocked it with an eye-blink sequence, and read the message alongside Armando:

“The PANI informs you: Baby...”

Neither of them could continue reading the message.

With his face and morals shattered into a thousand pieces, Armando, his hands trembling, took the phone from Soledad’s hands and carefully put it out of her reach. Soledad could only break down in tears —a suppressed cry so painful it was hard to witness. Armando rubbed his eyes frantically, as if this act could erase his memories, as if his eyes could forget the crime he and Soledad had committed that day.

Since turning back time was impossible, Armando decided it was time to confess his sin to the officer. The text message was clear. He had been sent to bring them to the law, and Armando agreed. Soledad seemed unable to emerge from her trance, so Armando merely informed her:

“My love, I’m going to tell everything to the officer, okay? I can’t take it anymore. Take your phone. I haven’t slept in three days, and honestly, I don’t think I’ll sleep again for the rest of my life. Do you want to say anything?” But Soledad only responded with a tear that ran down her face from her left eye, soaking her neck.

Filled with pain and guilt, Armando said aloud:

“Stop looking!”

However, this shout was completely drowned out by a heart-wrenching “NOOOOOOO MORE!” coming from a couple of seats behind the couple. Both Armando and Soledad were left speechless at the scene, one that could pull anyone out of their world for a few seconds.

When Soledad was able to take her gaze off from the grotesque image that stood before all the passengers, she could not help but see how countless images of naked girls paraded among penises, semen, and depravity on Oscar's phone screen. Her stomach could only react with violent retching at the revulsion caused by seeing those photographs. Armando, meanwhile, sitting by the window, could not see the images on Oscar's phone, but he could see the panic on his face. His world had fallen apart, and, for the first time, he seemed to understand what he had done to so many women: violated them, exposed them, abused them, denigrated them, belittled them, traumatized them.

Armando then saw Belen collapse to the floor in the middle of the aisle, and instinctively, he stood up from his seat to check if she was alright. In doing so, he lost sight of what he had been carefully guarding throughout the trip: the final piece of evidence of his crime. As he stood up, a woman's handbag tumbled into Soledad's lap and nearly rolled to the floor, now fully visible to Agent Leal.

Both Armando and Soledad were petrified. It was evident that Agent Leal had seen the bag. Now he was walking towards them, and the couple had no choice but to tell the truth. With firm and resolute steps, Agent Leal walked what seemed like an eternity from the first seat of the bus to the seat where Soledad and Armando were. To their surprise, the officer seemed unconcerned—or perhaps unaware—of their guilt, as he did not stop when he passed by them. His priority was Belen. They were safe.

However, in that brief moment of peace, Soledad let her guard down. When she heard another bus pass extremely close, blaring its horn incessantly, Soledad screamed, "BABY!" and Armando tried to cover her mouth to muffle the shout.

It was not until then that, Agent Leal, after quickly confirming that Belen was alright and instructing Oscar to move as far away from her as possible, turned back and stopped in front of Soledad and Armando.

"Oh, man, you just let the Weeping Woman in the middle of the bus!" shouted the passenger in the last seat.

Agent Leal ignored the comment as a transmission came through on his personal radio at that moment. Determined to focus on what was in front of him, he turned down almost all the volume on the next broadcast while requesting Soledad and Armando's ID:

"Partners, we are receiving the coordinates for this morning's attempted homicide. According to information sent by PANI in their mass text message, a baby was abandoned in a dumpster in Los Colegios of Moravia. At this moment, we confirm the opening of an investigation for attempted homicide. We have recordings from 8 cameras from some local businesses. It appears that the alleged parents are a young couple, whose identities have not yet been verified. Please report to the site as soon as possible. Over and out."

Although the volume of the broadcast was almost inaudible, all the passengers on the bus heard it. However, the only thing the agent cared about at that moment was the task at hand: Armando and Soledad's ID cards. Amid terror and disbelief, Armando searched for the IDs in the maternal bag, while Soledad could only read the messages from her aunt that had started arriving on her phone. The officer was right beside her; just by lowering his gaze, Agent Leal could read every word.

*Sole, where are you? Oh, tell me you're not the one in the video, my love.*

**Which video, aunt?**

*Hey, that thing about the baby in Moravia. It's on Facebook and someone sent it to me on WhatsApp! Where's the Gordo at? Is he with you? What a mess! Call me now!*

...

**Writing**

...

**Writing**

...

*Why isn't Armando picking up? Little Armandito is also in the video! Oh, holy Virgin Mary!  
SOLE, answer me. What did you do to Mathias?*

...

**Writing**

...

...

**Last seen online: Feb 29, 3:30 p.m.**

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:30 p.m.*

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:31 p.m.*

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:32 p.m.*

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:33 p.m.*

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:34 p.m.*

*Aunt Gladys*

*Missed call, today 3:35 p.m.*

“Is everything okay?”— Officer Leal asked Soledad, as he looked out the window from Armando’s seat. Soledad could only cover her mouth with her left hand and hold her breath. As she kept her gaze forward, she inevitably made eye contact with Gerald Gerardo, who stared at her without blinking. Soledad, then, in an inner revelation, recognized her counterpart and could only whisper in an almost imperceptible voice:

“I am an ogre as well.”

“Officer, here are the IDs,”— Armando said, trying to distract the agent from Soledad’s revelation. More and more, Armando was convinced that the agent still did not know who they were or what crime they had committed.

The moment Officer Leal had the IDs in his strong hands, he received a second broadcast and again lowered the volume until it was almost inaudible:

*“Partners, we hereby confirm the identities of the alleged parents of the baby reportedly left in a recycling bin outside a house in Los Colegios of Moravia— the world’s capital for abandoning newborns in municipal trash—. They are Armando Castillo Rodríguez and Soledad Gómez Flores from San José. Gómez Flores reappears in the OIJ records after the murder of her mother a year ago. The apparent femicide occurred in her residence and was perpetrated by the victim’s husband, Gómez Flores’s stepfather. It is rumored to have been a crime of passion. Mrs. Inocencia Flores was allegedly pregnant at fifty years old, and her then-husband denied the claim, saying that no child would take his place again, as had happened when Soledad was born, and decided to stab Inocencia and her unborn child in front of multiple witnesses at a family party. The supposed murderer has not yet been located despite all police efforts, although it is rumored he frequently visits his former residence, which the police have been unable to confirm. Furthermore, Mr. Castillo was released from a PANI shelter where he was abused and mistreated by the officials. It is rumored that Castillo had been stealing newborn supplements from local businesses. Please, if seen, arrest them on the spot. Over and out.”*

Agent Leal took the ID cards in his hand and compared the information with what he had just heard. Then, he pierced with his gaze into the hidden story reflected in the eyes of Armando and Soledad.

**Chapter 6**

## **White Envelope**

While Agent Leal carefully examined the ID cards in his hands, he thought he heard something unusual behind him. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see one of the passengers frantically shaking his right leg. Once again, to Armando and Soledad's surprise, Agent Leal seemed to ignore the fact that the criminal's names from the broadcast were identical to theirs. He then returned their identification cards and turned his back on them.

Once she felt safe, Soledad asked the officer if she could go help the young woman who was on the floor, since it would be inhumane to abandon someone at such a fragile moment. Leal simply shrugged and allowed Soledad to assist Belen while he tried to unravel the mystery of the young man who was shaking his leg.

To the agent's eyes, the young man was nothing out of the ordinary. He appeared to be in his twenties, thin, clean-shaven, wearing square glasses with a strong prescription, dressed in a short-sleeved plaid shirt tucked neatly into loose, faded jeans. The young man gave the impression of being from a rural area of Costa Rica who had migrated to the city. His white socks worn under dress shoes and the belt buckle with an agrarian symbol gave him away. Leal was able to notice his Casio calculator watch and a white folder in his hand with a full name and an ID number written on the outside:

*Isaac Rojas Rojas*

*2-888-IRR*

It was clear that the ink had run and diluted from what looked like drops of water, which formed stain patterns in multiple directions. Leal could see that young Isaac was holding another stained document in his hand beneath the folder, but he could not see it.

Isaac, with all the capillaries in his face seemingly about to burst, looked at the agent's murky badge and bitterly asked:

"I suppose you already know who I am, right?"

"Isaac Rojas?" Leal asked, using the information on the folder. "ID", he added curtly.

"THIS ISN'T FAIR!" Isaac burst out in shame and frustration, as uncontrollable tears rolled down his face.

What Agent Leal did not know was why the simple request for an ID card had triggered such an outburst.

Before getting on the bus, Isaac had lost every possibility of saving himself and his family. Despite being an incredibly hardworking young man, Isaac was still a university student —

even though he had spent eight years in the same major: Mathematics Education. In high school, he was always told to be brilliant with numbers, and for that reason, he chose to pursue this noble profession. Another reason why Isaac decided to pursue this academic path was because it was the only career he had been admitted to at the new Universidad Desconcentrada de la Gran Provincia de Alajuela (UDEGPA). For Isaac, his future came down to either continuing to cut genetically modified sugarcane with his father or attending UDEGPA.

From Isaac's point of view, cutting sugarcane was not entirely bad. Due to all the genetic modifications made to the plant, every time Isaac pricked himself on one of its stalks, his fingers and hands would swell disproportionately, which he always found fascinating. For hours, Isaac felt superhuman—stronger than he knew he truly was. He had always considered his parents to be heroes. Despite having no formal education, they had raised him as best they could, no matter the cost. Abraham, Isaac's father, never saw his hands return to their normal size. After decades of working with unregulated products, his arms and hands lost their human shape more and more with each passing day. He and his wife, Sara, saw this as a blessing—the price to pay for their livelihood and for the opportunity to provide their son with a better future. However, it always hurt Isaac deeply to see that their only source of income was minimal; it barely covered their basic needs, and most of the money was spent on his education and on their home's mortgage.

Despite the hardships, Abraham and Sara decided—with a dagger in their hearts—that the best thing for everyone was for Isaac to leave their small farm and pursue his studies. In their minds, simply attending university would guarantee a better future for them all, especially for Isaac. To pay for his studies and help with the mortgage on the house, Isaac had begun giving math tutoring sessions at night institutes close to the university and to where he was staying: a gloomy room with no windows, closet, bed, or door. A curtain was all that separated his room from the other seven on that floor.

Given the conditions in which he lived, there were many nights when Isaac would return to his room and could only eat rice with chayote. That was all he could afford not to go to bed hungry while still keeping his finances in order. On other occasions, Isaac came back from tutoring so late that he had to make a choice: eat dinner or sleep, since the next day he had to be at UDEGPA at 5 a.m. to complete his assignments and do the readings for the class he had not been able to finish during the week. In those cases, while dreaming of one day securing a permanent position as a mathematics professor at NuMAEP (Nuevo Ministerio de Alabanza Educativa Pública<sup>1</sup>), a traditional name that was changed after eight years of a neo-Pentecostal government, Isaac would go to sleep in peace, knowing that all the effort

would someday pay off. What Isaac did not tell his parents was that he got paid every four months. At the institutes where he informally worked, without life insurance or labor rights, it was told him from the very first day that since he did not have a permanent appointment, he could “walk away” from his position at any time and switch to a better job. Therefore, payments were made at the end of the module, in order to ensure that professors stayed and completed the entire academic term they had committed to teaching.

After eight long years at the university, intertwined with eight seemingly endless years of job insecurity, Isaac was beginning his third year of the program, which made him an eligible student/teacher for the new academic and religious background competition at NuMAEP. In this new competition, candidates had to prove their academic and spiritual records through objective and tangible methods —something Isaac had been preparing for over many years. On the academic side, he finally had his credentials: he met the requirement of having completed the second year of the Christian Education program with an emphasis on Mathematics. On the spiritual side, the most important part of the competition, Isaac knew he would earn the maximum score. In his mind, he would gain these points by demonstrating the sacrifices he had made for his family’s well-being, having worked under precarious conditions for nearly a decade helping students at social risk, having lived for years without luxuries or proper nutrition, remaining humble, and never complaining about all the struggles that he and his family had endured to reach the place they were in today.

#### 1. New Ministry of Public Worship Education

Isaac had spent the last few years of his life, in the world, to his family, to his students, to himself, and especially to NuMAEP, the power of resilience —Isaac had learned this term in a political science class, where they discussed the Guerrero-Álvarez case and his obsession with power.

One day before submitting the official documents for the Academic and Religious Background Competition Feb-2032, Isaac was notified that he was failing to meet an essential requirement to be appointed: the TCA (Trabajo Comunal de Alabanza<sup>1</sup>). Something interesting had emerged from these eight years of neo-Pentecostal government: any public entity had full access to his data, for better or worse.

“God is in order,” said the secretary in charge of the preliminary reviews for the competition, “and if you do not bring me proof of completion of the TCA, praised be Minister Santa Merulyn, you will not be able to submit your credentials, no matter how well qualified you are.”

“But ma’am, how do you expect me to provide that if no one told me about it? And how am I supposed to complete, in one day, the hours I am missing —hours that not even Saint Don Fulgencio Álvarez, may God bless his holy soul, managed to complete in his entire life?”

“What a lack of respect, young man! Never use the name of Saint Don Fulgencio Álvarez in vain. And regarding the TCA, I can confirm here that you did, in fact, read the email on Monday, January 5, 2032, at 6:06 p.m., and spent about six minutes reading the attachments. So, we take it that you were aware of all the requirements. We expect you tomorrow, Sunday, February 29, after the service, of course, with the requirement fulfilled — or should you better not show up at all. Have a good day.”

### **Click.**

1. CPA (Communal Praise Work) in English.

entecostal

ire guide your pain! See you soon!

When the call ended, Isaac did not know what to do and panicked. His life —and that of his family— depended on this competition. He could no longer keep paying the mortgage, his rent, his studies, and the other expenses of both households. Isaac had been waiting eight endless years for this opportunity, and the truth was that he could not endure another day in poverty, in precarity, with hunger, uncertainty, and all the consequences that entailed for his family. Isaac knew that if he did not change his current situation, eventually, everything would get worse: his parents would lose their house and he would never be able to advance professionally.

His stress was so intense that his hands began swelling, just like they did when he pricked himself with sugarcane. His hands became unrecognizable to the point that he dropped the phone because he could no longer hold it due to the monstrous size of his fingers. But, “what could he do then?” he thought to himself. For Isaac, there really was no choice: either he obtained that certificate proving he had completed the hours, or he would return to his family’s farm —which was mortgaged— to work the fields with his father and simply wait for everything to be taken from them, ending up living under a bridge. He could not imagine his father begging or selling newspapers on the street, nor could he picture his mother unemployed and heartbroken over losing the farm. It would be a punishment to see the disappointment on their faces day after day because of his lack of commitment, for not having achieved what he had always promised to achieve, for failing to fulfill the dream he had vowed to make come true.

The disappointment of his parents would be infinite because they had sacrificed everything for him to be where he was —not for their son to abandon them and throw it all away. Isaac

felt guilty for wanting to go back, even though it was the only thing he wanted at that moment. But he knew that, if he went that route, all his effort would be in vain, and his eight years would go down the drain.

It was truly impossible to complete all the TCA hours in a single day, but the challenge pushed him to consider decisions he would not have made under normal circumstances. Isaac had heard of alternative methods to obtain the certificate. There were stories of students who, one way or another, had bribed their TCA coordinators to sign off on their hours in exchange for a sum of money. It was said that everyone had a price, and rumors circulated that TCA directors were often drawn to the business because of how lucrative it was to coordinate the praise work. After all, how else could a minister maintain his lifestyle? With a teacher's salary?

Isaac's grotesque hands trembled at the mere thought of committing such a crime. He could not imagine living with that kind of wrongdoing in his conscience when he had worked so hard to achieve his goals honestly. What would the consequences be if he chose that path? Was there any other solution for him? The very idea of bribery hurt him deeply. He had one day to get the certificate, and without it, he would starve. He had to choose between two scenarios: find someone willing to be bribed so he could submit the missing documents the next day, or give up everything.

Determined to achieve his life's goal, Isaac made up his mind to obtain that certificate at any cost. Tormented by his nightmares and dreams, he mustered the courage and knocked on his program coordinator's door. He explained that he had 24 hours to submit the documents for the background competition and that he was only missing one proof letter confirming that he had completed the TCA. The program director replied:

"But you have not even completed half the hours, young man of God!"

For a moment, Isaac forgot that all institutions had access to his documents and that the program director was one of the people authorized to review the files. Now he felt even more shame and guilt than when he had first entered and could not bring himself to say the next phrase: "What is your price?" However, Isaac's silence spoke for him.

"I know what you are looking for here, young man!" said the director. "By the way, go get your hands looked at. You look like a farmer with those "claws". A future teacher cannot look like that. See, many of my students come from the same situation, and honestly, it would be amazing to help them all achieve their dreams. But putting my name on the line, as well as the name of this prestigious site, is unthinkable. Besides, we would be talking about committing a crime. Are you aware of what you would be making me risk? Yes, I know you

have not bribed me —or anything like that— but the look on your face gives it away for miles. Or am I wrong?”

“It’s not what you think. I have been...”

“Yes, I know”, the director interrupted. “You have been in this program for eight years, you come from a modest family, you tutor in the neighborhood institutes, and for some reason, you live off ripe bananas and chayote. Yes, I know. We all know. Your life is not easy, but believe me, you are not the only one. I tell you this because I spend hours reading your profiles, but that is life; no matter how unfair it is, that is how it is. I am not trying to romanticize poverty, but how wonderful it is to come home and have a good salmon dinner, knowing that at some point you did not even have enough to eat, or a place to stay. How wonderful it is to get out of that! It is such a... such a... well, you get it. Maybe you do not. Someday you will understand... or maybe not. Anyway, being poor helps you appreciate what you have. Trust me.”

“So... you... can help me?”

“Get out of my office! It seems you did not understand a word I said. Do not make me call security. Good luck with that, Rojitas. By the way, you are way too old to still be at the university. Haven’t you thought about going back to the little farm? You would fit right in. It would suit you. Hello?” —the director said as he answered a phone call that came in at that moment— “Yes, yes, here I have a lost soul. Yes, Rojitas. What a sin, right? That same one. The one who has been here his whole life and never gets ahead. Another lost soul? Okay... okay... Pass him through.” And with those words, the program director dismissed Isaac from his office while receiving another student in a similar situation.

There was nothing left to do. Isaac had tried. Honestly, the offer to go back home seemed like the best option. This city world had proven too big for him, just as his impostor syndrome had always made him believe. In his folder, ready to be submitted for the background competition, he was only missing the TCA document that could have changed his future. But, as the program director had told him, perhaps it was already too much for him.

So, as he left the office of such a respected authority, Isaac took the folder in his hands and looked at it one last time. Tears rolled down his face, and he threw the bundle of documents into the reception trash bin. With his heart tied in knots, he thanked the receptionist the best he could and opened the door to his new reality.

Just as Isaac looked up at the sky, trying to reconcile himself with his shattered dreams and his new truth, he heard a sound coming from the reception.

“Psssst! Psssst! Psssst! Rojas, come here.”

“Doña Emilce, sorry I did not greet you. How are you? It is just that I am... busy. My apologies!”

“Ah, Rojas, shame on me! I could not help overhearing your conversation. Poor little thing,” said the receptionist. “Is that really the only thing you are missing? Those papers for the competition? Look, just between us, I do not believe in Jesus or any of that; I believe in money. Hopefully in those green, hundred-thousand bills with the face of the environmentalist Cristina Figueroa. What a woman! That is what gets me out of trouble —not some damn minister stealing the only five colones I earn. Fuck you, those greedy old bastards! “So, happily, I would go straight to hell, but I will definitely help you, my dear,” continued Doña Emilce. “I know where the full hour reports are kept. And I know how to forge the signature of that Mr. Culicuadrado, the boss. You just sit here, all nice and quiet. I will be right back. By the way, how much money are we talking about? I cannot risk the little job I worked so hard for over some tiny thing. Come on, show me the cash. Seeing is believing, right? That is how life goes. “Also, I have to warn you so you don’t say later that I didn’t. Sometimes the Comptroller’s Office comes to check the hour reports, and if they see that someone magically completed all their hours in one day, they might even call the police and all that; it would be a whole spectacle. They would send you straight to jail! That has never happened, but, well, you never know, right? Do you want me to do the whole thing? Are you sure this is what you want?”

In his shock, Isaac could only nod.

“Now, pull that folder out of the trash and wipe those crocodile tears! Everything is going to be fine, my boy,” said Doña Emilce, who, with her grand 4’7 of height, ran at full speed, taking advantage of the fact that the program director was busy.

In an instant, Isaac had plunged into the trash to retrieve his precious folder. To his surprise, all the documents were intact. However, the cover was completely stained with remnants of fruit, food, and unknown liquids. Carefully, he removed the press and placed all the papers on Doña Emilce’s desk. Now all that was left was to see how much and in what way he would pay her. The only money he had was for the month’s mortgage, although deep down, Isaac knew that if he did not get this job at NuMAEP, he would no longer be able to pay it. In that case, it would be only a matter of months before the house was taken from them. So, with the pain that this reality brought, Isaac was willing to risk everything for his family.

A minute later, Doña Emilce arrived with a grin from ear to ear and said teasingly: “The Lord has heard your prayers, lost soul. Ask, and it shall be granted,” she continued after a brief

pause. “Well, my dear, here is what you wanted. Pinch yourself, kid; stop spacing out. And the money? You never told me how much you were going to give me. Do not tell me you have backed out! There is no turning back now, sweetheart. I have already entered your information into the system, and here is your authenticated certificate —signed and blessed.”

With a heavy heart, Isaac took the certificate in his still partially swollen hands and said:

“How do we make the payment? This is all I have,” Isaac confessed, showing his phone screen to his savior.

“Oh, Rojitas! Alright, that is just fine. It is not much, but hey, at least I can go to the supermarket with that,” Doña Emilce replied.

Completely humiliated and almost regretful, Isaac made the transfer to a son-in-law of the third cousin of Doña Emilce’s great-aunt’s father-in-law. No one could find out that this transaction had taken place, so they had to find a way to leave no trace. With all the documents in hand, Doña Emilce told Isaac that he could not submit everything in the old folder, so she wrote his full name and ID number on the cover of a new white folder. For Doña Emilce, manila envelopes were ordinary and disposable. It was better for Isaac to carry a new, durable folder for such an important occasion, since, after all, she was the one who was going to make him a real professional. With all the pride of a mother, she arranged the papers in the suggested order and, with great excitement, handed the folder back to Isaac, saying:

“How fast my little chicks do grow! Go, go! Dress nicely tomorrow and get me that little job. And see if you can shrink those little hands; looks like they came from the farm instead of the university. Bye!”

After the service ended, Isaac showed up at NuMAEP wearing his best clothes: a plaid shirt he had received as a gift three Christmases ago, jeans already faded from so much use, proudly white socks, and his dress shoes —a gift from his father. These were the very shoes Don Abraham had worn at his wedding. Struggling to hide his hands, swollen from shame, guilt, and anxiety, Isaac submitted the competition documents with his best attitude. The storm had passed and his future was only an official stamp away.

“Next,” said the nasal-voiced secretary Come Papaya.

Isaac could hardly contain his excitement; it was real. This was his moment. For a second, he could almost taste the salmon the program director had promised him. Goodbye, stupid, crippling poverty! However, his salmon dinner was interrupted by a phrase that seemed like a joke:

“But this folder is white,” said the unnamable secretary, returning it to Isaac begrudgingly. “We asked for a manila envelope. “Why is it so hard for young people to follow instructions?” the bureaucrat added lazily. “I cannot accept anything like this, boy! You are holding up the line. Learn to follow instructions next time.”

“What does the color of the folder have to do with everything inside? This is unfair! You do not know everything I have suffered to get here!”

“Anyway, it is obvious at first glance that you are missing documents. I am not even going to check them because of your insolence and failure to comply. By the way, it is unfair having to deal with ill-mannered people like you. Who knows what farm this corn grower comes from! Coming here to offend me, me! A graduate with honors in the syncopations, elisions, and supplementary roots of the languages of praise. What a lack of fear of GOD. Look, things are as they are, not as you think they can be. Next!”

With agonizing pain, Isaac could only collapse to his knees and weep bitterly over his white folder. He could not believe what was happening. This had to be a joke. Who would be denied submitting documents over the color of a folder? Worse yet, why, in the year 2032, was recruitment still being done in person with damn paper folders? Isaac had never felt so bitter towards life as he did that day. He looked around, and everyone ignored him. Even though his life depended on them, all people there only cared about a color, not a life story.

Just as Isaac lifted his eyes to the sky, seeking a divine explanation, his cell phone vibrated in his right pocket. It was a text message from Doña Emilce. Isaac read it and choked on his own saliva at the possible consequences he might have to face:

*Oh, my little one, they found out. They fired me from the university! And now they are looking for you everywhere. They told me they sent the cops after you for document forgery. My love, hide now. Delete this message.*

Isaac’s heart had never beaten so violently as it did in that moment. His vision blurred; he had forgotten how to breathe. Isaac thought he was going to faint right there in the reception hall, until he heard Mrs. Come Papaya shout:

“That’s him! I knew he could not bring everything complete! Someone who looks like that could never be an academic! Arrest him!” she said after receiving the crime report via text message.

When the security officers lunged at Isaac, he managed to evade them with his grotesque hands and sprinted out at full speed. Looking back, he saw the guards and Mrs. Papaya

chasing after him, so in desperation, he jumped on the first bus he saw —the “Ahead to Nowhere” bus.

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“Identify yourself...” Agent Leal began to say, but he could not finish his request. Six cars sped down the highway, so fast that they nearly shook the bus. The six vehicles seemed to have identified their target, because after passing alongside the bus, they made U-turns a few kilometers ahead. The agent appeared to be in a trance as he watched the cars stop at an intimidating distance.

Still with tears in his eyes, Isaac lifted his eyes to find an absent officer. He extended his hand to show his ID and accept the charges against him. However, Agent Leal did the unexpected. With disdain, he said to Isaac:

“Yes, yes. Thank you,” without even checking his ID. Then he walked to the back of the bus, sat down, and buried his face in his fleshy hands.

Isaac was left perplexed. What was happening? Was not the bus stopped because of him? Was there really a criminal on board? Now he was afraid.

## **Chapter 7**

### **BearSpot?**

Hypnotized by the enormous agrarian body sitting across the bus, Martin could not stop looking to his left. From the moment he boarded the bus with his heart in his throat, he noticed that right behind him sat one of the most attractive men he had ever seen in his life. That Alajuelan sex appeal had always held a mystical allure for Martin. Isaac, for his part, had no idea that Martin had been watching —and undressing— him for hours. Isaac could only think about going back home and having to say the following words: “Ma, Pa. I am back, but not for long. We are going to lose the house, and soon I will be in jail. Nothing was worth it.” With this thought spinning in his head, Isaac could never have imagined that his worried, anxious expression would be irresistible at this moment. Much less that his arms and hands, swollen from crime and guilt, would be the most exciting feature in Martín’s eyes.

However, Martin could not get distracted so easily today. The presence of the officer increased his anxiety, and it was not as if he could light up a marijuana joint right now to calm down. Martín found it extremely difficult to reconcile his reality with sobriety. He was used to consuming marijuana at least four times a day: once before breakfast, once after breakfast, once after lunch, and one last time at 4:20 or before going to bed.

Martin truly believed that people, in general, needed to smoke more marijuana. Everyone was always so stressed out and overloaded with worries: mortgages, loans, school and daycare fees, daily expenses, utility bills, the mother-in-law's birthday party, the sick baby's medicine, university tuition payments. All of this was drowning his friends, the average Costa Ricans; everyone lived in debt. Their lives were being rented out; their lives belonged to someone else. The average Tico lived to pay for things and stress out about them. But in his imagination, Martin believed that all of that —every bit of stress— could vanish with a single joint.

There were only two things in Martin's life that stole his peace. The first was burning his eyelashes. When, by accident, someone lit a marijuana joint too close to his eyes, they usually ended up burning one or more. Martin hated this; the smell of scorched hairs was not something he enjoyed. Besides, he always had to come up with some excuse for his friends and coworkers so they would not ask about his disappearing eyelashes. Among his thousand excuses, there was always the old reliable: "No, no, nothing. They have always been like this," or "Well, I got too close to a grill, and you know how it goes." But never, ever admit that he was an addict, even though he attended NA (Narcóticos Anónimos<sup>1</sup>) meetings whenever he wanted to score more marijuana or meet someone. Martín refused to accept that burning his eyelashes so often was a problem. In his mind, it was just carelessness with fire, and the drug itself had nothing to do with it.

The second thing that stole his sleep was different, completely unrelated to the problem with his eyelashes; it also had nothing to do with his girlfriend. Despite having been with Anita for six years, they had never been sexually intimate because both Anita and her parents disapproved of sex outside of marriage. In her mind, body, and political sheet, Christian precepts ruled. This did not apply in the slightest to Martin, but it was incredibly convenient for him.

His look was not something that kept him awake either; with his habits as a cyclist and swimmer, Martin had nothing to worry about. When he was not biking to work, he would go swimming after a long day, and there was not a week in which he covered less than 100 km in combined exercises. On his *Fakestagram Fans Only* page, Martin posted daily photos of his progress, featuring bare torsos and enviable quadriceps. Depending on the day and the achievement, there could be photos of Martin semi-erect above his leggings or showing the location of his mole on his lower back.

This need for approval kept growing and increased the number of athletic followers with whom he shared his progress online. Additionally, as a bonus, these followers suddenly started messaging him very frequently —not just about sports, but also about the famous

1. Narcotics Anonymous

mole and the pronounced size of both his quadriceps and what was hidden beneath the leggings.

Little did people know that this was not the only thing hidden beneath the leggings. Martin had another secret: his *BearSpot* profile. On that app —disguised as a Tabata-style stopwatch—, people could socialize both virtually and physically by tapping the face of someone they were interested in and seeing whether that person was a driver or a passenger. If it was a driver, the chosen person could take them to their destination, like a taxi. If it was a passenger, the person could choose whether or not to share the destination with that person. In any case, driver and passenger could talk about anything on *BearSpot*, exchange contact information if they felt chemistry, and even remove any clothing, as long as both parties requested it.

At least once a week, Martin used a credit card that no one knew he had just for a trip on *BearSpot*. The dilemma he always faced was deciding where to leave from and where to go so that he would never run into anyone he knew, and be dropped off in places unrelated to church, work, or sports. Usually, Martin would request the service when he told his girlfriend that he was taking public transportation to work that day. As a result, he would take longer to get home —if he even made it back at all.

To use *BearSpot*, Martin would walk for about half an hour to avoid running into familiar faces on the app, given its revealing geolocation feature. For obvious reasons, his profile picture did not show his face. Instead, it had some of the many photos of his famous quadriceps or a spot near his seductive mole. On his profile, captions read something like:

No sissies

No queers

No fat guys

No one over 35

Discreet

No face photos

Poppers

No bottoms

Well-endowed

Jock

No trans

Male x Male

No place



Once Martin located and conducted a thorough social media analysis of the driver he was going to choose, to make sure they were to his liking, he would select them while trembling, as if he were committing a crime. His breathing would catch, and in many cases, Martin had to wait for the driver sitting at the edge of the street because his legs would collapse due to the anticipation.

These experiences brought Martin to life. Finally, he was free to chat with another man, a man he found attractive, about any topic, although the conversations usually revolved around work, sports, and men. However, as time went on, Martin began to feel more empowered during his *BearSpot* rides. He started telling several drivers how he would like to be with another man and how porn seemed a little stiff and fake. To his great surprise, Martin realized that these conversations felt liberating, and he could see the degree of freedom with which other men also expressed their homosexual desires.

However, Martin clung to the idea that this was his only safe space. A place to talk, touch, and experiment without anyone noticing. By the end of his first year using the app, Martin began to take the conversations to another level. Unafraid of the consequences thanks to *BearSpot's* confidentiality policies, on more than one occasion, Martin ended up masturbating in the passenger seat with the help of the driver, who also could not contain himself when stimulated during the trip.

There were also unsuccessful trips on *BearSpot*, and these usually occurred when the driver used one of the following phrases: "You do not seem gay," "You look too 'macho' to like this stuff," "I have always been attracted to guys who seem straight but they are not." Martin would then end the trip wherever they were. From Martin's point of view, he was not gay. He did not understand people's obsession with labeling others. But he clearly did not want to be called gay in public. That was not what he was.

In those awkward and frustrating moments, Martín would get off *BearSpot* in a fury, light a marijuana joint, and walk home.

What did people gain by calling him gay? He clearly was not. He was not interested in marches, rainbows, unicorns, bars, makeup, or drag queens on RuPaul's Drag Race. For those reasons, he knew he was not gay, or at least that was what he said. What interested

Martin was sharing intimacy with another man: being able to talk, caress, and climax with another man. Did that mean he had to wear a gay flag on his chest and proclaim that the 'closet is for clothes'? That was for the traumatized queens who lived before gay marriage was approved. That kind of gay bothered him. If they already had their rights, why did they keep bothering people with their flags and stories of discrimination? Martin found it pathetic, since being gay was nothing to be proud of, let alone say in public.

There was no mountain to climb or body of water to cross more complex than letting himself be. Martin clung to the idea that smoking a joint would make all his doubts about whether or not he was gay disappear, but four times a day seemed not to be enough. Frequently, Martin had to turn to several dealers to be able to consume higher doses of marijuana. The textures, the memories, the smells, and the sensations of each *BearSpot* trip kept replaying endlessly in his mind. And those memories were the only thing that kept him awake at night. For Martin, the possibility that the entire world might find out he was sometimes attracted to other men was inconceivable.

However, no matter how many times Martin traveled on *BearSpot*, he felt that something was missing. That fleeting connection, restricted in both space and time, made him want more. Even though he had all the time and space he could desire with his girlfriend, he did not experience that spark he felt every time he intentionally—or accidentally—touched the *BearSpot* driver's hand. Even if it lasted only seconds, for Martin, those moments were worth more than an eternity with his girlfriend.

It was on this day, February 29, 2032, that as Martin walked from work towards the secret spot to request a *BearSpot* ride, he noticed a couple of men entering a place unknown to him in the middle of the city. To get inside, the shameless men simply pulled aside a curtain and vanished. Martin wanted to vanish too, so he put out his joint, stashed it strategically, and followed in their footsteps. Once inside, Martin's heart raced just the way it did when he requested his very first *BearSpot*. Behind the magical curtain, he encountered an unexpected scene: steam, tiny towels, lockers, rooms, saunas, and many, many naked or semi-naked men. Flaccid, erect, hairy, shaved, interested, disgusted. The moment Martin placed his belongings in a locker and wrapped himself in the provided towel, he felt naked—both, socially and physically.

Martin could not hide his erect guilt as he walked through the inner corridors. Inside, even though he wanted to enjoy that moment due to everything he had hidden during his life, the pressure of possibly running into someone he knew was more than he could bear.

Desperate to leave, Martin gave himself one last chance. On his way to the exit, he noticed a mature, prominent figure with a semi-erect bulge of considerable size, almost enviable.

Although he tried to make eye contact with that person, to see beyond his no longer so-prominent bulge, Martin could not bring himself to look up. The disgust he felt for himself made him run to the entrance without looking up. What Martin did not notice was that the person in the middle of the hallway was his father-in-law, who, upon seeing Martin, looked at him and said:

“No one can judge you here, Martin.”

Martin was so confused by his own desires and contradictions that he did not notice the familiarity of the prophetic voice in the sauna. As he grabbed his things and ran out of the place, the first thing he saw —after a momentary blindness from the sunlight— was a scene that stopped his heart. A group of police officers was running towards him.

They were shouting “criminal,” “forger,” “hypocrite,” “guilty.” As a protective measure, Martin could only make one decision at that moment: escape. He felt that if he were arrested, his truth would be exposed, and that was unthinkable. Deep down, he felt that entering a place like that should be considered a crime. Moreover, the fact that someone had called him by name and that police had appeared immediately afterwards could only mean one thing: these places were heavily monitored by the government, and they had the data of all visitors to later arrest them and give them shock therapy. It was the only explanation for how someone could know his name in a place full of anonymous people.

Amid the confusion and chaos, Gerald Gerardo stopped at the bus stop at the exact moment Martin wanted to smoke and vanish. He got on and paid three times the fare. Without waiting for change, he sat in the middle of the bus and lowered his head to avoid being seen by the officers. To his surprise, just after his furtive escape, he saw Isaac get on the bus, and when Gerald pressed the accelerator, for a moment everything was fine again, but this peace evaporated with the presence of Agent Leal.

Could this be the man who had spoken to him in the sauna? Or was he instead an agent tasked with hunting down all the godless, fearless users of *BearSpot*? In Martin’s mind, the government must have created a new division to suppress the polarizing “gender ideology.”

While Agent Leal was confirming the identities of some of the passengers, Martin deleted every single photo, app, account, online purchase, phone search, as well as the history on his computer, contacts, and electronic payments related to his greatest secret. Still, Martin told himself that he was not gay, and that reassured him —but all that substantial and circumstantial evidence could lead someone to an unfortunate, mistaken conclusion, especially someone trained to detect fake heterosexuals, who might be under close surveillance by the authorities.

During the search, Martin ignored almost everything happening around him, except for Isaac and his restless leg. When the officer simply did not acknowledge his presence, Martin began to convince himself that maybe not every government agent was after him, and that his secret might not necessarily be punishable by law—even though deep down, he already felt like he was serving a sentence.

## Chapter 8

### From Morocco to Loma Linda

“Oh, but Mr. Officer! Why are you sitting down? Have you already found the criminal? I knew it! The blood of Christ the Redeemer. There really is a God who sees everything. I knew it was that rat sitting next to me. You better stay there and protect us from a robbery. By the way, do not frisk me. I am a respectable lady, just like all the decent people on this bus—well, maybe we will not count the driver,” she added quietly to herself. “For example, what crime could this sweet lady in front of me have committed? She looks like a child of God. Older ladies like us do not commit crimes, right, ma’am? And we definitely should not have to show our ID or have our age questioned! That would be audacious,” she said as she adjusted her Moroccan shawl.

“ID,” Officer Leal insisted wearily to the passenger in the last row. However, when he got a good look at his face and noticed the tattoos on his neck, he withdrew his request. Leal had clearly recognized this *rat’s* face, and especially the hellish tattoo peeking out from beneath his shirt. The officer recalled the news report about the bus driver who had been assaulted exactly four years earlier. All the details of that brutal attack had been mentioned in the story. It had been a day hard to forget. Moreover, given the ease with which reporters move from murders to Christmas features—stories about how certain families help one another materially—Leal remembered, as if it were yesterday, the face of a new Costa Rican businessman who had sponsored those “Christmas stories” for the past eight years: the *rat*.

For Leal, the face of this benefactor was indelible: long, unkempt hair, a nose piercing, gauged ears, a patchy beard, a mustache longer than was proportionally proper for his face, and a perfect smile—something Leal felt jealous of. Growing up as the son of undocumented immigrants, Leal had never been able to access the kind of privileges enjoyed by people in even partially stable situations, so a symmetrical and impeccable smile always struck a sensitive chord in him. What Leal remembered most vividly was the tattoo of what appeared to be a demon, which, the officer judged, began on the chest and ended in claws that traced the entire neck of such a (un)distinguished passenger.

Leal also liked tattoos, but because of the hereditarily undocumented pigment of his skin, he knew that if he had the same kind of markings he would be judged with impunity by society and would go from being an upright officer to a “Mara<sup>1</sup>” delinquent. In his mind, he could hear his mother say, lying on a mattress-less cot in a provincial hospital: “But Costa Ricans are not xenophobic,” while they denied her medical care to treat her early-stage cancer several months earlier. “If I had been a gringa, son, I swear I would walk out of here cured—but a poor Nica is not worth a dime.”

Returning to the present, Leal recalled the interview that such a distinguished character had given to Esperanza Beating, in which he had confessed that he loved using public transportation, since it helped him not lose perspective on real life. Even though it was the year 2032 and electric cars were the only ones allowed on the streets, the average Costa Rican could not afford to buy one of those vehicles—much less own more than one per family. Thus, through the César Maléndrez Foundation, on its fifteenth anniversary, this unnamed, poorly dressed, and young alleged criminal supposedly wanted only the good for society and was seeking inspiration to create a new scholarship fund for a innovative theater foundation.

And yes, he had not always been an exemplary citizen. Despite six stints in Alcoholics Anonymous rehab, the looting of his best friend’s veterinary equipment, and even prostituting himself to obtain drugs on the outskirts of Infiernillo, at thirty-eight years old this (un)virtuous citizen had managed to turn his life around 180 degrees through theater. But that change could not be seen if judging him solely by his appearance—as María Eduviges de los Angeles Escalante de Rodríguez was doing.

María Eduviges de los Angeles Escalante de Rodríguez was the passenger seated in the second row on the right side of Gerald’s bus. Today she was furious because someone else—a woman less in need of a special seat for senior citizens—had taken her spot. She had therefore been forced to settle for the second available seat on the right side. In her mind, things were done properly, uprightly, and the left side was always the side of evil. So, seeking the first seat on the opposite side of the bus—the driver’s side, the servant’s side—

1. Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) is a crime organization from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador

As she searched and fussed over how to properly adjust her shawl—brought from Europe to impress everyone present—while the officer searched that despicable long-haired man, María Eduviges wanted nothing more than to get off the bus as soon as possible. Her purpose for the day was being ruined by the officer, and she was beginning to feel guilty. If he were to ask why an eighty-eight-year-old woman was traveling alone on a Sunday

afternoon, she would have to tell him, out of moral duty, the reason for her trip: God had forgotten her.

Yes, at eighty-eight years old —though she denied it and replaced the first eight with a seven— God had forgotten María Eduviges. Ever since her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren were old enough to understand, they had heard their grandmother say at every birthday, Mother’s Day, and Christmas:

“Oh, my loves. Why do you keep spending money on gifts for me? Don’t you know this is my last year here with you? Can’t you see what a waste it is? I won’t even be able to use these creams or perfumes. Why bother? You little rascals!”

However, her granddaughters always turned a deaf ear and planned events just for the women in the family, to celebrate the happy longevity of the Escalantes. For several years, María Eduviges enjoyed these activities; seeing her sisters, cousins, daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and great-great-granddaughters brought joy to her heart. She was happy to see them all alive, free, and safe. The wave of femicides from 2000 to 2020 in Costa Rica had finally ended, and now she could be certain that all her descendants would live as any long-lived Escalante would.

However, as the years went by, María Eduviges began to feel that what had once seemed like a blessing had in fact been a curse. Just when she thought no more pain could possibly fit in her heart as she laid to rest one more sister, one more cousin, one more daughter, María Eduviges’s heart would crack open again beyond repair with yet another death. In her imagination, a mother should never bury her children —and now she was laying her entire progeny to rest. It was through this pain that María Eduviges began to hate her life. For her, the time she had been lent to come into this world had already expired. Yet which irresponsible angel was in charge of death? What logic allowed that, at eighty-eight years old, she should have to survive her own children and grandchildren? María Eduviges was angry with God. Thus, at every birthday, when she blew out the candles, her wish for approximately the past ten years had been her own death.

Why was not Costa Rica like other countries, allowing her to die whenever she wished? What was the point of living if one was already exhausted from so much death? María Eduviges wondered. For many people, these questions were very sensitive, so she never asked them in public. She did not want to end up in a psychologist’s office being asked every week:

“Tell me, little María Eduviges. How are you feeling this week? Do you still have those thoughts?”

María Eduviges felt nauseous just imagining her sessions of “Finding Purpose in Life at Old Age” and the courses on “Reconciling with Those Who Left Us.” She was already more than reconciled with everyone who had departed before her; she had already fulfilled her life’s purpose. Deep down, the next logical step was to die—but it was the only thing denied to her in this life. After an impeccable career and having retired as dean of the School of Aeronautical Sciences at the prestigious Institute of Technology of Latin America, María Eduviges knew that whatever she set her mind to, she could achieve. Nevertheless, why would death not come to her if it was the only thing she wanted? At her age, what more could she possibly learn?

If there was one thing María Eduviges knew, it was how to distinguish good from evil. A clear example was that the lady seated in front of her unquestionably represented good, and the shaggy-haired man in the back, evil. In a more personal and introspective sense, thinking about her death was not a sin—but trying to bring it about by her own means, perhaps was.

And that had been María Eduviges’s plan for today. After the first church service of the day, she chose her favorite shawl and her most elegant clothes and jewelry, and then boarded the first bus that passed by her house. Since citizens her age could get on and off buses without any kind of record, María Eduviges repeated this practice all morning. In her mind, if by chance one of these buses were to have an accident that might threaten her life, she would not bear the guilt of her own death in the afterlife. How could it count as suicide if she was not the one responsible for the accident?

María Eduviges did not like to think about the details of her death; she preferred for it to arrive by surprise. However, when she boarded Gerald’s bus, she realized that her plan might actually come to fruition. This man, with his dubious appearance, kept making mistakes: constantly checking his phone, wiping his face, jerking the bus erratically, and—much to María Eduviges’s delight—almost crashing it on the highway. So, when Gerald stopped the bus in front of Officer Leal, she was stunned, mainly with disappointment. Her goal would have been achieved if it were not for the crowd of spoilsports who shouted, “Police!” Yet hope returned when six cars nearly overturned the bus. If they were going to be attacked, María Eduviges had decided she would be the one to deliver the “over my dead body/if God is with me, who can be against me?” speech, thus dying a martyr. There was no better scenario for a devout woman! María Eduviges could imagine all the masses dedicated to her, the Christian schools and libraries that would be baptized with her name. “Oh, how lovely it is to dream!” thought María Eduviges.

Death now sounded so pleasant that she was filled with energy. María Eduviges then turned to the lady seated in front of her and asked:

“Excuse me, young lady. What do you make of all this? It is strange that they are looking for a criminal here, isn’t it? The only criminal I see is that handsome man the officer has cornered.”

A face without makeup, swollen from holding in so many emotions and marked by evident malnutrition, turned towards her and did not say a single word. She looked María Eduvigés straight in the eyes for what felt like an entire lifetime, then shifted them to the jewelry, the shawl, and her ethnic earrings. María Eduvigés wanted to die, but she definitely did not want to die strangled by a grotesque and rude representative of the *Yahoo* tribe. Moreover, in her mind, María Eduvigés thought this was the face of a tormented soul who had never managed to rid herself of the Devil in the bottle. What wishes might this woman have made to deserve the punishment of such an unbearable face? Even worse, had she perhaps drunk some Mr. Hyde–style potion? A respectable lady could not appear in public like that. Somewhere else, perhaps deep inside her, the real, sweet woman was being held captive. María Eduvigés knew she had a problem with her addiction to literature, yet she could not stop thinking of all these literary references with such an image in front of her.

In the same way that María Eduvigés had been scrutinized, she could not help but notice the clothing of the seat-stealing lady. On second thought, María Eduvigés concluded that this woman could very well be a criminal. She was not wearing earrings, and her blouse was clearly from PJ Max, the store where every garment cost six thousand colones, regardless of the environmental damage or the precarious working conditions of its employees in remote parts of the world.

María Eduvigés had been told about that store. Clearly, she was not the sort of person who would associate with the kind of riffraff who frequented such places. On one occasion, it seemed to her that a friend had mentioned some new blouses that were quite suitable for older ladies. They featured embroidery that María Eduvigés remembered perfectly —well, that had been described to her in perfect detail. The difference was that this embroidery now appeared worn and frayed, not to mention the bleach stains scattered everywhere. Worse still were the multiple holes, eaten away by... matches? According to María Eduvigés’s prejudices, someone who went out dressed like that on a Sunday after church could never be a respectable person; Mrs. Jekyll must be held captive somewhere.

To make sure she was not about to die at the hands of a literary mirage, María Eduvigés asked the stranger again:

“And where are you from? Who is your mother and father? I might know them. Costa Rica is so small, after all, isn’t it?”

“From Loma Linda of Los Angeles,” the silent passenger finally replied curtly. “What would you know about my family?”

Rich old snob, pretending to be so virtuous riding the bus with us poor people. What would you possibly know about my late mother, who scrubbed toilets until her varicose veins burst in her lungs? What would you know about my father, who ended up killed in prison for —why would you care?!

In a state of denial, what came out of María Eduvigés’s mouth instead was:

“Loma Linda of Los Angeles... the little settlement that caught fire today and is now being consumed in its path... Are you sure that is where you liv—?” María Eduvigés knew it was best not to finish that sentence. She preferred a martyr’s death to one brought about by her own bad manners.

Once again, the unknown passenger turned around and stared ahead. With rage in her eyes, she grabbed her own hair and rocked in her seat. Whatever sanity she had left, she had lost with those questions.

Yes, she lived in Loma Linda of Los Angeles. And yes, she knew about the fire. She was the one who had started it that morning.

All the neighbors and townspeople in Loma Linda knew about the abuse that Doña Dulce and her grandson endured, yet no one helped her get out. They never asked if she was okay —not even when they heard her scream; not even when they heard her beg. Loma Linda was nothing but a euphemism for hell itself.

Since they were already in hell itself, Doña Dulce decided to add its most characteristic element: fire. This element was not foreign to her reality. In fact, it had been her constant companion. Doña Dulce felt the fire on her skin every time her husband stubbed out a cigarette on her grandson's back or palms. At only four years old, his back was covered in scars of all shapes and colors. She also felt the fire in her eyes and fingers when her husband forced her grandson to undress in front of a camera, all in order to obtain money to support his addiction.

With each of these inhuman acts, Doña Dulce’s husband drove her to paroxysms of madness. Many times, while she was forced to be an accomplice to these acts, Doña Dulce begged her husband to stop torturing her grandson, Jesus. He had no reason to bear the cross of an adult’s sins. Magda, Chus’s mother —as he was affectionately called— was unaware of everything that was happening. With her two visits a month, she truly did not realize the sentence she had imposed on her son. Chus<sup>1</sup>, for his part, tried to tell his mother

what was happening to him in that prison, using his limited and imaginative vocabulary; however, once Magda left, Doña Dulce's husband made sure to feed him blue laundry soap for dinner as punishment for trying to complain about everything his grandparents were "doing for him."

As much as Doña Dulce wanted to get out of there, she felt that no one would listen to her. What kind of government agency had any experience with husbands who torture their grandsons and wives? Who would believe that her husband was a child porn dealer? With what money would she go to San Jose to file a lawsuit? And after filing it, where would she live? If she took Chus to the PANI<sup>2</sup>, who would guarantee that her husband would not go looking for him and abuse him even more violently? If she took Chus in those conditions, would they consider her an accomplice? If so, both adults would go to jail. Chus would return

1. Short, term of endearment for Jesus
2. Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (child government services)

That Sunday, February 29, 2032, Doña Dulce woke up at 5 a.m., brewed the coffee, and prepared a bread with pâté for Jesus.

"Tita, what'cha makin'?" Chus asked innocently, watching his grandmother bring round after round of cigarettes into the living room.

1. Short, term of endearment for Jesus
2. Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (child government services)

"This is a birthday gift for Tito; today is his day. But I want to get a little gift ready before he wakes up. The poor man got home very late yesterday, so we are going to leave his birthday present in the living room, and we are going to go visit your other grandma. Understood, my darling? Your other grandma will be waiting for you today with arepas and ice cream. You will behave, won't you? I know you will."

With eyes full of wonder, Jesus continued watching as his grandmother poured the liquor bottles her husband had bought all over the house —on the sofas, the curtains, the wooden floor, the clothes, the door to his room, even on the cigar wheels.

"Tita, what is that? Ugh! It smells like Tito."

"Yes, my darling. That is his favorite scent. We are going to leave it all over the house so that when he wakes up, he knows we were thinking of him. By the way, did you have your coffee yet? We have to go soon; we are going to leave this candle lit here in the living room so that when he wakes up in a bit, he will see we were singing happy birthday to him. No, love, we are not brushing our teeth today. Come on! Look! Here comes the bus! Let's run!"

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In the blink of an eye, Doña Dulce had mechanically completed every part of her plan: taking the bus, leaving Chus with his other grandmother, and finally disappearing. Suddenly, she found herself on Gerald's bus, unsure how she had gotten there or in what condition she had left Chus. The only proof that it had all been real was the smell of alcohol on her clothes and shoes, along with the scent of smoke on her hands. The remnants of her best blouse bore all the cigarette burns she had inflicted on herself for every cigarette she had allowed her husband to extinguish on Jesus's body. That was how she knew it had not been a dream, but a nightmare—and now she had awakened. She was awake just long enough to encounter an officer and confess her truth: she had set her husband on fire, and with him, the entire cursed neighborhood that had left her to die for so many years.

In her search for the right words, her internal confession was interrupted by Gerald, who had finally come to his senses and now shouted with a trace of terror in his voice:

“Officer...!”

All the passengers saw six men get out of the vehicles that had stopped in the middle of the highway a few kilometers ahead of the bus. They were heavily armed, dressed in black, and wearing masks over their faces. The passengers—who had spent hours in silence on the bus “To Nowhere”—had now lost control, causing Officer Leal to snap back to reality and run down the aisle of the bus, dodging briefcases, shoulders, legs, and anything else in his path.

When he reached the front of the bus, Doña Dulce took him by the right hand and whispered a phrase with such sorrow and lament that María Eduviges covered her face with her shawl. A lady does not cry in public.

“They're coming for me, sweetheart. I just set my husband—”

“What are you talking about, ma'am? Don't watch so much TV,” Officer Leal said hurriedly, searching for the fastest way out of the bus.

“If they're coming for anyone, it's for me,” she said, seeing herself reflected in the rearview mirror.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Loyalty**

Every two seconds, Ernesto Leal glanced in the rearview mirror of the OIJ vehicle he had commandeered that morning. “Some kind of respect for authority still exists,” he thought

sarcastically to himself, as every lane on the highway cleared at his approach—which was not necessarily a good thing. At least, not in the eyes of a fugitive.

“Goddammit!” Ernesto muttered every time a bus swerved aside when they saw the official OIJ plate.

With every lane that opened up to let him pass, Ernesto began to feel incredibly exposed, his anxiety and nervousness growing. Deep down, he knew it would now be easier for him to be identified. In his innocent imagination, taking control of an OIJ car only made sense if he wanted to go unnoticed.

Now Ernesto was extremely frustrated with himself. He had been running from his own thoughts all day, only for his journey to end in vain, on a highway to nowhere. At what point had he turned onto the highway? Did he unconsciously want to be found? Every new decision Ernesto made seemed so wrong, making the murky weight from his badge on his chest feel heavier and heavier.

No matter how “official” —Ernesto or Leal<sup>1</sup>— he was, every step he took made him feel more like a dishonest, treacherous criminal.

Thanks to the clear highway, wary of the law, Ernesto could see that his loyal pursuers had located him. Six black cars appeared in the distance. If that was not enough, his personal phone would not stop ringing, and on the radio, Esperanza Beating was recounting the various events of the famous leap-year Sunday of 2032: a multiple murder, a deadly fire, the theft of millenary jewelry, a baby abandoned in Moravia, and now, ongoing, a high-speed

#### 1. Loyal in Spanish

in his inbox, Ernesto could barely drive while looking behind him. Calls from his parents’ house came one after another with no pause, his siblings messaged him on *WhatsApp*, and his OIJ colleagues sent messages to his work phone. Everything was chaos, but Ernesto could not stop to explain anything to anyone. He only wanted it all to end. No trials, no witnesses, no consequences. Ernesto simply wished to close his eyes and hear the world and his conscience fall silent.

It was then that Ernesto noticed the erratic bus that seemed unfazed by his presence—the bus of Gerald Gerardo. He decided to put an end to everything. At the speed he was traveling, the six black cars would catch up soon, so he took them by surprise. Ernesto floored the accelerator, said a wordless prayer to his parents, and overtook the bus for a few kilometers.

With hope of reconciling all his mistakes in another life, Ernesto suddenly hit the brakes, got out of his car, and walked towards the bus. This was the best way to stop all his thoughts — and with them, all his faults.

Since the sunlight was blinding his face, Ernesto raised his right hand to the level of his eyes. Partially overwhelmed by the brightness, Agent Leal lowered his head in a gesture of humility, accepting his inevitable fate.

Despite being prepared for the impact, the only thing he encountered was a driver who reacted unexpectedly and braked at the worst possible moment. In his desperation, Ernesto did not know what to do. His plan had failed. He asked himself so many questions as he walked to the bus door:

*“And now what the hell am I going to do? What excuse am I going to give them for stopping the bus? Is there even time to make a better decision? How am I supposed to show I am an authority?”*

As the bus doors opened, the only thing Ernesto could say was the most mechanical and official-sounding line he could improvise:

“Good afternoon. I am Special Agent Ernesto Leal Hurtado.”

He said this while showing some breakfast receipts from two days ago and a fake passport confiscated in a raid —which he did not even know why it was still in his pocket. Hoping that no one would ask to see his “credentials,” he continued:

“We have information that someone on this bus has committed a crime. I need to see your IDs. I will check them one by one to verify your personal information. Please do not make any sudden movements during the inspection. I ask that you remain in your seats and keep yourselves from using your cell phones or talking.”

Like an experienced character actor, Ernesto applauded himself for the performance. He had always admired agents who improvised their lines on reality police shows, but he never thought he had the nerve to say, “There is a criminal amongst you”, without breaking character. The problem now was what to do with those identity cards. Ernesto had invented the speech, but he had not thought about the consequences. Once the cards were handed over, what was he going to do? He had neither the interest nor the means to confirm their identities. And besides, in what world would this practice even be useful?

He just needed to get out of there as quickly as possible. But the excuse he had used to get on the bus was now tying him to a somewhat counterproductive pantomime. Worse still, he

had not considered the consequences that his presence and display of police authority was causing amidst the passengers.

As the confused Ernesto began requesting the ID cards, he noticed the worry and widespread anxiety on the faces of almost all the passengers. However, this was not the time to be concerned with their life stories. The six black cars had to be getting closer, and he could not afford to still be on the bus when they arrived.

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Between exhaustion, shame, his suicidal urges, and the guilt over his crime, Ernesto seemed to live through a series of endless nightmares in the blink of an eye. In the fragments he could recall, he had seen people standing up, pulling out rosaries, sitting down, screaming, making phone calls, screaming again, crying, sexually harassing minors, hearing buses, receiving immediate-arrest transmissions, and even identifying a minor celebrity. For Ernesto, all of this happened in a matter of seconds, and yet, in his mind, none of it could possibly be happening; he should not be there, and neither should the passengers. If any of this were real, Ernesto would not have known how to handle it; the cruelty was too great for it to be true. What “was” real appeared before his eyes as he handed an ID back to a passenger: they had caught up to him. There was no turning back. Despite having wanted to end his life, it seemed his fate was to become a permanent passenger on the bus ahead to Nowhere. Standing near the back seat of the bus, Ernesto rubbed his eyes, hoping that somehow this way he could wake from such a brutal nightmare.

When he heard from afar, “Officer...!” Leal knew what he had to do. Amid the chaos and helplessness, he simply lunged towards the front of the bus to confirm his suspicions. With his long legs, he reached Gerald’s side in seconds, who now seemed to have fallen victim to his own fear, as a large amount of sweat ran down his face and a voluminous excremental liquid streamed along the bus steps.

Seeing this —and the armed men approaching the bus with each passing second— Ernesto could not do anything but act without a script and confess, staring at his own reflection in the rearview mirror. With tears in his eyes, he said honestly:

“If they are coming for anyone, it is for me.”

These were the last words of Agent Ernesto Leal Hurtado before he shook Doña Dulce’s hand off his right forearm and leapt fearfully down the bus steps. Once outside, he looked at the six men pursuing him and, without thinking, ran towards the highway once again.

María Eduvigis saw him raise his right hand to the level of his eyes, just as he had done a few minutes earlier, but to her (mis)fortune, the bus passing at that moment was unable to react in time. She watched as the vehicle ran over Agent Leal's body and hurled him six meters away. Seeing the officer's fate, María Eduvigis could only cover her face with her shawl and wish for a few more years in this life.

## Chapter 10

### Us First

*"What a damn long day, huh, kids?"*

*"Are we on air yet?"*

"Good afternoon, dear viewers; we regret interrupting your regular programming. As reported by several drivers just minutes ago, an apparent pursuit is taking place on this very highway, which has now become a mysterious crime scene. According to our local collaborators, six black cars were reported chasing the bus you see on screen. Inside, thirteen passengers feared for their lives when, apparently, half a dozen armed individuals—who seemed to be hitmen sent by some criminal organization—stepped off from the six vehicles. Their fearsome appearance, combined with the visible display of weaponry, did not go unnoticed. On our *Fakestagram* profile, you can find photos that some bystanders managed to capture before their sudden disappearance. You can view, share, and even set these images as your wallpapers using the following hashtags: #usfirst, #2032, #tonowhere, #meninblackCR, #narcosCR, #airportalert, #turquoisebluepresumedpositiveindicatorforcocaineCR. If you have photos of this unusual sighting, do not hesitate to tag us as well. The *Fakestagram* community will thank you!"

Back at the scene, we confirm that we are live at the location of the incident. Behind me, you can see the body of a male, incompatible with life. This was one of the passengers on the bus headed to Nowhere; strangely, it was Agent Ernesto Leal Hurtado, in charge of the Anti-Drug Department in the area. Witnesses have shared with us what they saw today. Here we have one of the witnesses. Good afternoon, ma'am. What is your name?

"María Eduvigis de los Angeles Escalante de Rodríguez," she said, her voice trembling as she tried to cover her face with her Moroccan shawl.

"Thank you, María. We are live for the news program *Us First*. Could you tell us what you saw from the bus?"

"Uh, well. Yes, the officer got off the bus in a hurry; I saw him quite nervous. He was looking for someone on the bus who had committed a crime, but look at these faces, miss! Who

amongst us would be capable of committing a crime? I was outraged that he doubted any of us. We are all law-abiding citizens! Well, except for a couple of people there who were a bit shady, but who am I to judge, right? The officer then jumped off the bus in a flash and..." — María Eduviges's voice broke at the memory of what could have been her own fate—"The agent made a choice; I do not think he had time to look back. Those masked men were aiming their terrifying weapons at him when another bus struck the young officer. He did not even have time to say goodbye! He left us here with no explanation or instructions! He was ungrateful!" —the professor said, tears streaming down her face.

"A truly touching report. Thank you, María. We will be providing more details on this shocking death later," said Esperanza, beginning to feel somewhat unsettled by the reaction she had just witnessed.

Here we have other witnesses. Good afternoon, young man. What is your name? Do you know what happened today? Tell us, where were you coming from and where were you headed?

"Well, I would rather not say my name," said Isaac, trying to hide his face behind the folder he was holding.

"Do not worry, on our news program, your privacy comes first," Esperanza replied, "but your name is on the folder."

With this revelation, Isaac lowered the folder to his hip, in a posture of defeat, avoiding the camera, and confessed:

"Uh, yeah. My name is Isaac. I was delivering some documents, and now I do not know where I am going. I was hoping to find the answer to that question today."

"Okaaay. Without a doubt, Isaac, you are a mysterious young man. I could not help but notice the folder. Were you delivering documents for NuMAEP?"

Isaac could only respond with a look of panic and a heart that stopped beating for several seconds. With no answer forthcoming, Esperanza pressed further:

"But the folder is white. Apparently, your documents were not accepted. Anyway, could you tell us what happened around here today? Isaac? Isaac Rojas Rojas? ID 2-888-IRR! Tell us something!" But Isaac could not answer. He simply slipped away among the other passengers and the thirty-people news crew.

After an unexpected commercial break, Esperanza returned with her composure intact. She continued:

“Despite the trauma that some passengers appear to have experienced, we will continue with the live broadcast. As we can see in the images... wait a moment! Was that the winner of *Shaking with the Stars*? What is he doing...? Oh, no.”

Well, viewers, as you just saw, our heartthrob has just escaped amid the crowd. If you do not follow him on social media, just a few minutes ago our favorite Costa Rican exposed a scene of sexual harassment on a bus. But I would have never imagined it was this very bus we have on screen! We will now proceed with the investigation of the alleged sexual harasser. He may still be around —however, despite the new agenda provided by the social media photos, Esperanza had to abandon it upon hearing what was being transmitted from the studio— “Excuse us, dear viewers, we are receiving breaking news. According to OIJ sources, Mr. Leal had been questioned for accepting bribes hours before his death. In fact, the unfortunate incident reported earlier today, in which two undocumented immigrants died in a revenge-related event, appears to involve Leal Hurtado’s parents.

“Preliminary information indicates that Leal had received a significant sum of money last night, money coming from local drug dealers. It is speculated that Leal had accepted this large sum to cover the cost of his mother’s cancer treatment —she, as we know, an illegal immigrant without access to healthcare. According to reports, earlier this morning Leal had rejected the money and exposed the alleged dealers to the local police department. Apparently, Leal regretted accepting the bribe and informed his superiors of his resignation, effective this very afternoon. The information is being corroborated by our colleagues at the OIJ headquarters, who are interviewing all parties involved.”

“Could all of this, then, be a reckoning or a message to police officers who accept bribes? We will provide further details in the evening broadcast. Reporting live from the highway on the route ahead to Nowhere, this is Esperanza Beating. For now, we return to the Us First studio.”

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Ready, everyone? Are we off the air now? Is this damn thing over? Geez, dude, what do you think? Yep. Back to the studio. Got to suck up all the information for the avalanche of questions coming in the evening broadcast. All that preparation just so the boss, Mr. Little Eyebrows, can interrupt me every two seconds. What do I think? Well, honestly, who would think could accept money from a drug dealer? What an idiot! Dude, and on top of that, he was going to use the money on a cancer treatment. What else did he want? Did he want us to give free treatments to every foreigner who comes here with health problems? Dude, if I pay social security, I use the system; not people who do not pay. That makes me so damn angry! Immigrants who think they are better than ticos. But anyway, do not get me started.

You do not want to know what I think about the people who started the fire, the stalker, the couple who abandoned their baby, and even less about the thief in Santa Ana. Anyway, none of those people are worth a penny. What do you mean? That I do not know the circumstances of why they did what they did? Dude, nothing can justify what they did. I do not know them, but how could anyone even say...? Dude, do not justify them. NEVER. Nothing can justify their actions. I hope they rot in jail. Dude, I forge my own destiny regardless of what happens around me. Am I in favor of the death penalty for these people? Ah, dude, you really should not have asked me that. Let's see... Reason number one...

**Where are you heading to?**

## Chapter V Instruments

### 5.1 Text Analysis

The table below provides a detailed analysis of the different categories considered in text analysis for three articles and one book. It breaks down the content into key elements, allowing for a systematic comparison across the sources. Each category highlights specific aspects such as themes, tone, style, and structure, enabling a clearer understanding of how the articles and the book approach the subject matter. This comparative overview helps to identify similarities and differences in the treatment of topics, as well as the depth and focus of each source. Due to the elongated titles of the articles, the same will be represented as Article 1, Article 2, and Article 3 respectively (based on the translation order).

***Table 4 Text Analysis***

<b>Text Analysis</b>	<b>Article 1</b>	<b>Article 2</b>	<b>Article 3</b>	<b>Ahead to Nowhere</b>
Text Style	Description	Description	Description	Narrative
Scale of Formality	Formal	Formal	Formal	Colloquial and Taboo
Scale of Generality	Technical	Technical	Technical	Popular
Scale of Emotional Tone	Warm	Warm	Warm	Intense
Text Function	Informative	Informative	Informative	Expressive
Type of Translation	Scientific	Scientific	Scientific	Philosophical writing

*Table 4 shows the analysis of every original text to be translated*

*Source: Researcher's own creation*

### 5.2 Color Coding

Below you will find 16 paragraphs chosen from the different articles and book translated that best represent translation procedures and methodologies. The color-coding methodology is designed to make the review process more visual and systematic. This approach allows reviewers and translators to quickly identify strengths and weaknesses, ensuring that the final translation is precise, coherent, and faithful to the original text. See the

color-coding table to match the legend of translation procedures with the corresponding color.

### 5.2.1 Color Coding English-Spanish

#### Text 1

It can be understood from Harmer's work that conveying and understanding meaning is essential for communication to take place. In fact, this is one of the premises of Communicative Language Teaching.

A partir del trabajo de Harmer, se puede entender que transmitir y comprender el significado es esencial para que la comunicación tenga lugar. De hecho, esta es una de las premisas de la Enseñanza Comunicativa de Idiomas.

#### Text 2

In terms of purpose, Shehan (1998 mentioned in Murphy, 2003) distinguishes *between* the three goals of accuracy, fluency, and complexity as the purposes for any task, *and* he adds that the learner cannot give full attention to these three goals; therefore, the task designer's role is to select the task according to the desired pedagogical outcome.

En cuanto al propósito, Shehan (1998, citado en Murphy, 2003) distingue los tres objetivos de cualquier actividad: precisión, fluidez y complejidad. También añade que el estudiante no puede prestar una atención completa a estos tres objetivos; por lo tanto, el papel del diseñador es el de seleccionar la actividad de acuerdo con el efecto pedagógico que se desee.

#### Text 3

The third assignment was a communicative task in which the students had *to* write an e-mail as *a* response to a problem that a fictitious friend supposedly told each student. The learners had *to* select between two time tenses according *to* the type of actions: definite or incomplete. The teacher provided the students *with* the copy of the task's guidelines.

La tercera tarea fue una actividad comunicativa en la que los estudiantes debían redactar un correo electrónico como respuesta a un problema que un amigo ficticio supuestamente le había planteado a cada uno. Los alumnos debían elegir entre dos tiempos verbales según el tipo de acción: definitiva o incompleta. La profesora proporcionó a los estudiantes una copia de las instrucciones de la actividad.

#### Text 4

Understanding instructions is the last of the top three factors that prompts learners to do homework; for this reason, one may infer that if ~~homework~~ directions are complex or difficult to understand, pupils are less likely to complete the assignment.

La comprensión de las instrucciones es el último de los tres principales factores que motivan a los estudiantes a hacer la tarea. Por esta razón, se puede inferir que, si las indicaciones son complejas o difíciles de entender, será menos probable que los pupilos completen la asignación.

#### Text 5

Based on the results obtained in the first intervention, three tendencies were found: students whose performance on both the graphic organizer and the summary was the same, learners who performed better on the summaries, and students who performed better ~~on the completion of~~ the graphic organizer. Figure 1 shows in detail the results for each tendency.

Con base en los resultados obtenidos en la primera intervención, se identificaron tres tendencias: estudiantes cuyo rendimiento fue el mismo en el organizador gráfico y en el resumen, alumnos que obtuvieron mejores resultados en los resúmenes y estudiantes que consiguieron calificaciones superiores en el organizador gráfico. La figura 1 muestra en detalle los resultados de cada tendencia.

#### Text 6

When they were asked whether the use of graphic organizers would help them understand the main ideas of a text ~~or not~~, the majority of learners answered affirmatively the question, which is shown in Table 3. Compared with their perception about the degree of usefulness of this tool, there is a dramatic increase in terms of their positive view about graphic organizers.

Cuando se les preguntó si el uso de organizadores gráficos les ayudaría a comprender las ideas principales de un texto, la mayoría de los alumnos respondió afirmativamente a la pregunta, como se muestra en la tabla 3. En comparación con su opinión sobre el grado de utilidad de esta herramienta, se observa un aumento positivo significativo en su punto de vista con respecto a los organizadores gráficos.

#### Text 7

The blind student required more curricular accommodations because of his ~~very~~ low proficiency level of English. The teachers decided ~~to~~ change and even ~~to~~ eliminate some of the exercises prepared for the rest of the students in order to help him complete the tasks assigned in class. Moreover, all the instructions were written in ~~both~~ English and Spanish in every handout for ~~him~~ not ~~to~~ have to depend on the instructors.

El estudiante ciego necesitó más adaptaciones curriculares por su bajo nivel de inglés. Los profesores decidieron cambiar e incluso eliminar algunos de los ejercicios preparados para el resto de los estudiantes con el fin de ayudarlo a completar las tareas asignadas en clase. Además, todas las instrucciones de cada ejercicio impreso estaban escritas en inglés y español para que no tuviera que depender de los instructores.

#### Text 8

Due to ~~the fact~~ that data about learners' autonomy was gathered from only two observations, ~~it~~ is also important ~~to~~ analyze the results obtained from the evaluation form that the supervisors regularly used. Table 3 shows to which extent the lessons of this course led to participants' autonomy.

Debido a que los datos sobre la autonomía de los alumnos se recopilaron en solo dos observaciones, también es importante analizar los resultados obtenidos del formulario de evaluación que los supervisores utilizaron regularmente. La tabla 3 muestra en qué medida las lecciones de este curso llevaron a la autonomía de los participantes.

### 5.2.2 Color Coding Spanish-English

#### Text 9

De todas las personas en el bus, había otra que tampoco podía lidiar un segundo más ~~con~~ la presencia del agente Leal. Era hora de confesar. Sabía ~~que~~ habían detenido el bus por su culpa. Y ~~ya~~ no había vuelta atrás.

Of all the people on the bus, there was someone else who could no longer endure Agent Leal's presence any longer. ~~It~~ was time to confess. This person knew the bus had been stopped because of her, and there was no turning back.

#### Text 10

Así que este nuevo trabajo significaba la vida entera para Fátima. Su madre y padre en Nicaragua dependían de su salario para comprar las medicinas para ~~la~~ pulmonía crónica causada por tanto utilizar la cocina de leña, así como ~~para~~ las drogas apaciguadoras de múltiples fallas cardíacas.

So, this new job meant everything to Fatima. Her mother and father in Nicaragua depended on her salary to buy the medications for chronic pneumonia caused by years of using a wood stove, as well as the soothing drugs for multiple heart conditions.

#### Text 11

Ante tal escenario, el agente Leal no pudo quedarse de brazos cruzados. Él ignoró el hecho de que Gerald no pudo procurarle una identificación y caminó hacia Belén, pasando al costado de Fátima y Modesto, quienes solamente se tomaban de la mano y sostenían el rosario con un agarre indestructible.

Faced with this situation, Agent Leal could not stand idly by. He ignored the fact that Gerald had not been able to provide identification and walked towards Belen, passing by Fatima and Modesto, who were simply holding hands and gripping the rosary with an unbreakable hold.

#### Text 12

Fue ahí cuando el agente Leal, después de confirmar rápidamente que Belén se encontraba bien y de indicarle a Óscar que se apartara de ella lo más posible, se devolvió y se detuvo ante Soledad y Armando.

It was not until then that, Agent Leal, after quickly confirming that Belen was alright and instructing Oscar to move as far away from her as possible, turned back and stopped in front of Soledad and Armando.

#### Text 13

El agente Leal tomó las cédulas en su mano y comparó la información con lo que acababa de escuchar. Entonces, así, penetró con su mirada la historia oculta en los ojos de Armando y Soledad.

Agent Leal took the ID cards in his hand and compared the information with what he had just heard. Then, he pierced with his gaze into the hidden story reflected in the eyes of Armando and Soledad.

#### Text 14

Una vez más, la desconocida pasajera se volteó y miró hacia delante. Con rabia en su mirada, se tomó a sí misma del cabello y se meció en su asiento. Lo que le quedaba de sanidad, lo había perdido con esas preguntas.

Once again, the unknown passenger turned around and stared ahead. With rage in her eyes, she grabbed her own hair and rocked in her seat. Whatever sanity she had left, she had lost with those questions.

#### Text 15

Dado que la luz del sol le encandilaba el rostro, Ernesto elevó su mano derecha a la altura de sus ojos. Sintiéndose parcialmente inundado por la luminosidad, el agente Leal bajó su cabeza en señal de humildad, aceptando su inevitable destino.

Since the sunlight was blinding his face, Ernesto raised his right hand to the level of his eyes. Partially overwhelmed by the brightness, Agent Leal lowered his head in a gesture of humility, accepting his inevitable fate.

### Text 16

Él nada más necesitaba salir de ahí cuanto antes. Pero la excusa que utilizó al subirse al bus lo estaba atando a una pantomima un tanto contraproducente. Peor aún, no tenía en mente las consecuencias que su presencia y despliegue de actitud policiaca estaba creando en los pasajeros.

He just needed to get out of there as quickly as possible. But the excuse he had used to get on the bus was now tying him to a somewhat counterproductive pantomime. Worse still, he had not considered the consequences that his presence and display of police authority was causing amidst the passengers.

## 5.3 Glossary

Glossaries are an essential tool for translation because it ensures consistency, accuracy, and clarity across the text. By defining key terms and specialized vocabulary, a glossary helps translators maintain the same meaning throughout the work, especially when dealing with technical, cultural, or context-specific language. It also serves as a reference that facilitates understanding and reduces errors or misinterpretations. To support this translation project, two tables will be provided below: one containing the glossary derived from the three articles, and another presenting the glossary compiled from the book. These tables offer a structured overview of important terms, making the translation process more precise and efficient.

### 5.3.1 Glossary from the Three Articles of *Lenguas Modernas Magazine*

*Table 5 Glossary English-Spanish*

Source Language (English)	Target Language (Spanish)	Description	Grammatical Category
Interlinked	interconectadas	Connected together or linked with each other and all parts affect and depend on the others	Adjective

Speculating	especulando	Forming ideas or guesses about something without having complete information	Verb
Tally lists	Listas de cotejo	Way to count and record items quickly using tally marks instead of writing numbers.	Noun
Return rate	porcentajes de entrega	Percentages of returned information/tasks from people	Noun
Guidelines	instrucciones	Recommendations or instructions that help people know how to do something correctly or safely	Noun
Oblivion	olvido	a state where nothing is remembered or known	Noun
Hindered	obstaculizaron	Something that made harder or slowed down progress	Verb
Hypoacusis	hipoacusia	Partial loss of hearing characterized by reduced hearing sensitivity in one or both ears	Noun
Endeavor	proyecto	A serious effort or attempt to achieve something important or difficult	Noun
Accommodations	adaptaciones	Changes in how a student learns or shows what they know, so they can succeed in class	Noun
Fostering	fomentar	Helping something grow, develop, or improve by giving	Verb

		support, care, or encouragement	
Impairment	discapacidad	Problem or loss in a physical, mental, or sensory function that makes it harder for someone to do certain activities	Noun
Practicum	práctica	Hands-on, practical experience in a field of study where students apply what they've learned in a real-world setting	Noun
Gap-filling (exercises)	(ejercicios) de complete	Learning activities filling in missing words, numbers, or information in a sentence, paragraph, or table	adjective
Cognitive	cognitivo(a)	Mental processes involved in thinking, learning, and understanding	Adjective
Schema	esquema	mental framework or structure that helps people organize and understand information	Noun
Draw	sacar	reach, form, or arrive at something based on evidence or information	Verb
Stakeholders	interesados	people, groups, or organizations that have an interest in or are affected by a project	Noun
Fixtures	dispositivos	Permanent or semi-permanent objects that are fixed in a building or property	Noun

Gist	esencia	Most important point that a text is trying to convey	Noun
Ascribed	atribuido	Assigned or attributed to someone or something	Verb
Basal	básico(a)	basic, fundamental, or forming the base or foundation of something	Adjective
Handouts	impresiones	Printed materials that a teacher, presenter, or speaker gives to an audience	Noun
Deprivation	privación	The state of lacking or being denied something important	Noun
Exerted	Influido	Put forth effort, influence, or force to make something happen (in past tense)	Verb

*Table 5 portrays the glossary from English into Spanish translations*

*Source: Researcher's own creation*

### **5.3.2 Glossary from the Book *Hacia Ningun Lugar***

**Table 6 Glossary Spanish to English**

<b>Source Language (English)</b>	<b>Target Language (Spanish)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grammatical Category</b>
Exabrupto	outburst	A sudden, strong expression of emotion, usually happening quickly and often without control	Noun
Embalsamados	embalmed	treated with chemicals to preserve it, so it does not decay quickly	Verb

Umbrosos	shadowy	Something that is dark or unclear	Adj
Pesquisa	inspection	Careful examination of something to check its condition, quality, or safety	
Chal	shawl	Piece of cloth that people wear over their shoulders or around their upper body to keep warm or for style	Noun
Matutino	morning	Something that happens in the morning	Adjective
Apaciguadoras	soothing	Something that makes people feel calm, relaxed, or less upset or less in pain	Adjective
Repisa	shelf	Flat surface attached to a wall or inside furniture where you put or store things	Noun
Mezzanine	mezzanine	Intermediate floor or level in a building, between the main floors	Noun
Criminalizarla	charge	Formally accuse someone of a crime	Verb
Embestirse	crash into	To collide violently with something	Verb
Delataran	betrayed	Be disloyal to someone or to break their trust	Verb
Reprimido	repressed	To be held back, restrained, or suppressed, especially feelings, desires, or memories	Adjective

Grotesca	grotesque	Very strange, ugly, or distorted in an unpleasant way	Adjective
Depravación	deprivation	Morally corrupt, wicked, or extremely bad actions	Noun
Desquebrajado	broken	damaged, not working properly, or no longer whole	Adjective
Desfilaban	paraded	That walked or marched in a public way, often to show something off or celebrate an event	Verb
Inhumano	inhumane	Behavior that is cruel, lacking compassion, or showing no regard for the suffering of others.	Adjective
Holgados	loose	Not tight, not firmly fixed, or free to move	Adjective
(Venas) capilares	capillaries	Tiny blood vessels in your body that connect arteries to veins	Noun
Ensanchaban	swell	Increase in size, volume, or amount	Verb
Ínfima	minimal	Something that is the smallest possible in size, amount, or degree	Adjective
Lúgubre	gloomy	Something that is dark, depressing, sad, or not cheerful	Adjective
Neopentecostal	neo-Pentecostal	Modern movement within Pentecostal Christianity that emphasizes personal experience with the Holy Spirit,	Adjective

		miracles, prosperity, and contemporary forms of worship	
Precariedad	Insecurity/poverty	Being uncertain, insecure, or unstable in terms of work, income, or living conditions	Noun
Pisuicas	devil	Powerful supernatural being who represents evil, temptation, and opposition to God	Noun
Síncopas	syncopations	Weak beat is stressed instead of the strong beat	Noun
Elisiones	elisions	Omission or dropping of a sound, syllable, or letter in speech or writing	Noun

*Table 6 conveys the glossary from the Spanish into English translationn*

*Source: Researcher's own creation*

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations derived from an eight-month study focused on the analysis and translation of a group of texts in both English and Spanish. Throughout this process, particular attention was given to the linguistic, cultural, and stylistic challenges that arose when transferring meaning between the two languages. By closely examining these texts and the decisions made during the translation process, the study aimed to identify patterns, difficulties, and effective strategies that emerged over the course of the work.

Based on the observations and insights gathered during this period, this chapter outlines a series of recommendations intended to support and guide translation practice. These recommendations are informed by the practical experience gained while working with the selected texts, as well as by the reflection on the methods used to address translation challenges. By presenting these findings, the chapter seeks to contribute to a better understanding of translation processes in English and Spanish and to provide useful guidance for translators who may encounter similar linguistic and contextual issues in their work.

#### **6.1 Purpose of the Conclusion**

The conclusions presented in this study are drawn from the translation work carried out throughout the project, as the translation process itself served as the primary space for analysis and evaluation. The study was guided by several initial theoretical considerations.

First, it aimed to produce accurate and stylistically faithful translations of selected English and Spanish literary texts while preserving their original tone, rhythm, and contextual meaning. In addition, the project intended to evaluate the potential impact of these translations on readers who may now have access to a greater number of texts in their native language.

Another important objective was to compare the translated versions with their source texts in order to verify that the translations remained loyal to the original works while still functioning naturally in the target language. These guiding ideas provided the theoretical framework through which the translation process was examined and later reflected upon.

To support the evaluation of these theoretical goals, several methodological instruments were implemented throughout the study. Detailed text analysis was used to examine linguistic choices, stylistic elements, and contextual nuances in both the source and target texts.

A color-coding methodology was also applied during the revision stage in order to make the review process more visual and systematic, allowing different types of translation decisions and issues to be easily identified and categorized. Additionally, glossaries were developed and maintained to ensure consistency and terminological accuracy across all translated materials.

The use of the above-mentioned instruments made it possible to assess the translations in a structured way, ultimately allowing the conclusions of the study to be grounded in both practical translation experience and systematic analysis.

## **6.2 Conclusions**

The conclusions presented in this segment are stated in the order that they appear in Chapter 1. This structure was adopted because each objective produced distinct findings throughout the translation and analysis process. By separating the conclusions in this way, it becomes possible to clearly examine how each objective was addressed and what results emerged from the different stages of the project. The following sections therefore present the conclusions individually for each objective, allowing a more organized discussion of the outcomes and the insights obtained during the study.

### ***6.2.1 To produce accurate and stylistically faithful translations of selected English and Spanish literary texts, preserving their original tone, rhythm, and contextual meaning***

The analysis of the original texts and the development of glossaries played a fundamental role in producing accurate and stylistically faithful translations of the texts. A careful examination and text analysis made it possible to identify linguistic nuances, cultural references, and stylistic features that required special attention in order to preserve the author's intent in the target language.

At the same time, the creation and consistent use of glossaries supported the translation process by ensuring terminological accuracy and coherence across the different texts. The glossaries allowed the recording of key terms, recurring expressions, and context-specific vocabulary, which helped to maintain consistency while also facilitating a more efficient revision and comparison between the source and target versions. Together, the systematic analysis of the original texts and the use of glossaries strengthened the translation process, enabling the production of translations that remained faithful to the original tone, rhythm, and contextual meaning while still sounding natural and coherent in the target language.

### ***6.2.2 To apply appropriate translation strategies to each text type***

Text analysis and a solid understanding of translation strategies and procedures were essential in guiding the translation process for each text. The analysis of the purpose, audience, tone, and structure of the materials, influenced the selection and application of strategies that best suited the communicative objectives of each text. For the three articles on teaching, this meant prioritizing clarity and maintaining accurate academic terminology to preserve the instructional and informative nature of the texts.

In contrast, translating the book on the daily struggles within Costa Rican society required greater attention to cultural context, narrative tone, and social nuance. Applying strategies such as adaptation, modulation, and careful lexical selection allowed the translation to convey both meaning and cultural depth. Ultimately, the combination of text analysis and strategic decision-making ensured translations that were coherent, accurate, and appropriate for each text type.

### ***6.2.3 To evaluate the impact of translation on reader accessibility and reception***

By using glossaries, color coding, and text analysis, it was possible to evaluate the impact of the four translations on readers' accessibility and reception. Glossaries supported consistency in terminology and clarified specialized or culturally specific terms, making the texts easier for readers to understand. The color coding helped to identify translation strategies, patterns, and problem areas across the texts, allowing for a clearer visualization of the decisions made during the translation process.

Additionally, text analysis provided a deeper understanding of each text's purpose, audience, and stylistic features, which guided the evaluation of how effectively the translations communicated their intended meaning. Together, these tools made it possible to assess whether the translations were accessible to their target audiences and whether they preserved the tone, clarity, and communicative goals of the original texts. Finally, this approach helped to determine how successfully the translations could be received and understood by their corresponding readers.

### ***6.2.4 To conduct a comparative textual analysis to assess fidelity to the source material***

Text analysis and comparison were essential in the translation of the three education articles and the literary text, as they helped to assess fidelity to the source material throughout the process. Through detailed text analysis, the purpose, audience, tone, and key terminology of each text were analyzed, which allowed the understanding of the communicative intentions of the originals before translating them.

Comparing the source texts with their translated versions made it possible to evaluate whether the main ideas, structure, and stylistic elements had been accurately preserved. In the case of the education articles, this process focused on maintaining precise terminology and clear explanations to ensure that the academic and informative nature of the texts remained intact.

For the literary text, comparison also involved paying close attention to narrative voice, tone, and cultural nuances in order to remain faithful to the original style while still producing a natural translation. Overall, the combined use of text analysis and systematic comparison helped to ensure that the translations remained faithful to the source material while effectively communicating their meaning to the target audience.

### **6.3 Restatement of the Research Question**

In this project, the final result complied with the original thesis statement since accurate and stylistically faithful translations were successfully carried out. Due to this accomplishment, the readership will now be able to access articles and teaching material created by English-speaking educators, which were not available to them before. Also, English-speaking individuals will now be able to find and understand documents, books, and information in general created by Spanish-speaking instructors. Thanks to the accurate and faithful translations, both audiences can access meaningful data for their professions and life.

### **6.4 Recommendations**

Students who wish to pursue a postgraduate degree in translation can benefit from developing strong analytical and preparation habits when working with texts. One important recommendation is to read the source text several times before beginning the translation in order to fully understand the gist, structure, and main ideas of the document. This repeated reading helps to identify potential challenges and ensures a clearer interpretation of the author's message.

It is also advisable to create a glossary while reading the original text, noting key terms, specialized vocabulary, and possible equivalents in the target language, which supports consistency throughout the translation. Additionally, students should take time to research and understand the author's background and the context in which the text was produced, including its cultural, historical, or academic framework.

Another important recommendation is to stay in contact with the author to clarify specific details of the text; this could be done through a call, email, or in-person meeting. The translator should have questions already mapped in order to get the answers s/he is looking for because this could be the only time they can get with the author. Discussing

elements such as characters' names, specialized terms, or culturally specific references can provide valuable insight into the intended meaning and nuance behind word choices.

Understanding the author's objective and the reasons for selecting particular words or expressions helps the translator capture the text's tone, style, and subtle implications more accurately. This collaborative approach not only enhances fidelity to the source material but also deepens the translator's comprehension of the text's purpose, ultimately resulting in a more precise and authentic translation. Developing these practices can greatly improve translation accuracy, coherence, and overall quality, while also helping students build the critical skills required for advanced studies in translation.

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## Appendixes

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# The Increase in Percentage of Students Who Actually Do Homework by Means of Communicative Out-of-Class Tasks instead of Homework Assignments: A Case Study of Adult EFL Students in the Conversation Courses at The University of Costa Rica

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### Abstract

This study investigates how communicative out-of-class tasks instead of homework assignments can increase the percentage of students who actually do homework in the conversation courses at the University of Costa Rica. The review of the literature indicates that communicative out-of-class assignments facilitate learning through purposeful language use. The information gathered supports the premise that communicative out-of-class tasks enhance learners' rate of response to homework assignments. In addition, the results indicate that goal-oriented communicative tasks make students reflect on their own learning, and that homework complements the teaching and learning process when it fulfills the learners' interests and needs.

**Key words:** homework, conversation courses, communicative out-of-class tasks, teaching, learning

### Resumen

Este estudio investiga cómo los trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase, en lugar de la tarea regular, pueden incrementar el porcentaje de los estudiantes que realizan la tarea en los cursos de conversación de la Universidad de Costa Rica. La revisión de la literatura indica que los trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase facilitan el aprendizaje a través del lenguaje con un propósito definido. La información recopilada apunta a que dichos trabajos mejoran la respuesta de los estudiantes hacia la asignación de tarea. Asimismo, los resultados indican que dichos trabajos, con fines específicos, contribuyen a la reflexión de los estudiantes

sobre su propio aprendizaje y que la tarea complementa el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje cuando ésta satisface las necesidades y los intereses de los estudiantes.

**Palabras claves:** tarea, cursos de conversación, trabajos comunicativos fuera de clase, enseñanza,

aprendizaje homework is useful in the process of teaching and learning since it constitutes a source of information about the students' performance in the subject matter (Vatterott, 2009; Kumar, 2006).

Since home-

**H**omework is assigned to fulfill different purposes and needs, it has been classified into different types (e.g. Halam, 2004; Kumar, 2006; MacBeath and Turner (1990) cited in Hallam, 2004). Information about homework as part of the communicative approach—both the definition and characteristics of this approach are to be presented in the review of literature—was not found (see Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Nunan 1989, 1999, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996). However, some communicative tasks presented by Nunan (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and Richards (n.d.) will be adapted in order to accomplish the purpose of this research project. In addition, examples of studies conducted to practice oral skills outside the class will be described in order to acknowledge the contributions that a number of authors (e.g. Carralero, 2010; Stannard's, 2007; Rance-Roney, 2008) have made to the field of homework in the EFL classroom.

As part of those contributions, this study aimed to answer how communicative out-of-class tasks instead of homework assignments can increase the percentage of students who actually do homework. In other words, this research project attempts to determine if communicative out of class tasks are a means to enhance students' rate of response to do homework. Three of the researchers of this study have been working at the Conversation Courses for one year average, and they have noticed that some students do not hand their assignments in. A possible reason for this is that learners tend to limit themselves to what they do in the classroom and practice little on their own, which affects directly their acquisition of a foreign language. The little availability of native speakers and of other second-language speakers outside the classroom also affect negatively, which in turn pushes instructors to look for resources that allow learners to practice their oral skills. This basically describes how we arrived to the following question: how can assigning out of class communicative tasks instead of workbook activities increase the percentage of students who actually do homework? To answer the aforementioned question, the research was carried out with a group from the Conversation Courses at the University of Costa Rica.

## **Review of the Literature**

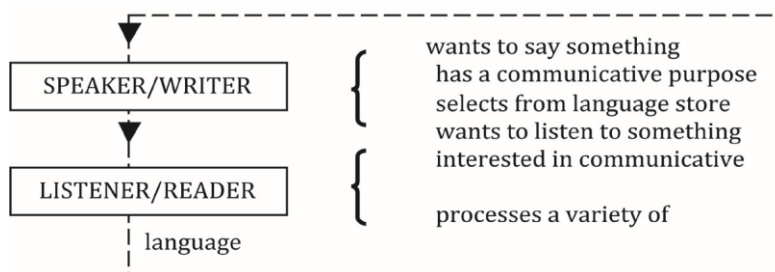
### **Types and Purposes for Assigning Homework**

Homework assignments as a complement for teaching and learning has been discussed by Vatterott (2009) and Kumar (2006), who highlight the contribution of out-of-class assignments to learning and also point out that learners are able to develop mental skills by means of these tools. Kumar (2006) also stresses the potential of homework assignments to provide teachers with an insight of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Some authors have classified homework into different types.

For example, MacBeath and Turner (as cited in Hallam, 2004), point out the existence of four types of homework: “finishing off work started in class[,] self-contained or parallel homework (distinct from classwork)[,] spontaneous work arising out of a project or activity being undertaken[,] and preparation reading or research done in advance of a lesson” (p.7). Additionally, Kumar (2006) indicates the existence of six types of homework. The first one is “practice type homework,” which is “meant to reinforce learning and help the student master specific skills” (p.35). The second type, the “preparatory type homework,” is used to “introduce material that will be presented in future lessons” (Kumar, 2006, p. 36). The third one is the “extension type homework,” which serves as “long-term continuing parallel class work” (p. 36). The fourth category, “application type homework,” lets the learners establish a connection between skills and concepts with new concrete and abstract situations (p.37). Then, the “creative type homework” gives the pupils the chance “to apply previously learned knowledge in a creative or imaginative manner” (p.37). The last one is called “cooperative type homework,” which enables the students “to work and learn cooperatively” (p.37). One can see that MacBeath and Turner’s (as cited in Hallam, 2004) as well as Kumar’s (2006) classifications seemingly complement to the process of teaching and learning and they also seem to cater for the learners’ needs.

### Communicative Tasks

The word communication derives from the verb “communicates”, which means “to share information with others by speaking, writing, moving your body or using other signals” (Procter, 2005). In other words, there are written and oral forms to communicate with others. This is fundamental in our project because the tasks assigned will involve written and oral exercises to see if the pupils have a positive response compared to the one showed after doing workbook exercises. Communication can also take place in different settings and through different means as well. Harmer (1991) exemplifies the nature of communication in the following diagram:



Harmer, p. 48, 1991

It can be understood from Harmer’s work that conveying and understanding meaning is essential for communication to take place. In fact, this is one of the premises of Communicative Language Teaching.

The Communicative Approach, popular since the 1980’s, holds as its main goal effective communication; that is, it seeks that students learn how to respond to and understand others in different contexts and settings. In this sense, accuracy is not vital, unless it disrupts communication (Harmer, 2001 and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, certain language difficulties due to students’ lack of knowledge should not prevent their communication (Richards, 2001). Very similar to this approach, TaskBased Language Learning pursues a type of learning where activities are meaningful for learners and therefore prompt communication (Willis, 1996); this is why the two approaches are combined, and we often talk

about “communicative tasks” instead of communicative exercises. Therefore, the word task will be defined to highlight its relevance in this project.

### **Defining Tasks**

Most authors agree that a task includes using the language to attain a result especially a communicative outcome. Willis (1996) states that tasks are always activities that use the target language “for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome” (p.23). Crabbe (2007) points out that a task “is a unit of communicative activity designed to facilitate learning with a clear purpose.” (p.119) For Mori (2002), tasks are today activities that facilitate language learning through purposeful language use and they constitute a central element of language pedagogy. However, there are other factors that should be taken into account whenever the instructor plans tasks.

### **General Aspects about Tasks**

In terms of purpose, Shehan (1998 mentioned in Murphy, 2003) distinguishes between the three goals of accuracy, fluency, and complexity as the purposes for any task, and he adds that the learner cannot give full attention to these three goals; therefore, the task designer’s role is to select the task according to the desired pedagogical outcome. For Murphy (2003) learning outcomes are a product of the three main factors: “the contribution of the individual learner, the task, and the situation in which the task is carried out;” (p.119) in this way, the task will change as the person interacts with it; this is the reason why sometimes the results may not be consistent with the objectives stated. Murphy (2003) also suggests that task designers should keep in mind four main aspects of tasks when planning: the objective, content, methodology, and context of tasks (p.353).

Crabbe (2007) agrees with Murphy and he considers that tasks are also a significant tool for providing communicative opportunities for the learners inside and outside the classroom, but in order to exploit tasks fully for learning the instructor should “engage the learners in understanding, identifying and taking up the learning opportunities” (p.124). Tasks can also focus on language forms or on the meanings that are communicated (Littlewood, 2004). These two aspects (form and meaning) can serve not only as major components of the methodology, but also as course organizers because they provide “a link between outsideclassroom reality and inside classroom pedagogy” (p. 324).

According to Muranoi (2007) some scholars believe that output practice is essential to acquire a L2. This author concludes that “output practice (i.e., any activity designed to provide L2 learners with opportunities to produce output) is effective for developing L2 learner’s well-balanced communicative competence” (ibid, p. 76), although the author only refers to language practice inside the classroom. In spite of this, Nunan (1991) does highlight an increase of autonomy in learners when they use their new knowledge outside the ESL classroom. He states that since students learn useful, real language for real purposes in the framework of communicative tasks, it is pertinent to set homework practices that follow this direction.

## **Definition of Communicative Tasks**

Although Lambert uses the term “communication tasks” instead communicative tasks, he defines them as pedagogic tasks which operate through a planned diversion in the information held by learners, and which usually approximate to some degree to a real- world task which learners may have to complete outside class (Lambert, 2004:18-27). This definition will be used for the present study.

## **Communicative Tasks as Homework**

In regard to setting communicative tasks as out of class assignments, no formal research has been carried out to our knowledge. Moreover, the books reviewed do not include any section about homework in the frame of the communicative approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Nunan 1989, 1999, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996). For the purpose of this study, we designed and adapted communicative tasks meant to be used in the classroom in order to convert them to homework. About the types of communicative tasks, several authors present different classifications/examples. We have used for the present study Nunan’s (1989), as cited in Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 231). For him, communicative tasks refer to real world tasks and to pedagogical tasks. Along with Nunan’s classification, we will also work with that of Richards (n.d.), in which communicative tasks include accuracy activities and fluency activities.

These two authors were selected because their typology permits to design homework assignments departing from tasks meant to be used in the classroom. This means that the tasks that they propose can be adapted to suit our research purposes. Classifications provided by other authors were not as suitable as the ones above to be turned into out-of-class activities.

## **Current Research on Homework Assignments**

In the literature reviewed, we found three projects in which teachers encouraged their students to practice oral skills outside the class. The first one was done by a university professor who shares his experience about assigning students homework in which they had to record themselves. Also, the teacher prepared follow-up activities to continue in the same line of the homework assigned, which made him realize that his pupils used again the knowledge gained from the assignment. As a result of this trial, the instructor claims that his classes “were more interlinked” (Stannard’s, 2007, p.12), and he finally found a way to promote oral work outside the class.

Moreover, Rance-Roney (2008) used digital stories with his college students as the final project of the course. Learners were asked to write a script of the story, and after being checked by the instructor and recorded several times, they digitally animated the account using movie-oriented software.

The last one is a very current project named “talking heads.” This plan seeks “to involve students in speaking activities outside the classroom” (Carralero, 2010, p.16). The main idea is that learners record themselves monthly performing a speaking activity that has been practiced during class time. The author mentions that learners began to reflect on their performance and started to try to overcome their weaknesses (ibid).

All these projects have in common the teachers’ goal to try to maximize speaking practice outside the classroom using goal- oriented, reflection-promoting, and student-centered communicative

tasks. These are also objectives of this research project aside from increasing the number of students who do homework especially because homework is an issue that concerns all teachers and because there is little research on the topic (North & Pillay, 2002, p.138). In this way, our research question is: How can communicative out-of-class tasks instead of homework assignments increase the percentage of students who actually do homework? Four sub-questions derive from this main question:

1. What was the difference in the return rate between communicative tasks and workbook exercises?
2. What are the main reasons why students do homework?
3. What are the reasons why students skip/do not do homework?
4. What is the difference of students' performance in communicative tasks and workbook exercises?

## **Intervention**

The researchers assigned two workbook exercises and two communicative tasks as homework. The teacher asked the students to complete a workbook exercise based on the subject matter, and then, the students had to complete a communicative task also taking into account the topics studied in class. The students first did a workbook exercise, which was followed by an oral task. These two assignments were based on the same topic. After these two interventions, the learners had to do another written communicative task followed by a workbook assignment. The order was inverted from the first two assignments to the last two assignments because of the limited time available to assign homework (they were about to finish the course and it was impossible to give them a communicative task after assigning an exercise from the workbook.) These two assignments were focused on a specific topic different from the one of the first two assignments previously mentioned.

The time given to the students to complete both types of assignments varied. The students were given either only two days to complete the assignments while they were given a week to do their homework or task. The idea was to consider time given by the teacher as a possible reason to do or not to do homework. Through these interventions, we expected to obtain a higher response rate when assigning out of class communicative tasks than when assigning workbook exercises. The next section will provide specific information of the exercises and tasks assigned for homework.

## **Description of the Assignments**

### **Assignment 1**

As the first strategy, the teacher assigned a workbook exercise based on unit #10 of the book Skyline 4. The students used different past modals to complete some exercises in the book speculating about past events or actions. In one of the exercises, the students were given some statements. Based on those statements, they had to write sentences with "should(n't) have." For the second exercise they had to use "could have" instead of "should(n't) have" instead. The third exercise asked the students to compare two people by using "would have" and some words provided in parentheses. The last exercise was a matching of sentences: one column included sentences describing a situation and the other column included sentences with past modals. The researchers

made copies of the pages from the workbook given as homework to be able to collect and to check them.

### **Assignment 2**

For this communicative homework assignment, the students had to record themselves in order to give their opinions about a panhandler woman who describes her situation in a video from *Youtube*. They were asked to answer some questions by using the contracted form of modal auxiliaries in past tense, with the purpose of practicing the topic studied in class. The students talked about different aspects on the video that they considered relevant for the topic, and the recording had to last 1 to 2 minutes maximum. The teacher provided the students with the copy of the task's guidelines.

### **Assignment 3**

The third assignment was a communicative task in which the students had to write an e-mail as a response to a problem that a fictitious friend supposedly told each student. The learners had to select between two time tenses according to the type of actions: definite or incomplete. The teacher provided the students with the copy of the task's guidelines.

### **Assignment 4**

For the fourth strategy, the instructor assigned a workbook exercise based on unit #11. The students had to use the future progressive ( will be -ing) to complete some exercises talking about future events. In one exercise, the students had to use their imagination to write sentences based on the illustrations provided. In the following exercise, the learners had to write either affirmative or negative sentences using the correct form of the future progressive plus some phrases given in a chart. There were other exercises related to pronunciation and vocabulary included in the copies from the workbook that were assigned for homework. The researchers made copies of the pages from the workbook given as homework to be able to collect and to check them.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted with a group of 20 students, 6 men and 14 women, in the Conversation Courses at the University of Costa Rica (a program which follows the communicative approach). Most of these students were working adults whose ages ranged from 20 to 45 years old. They were enrolled in a high intermediate level of English or level 8 out of 12 levels. These participants attended classes twice a week, 3 hours per day during ten weeks.

### **Procedures**

To collect the data, four instruments were designed:

The first instrument is the pre-intervention questionnaire, which includes multiple-choice items and Likert Scales to obtain information such as the students' previous experiences regarding homework, and their opinions about the usefulness of different types of homework (see Appendix 1).

The instrument for students who did their assignments consists of multiple choice items and a Likert Scale to collect information about main aspects such as the pupils' reason(s) to do the assignment, the degree of effort that they put to do their homework, their level of comprehensibility of the instructions and their opinions about the assignment (see Appendix 2).

The instrument for students who did not do their homework has the same format of the instrument previously described, but it refers to the pupils' reasons for not doing their assignment, their opinions about the instructions given in class before doing the assignment, and the possible reasons that would have led them to do the assignment (see Appendix 3).

Two tally lists were made in order to collect administrative data such as the number of students who hand in their homework and those who did not do it. One tally was designed for the workbook assignments. The other tally was designed for the communicative tasks.

The pre-intervention questionnaire was given to the students in the classroom before assigning homework. Once the participants had completed this instrument, the researchers started assigning homework to collect the data. To achieve this goal, the participants were given a copy from the workbook exercises assigned and the guidelines to develop the communicative tasks. Regarding the communicative tasks, the teacher collected the recordings in different ways: in a CD, in a cassette, by transferring the recording from the students' pen drive into her computer, or via e-mail. In the case of the second communicative task, the participants had to send an e-mail to the teacher's e-mail account, or they were also allowed to write the e-mail in a piece of paper that had to be delivered to the teacher.

The teacher in charge of the group collected the data from the tallying lists and the post-intervention questionnaires the day when the students had to hand in their homework. The first step—once the teacher had collected the assignments—was filling the tally list. Then, she gave the participants the post-intervention questionnaires depending on their situation (whether they had done their assignment or had not).

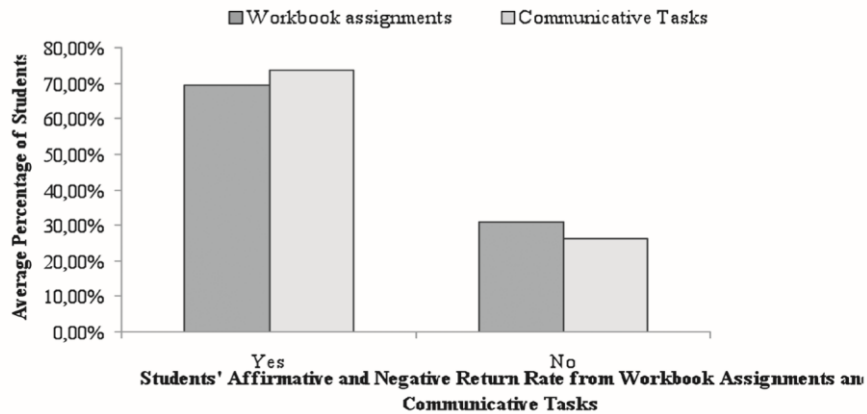
Both types of homework were checked by all the researchers. This information together with the data from the tallying lists and questionnaires were also classified and analyzed by the three investigators.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results and discussion for sub-question 1**

Even though there was a decline in the return rate from the first communicative out-of-class task to the second one, it is noticeable that the percentages for the return rate in communicative assignments are higher than the percentages that correspond to the workbook assignments. Figure 1 shows this in detail.

**Figure 1**  
**Percentage of students who did and did not do workbook assignments and communicative tasks 1 and 2**



This finding is in agreement with one of the conclusions stated in the review of the literature: Whenever students are assigned homework from the workbook, they end up complaining about the monotonous and boring nature of the exercises, and they ask for practice to improve their listening and oral skills in English. About this point, Kumar (2006) considers that when students are involved in the process of learning another language, they ask for complementary activities and extra practice so that they can develop more skills to use the language appropriately. In addition, Littlewood (2004) considers that because tasks provide “a link between outside-classroom reality and inside classroom pedagogy,” (p. 324) they help students to find more organization and sense on what they are learning. Therefore, based on the results, it can be assumed that the participants considered that the tasks assigned were more significant tools for providing communicative opportunities for them outside the classroom, and that is probably why the return rate for the communicative tasks in general was around 4% higher than the one for workbook assignments. Another relevant aspect is that before the intervention, one of the first questions that students were asked was how frequently they did homework. Table 1 shows that most learners said, in general terms, that they almost always do homework.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of frequency with which the participants do home-  
work according to the pre-intervention questionnaire**

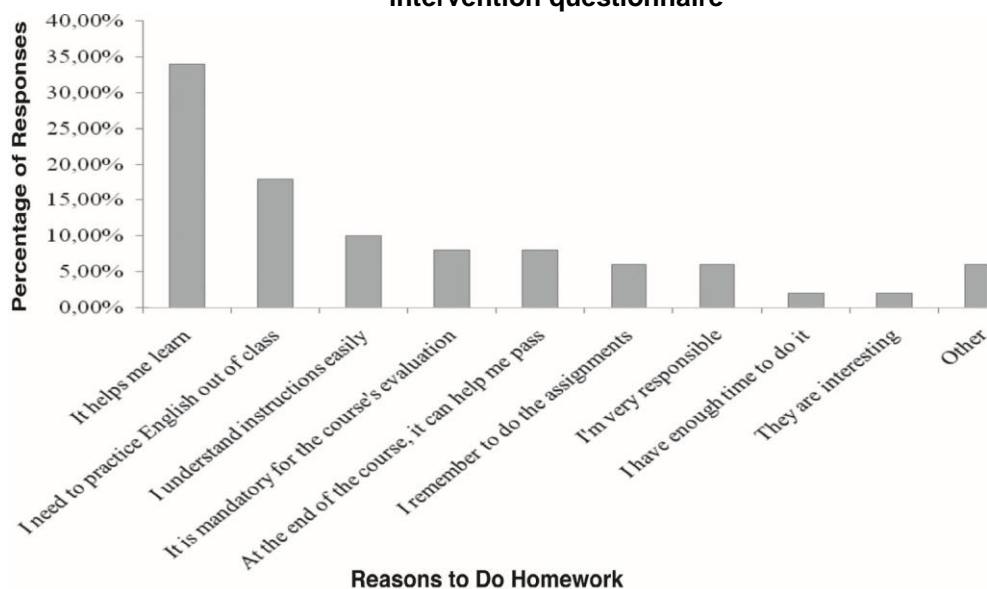
Frequency	Never	Almost never	Almost always	Always
Percentage of students	0%	20%	65%	15%

This finding is consistent with the results obtained after the post-interventions as Figure 1 indicates. Most participants did almost always both workbook assignments and tasks during the intervention. Hence, there is coherence among the data from the pre-intervention questionnaire and the post-intervention questionnaire.

### Results and discussion for sub-question 2

In order to determine the main reasons for students to do homework, data were obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire and from the questionnaires that the participants answered after every assignment. The information was analyzed in the same order that the instruments were mentioned. Students were able to choose all the options that applied in the pre-intervention questionnaire as well as in the post-intervention questionnaire. Figure 2 shows these options in detail.

**Figure 2**  
**Students' reasons for doing homework in general terms**  
**according to the information provided in the pre-  
intervention questionnaire**



This fact shows that learners consider out of class practice important in the process of language learning. Similarly, Nunan (1991) believes that putting into practice what has been learned carries advantages for students. Understanding instructions is the last of the top three factors that prompts learners to do homework; for this reason, one may infer that if homework directions are complex or difficult to understand, pupils will be less likely to complete the assignment. In 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> place, 8% of the learners chose the fact that homework is mandatory for the course evaluation and at the end

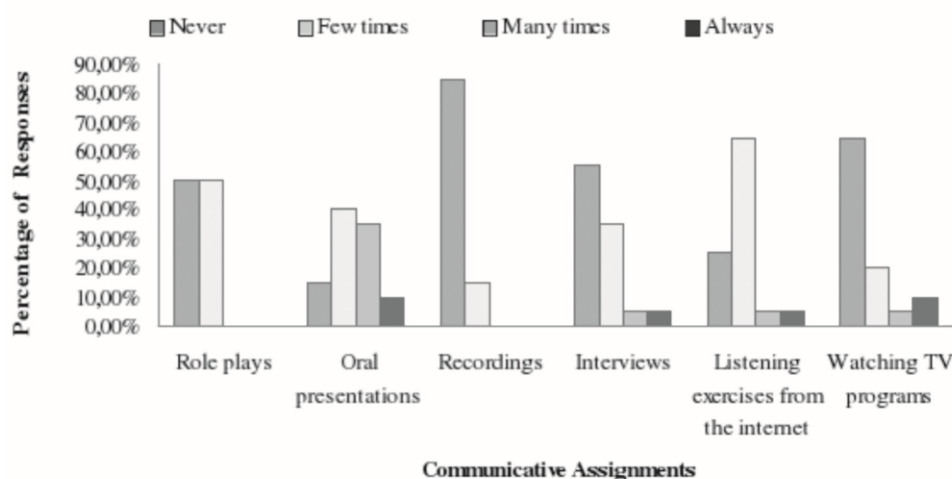
of the course it can help them pass. Indeed, according to Table 2, most students have taken from 4 to 7 levels at the Conversation Courses. Therefore, 70% of the participants know that there is a 5% value for homework and attendance together. This percentage can be decisive to pass or fail the course if they have not performed well in exams and/or quizzes.

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of the number of courses that students have taken at UCR obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire**

Number of courses	0	1	2-3	4-7
Percentage of students	0%	5%	25%	70%

As Figure 3 shows, tasks that suit communicative purposes are never or few times assigned to learners as homework. Oral presentations do not follow the same tendency that the rest of the alternatives, though.

**Figure 3**  
**Frequency with which communicative-like tasks are assigned as homework in the conversation courses according to the participants' perception**



The reason behind these answers may be that one rubric of the evaluation of the courses is oral presentations and teachers can decide if students prepare their presentation out of class or if it is impromptu. As a conclusion from the data provided by the pre-intervention questionnaire, it can be stated that even though most homework assigned to the participants comes from the workbook, they do it because it helps them practice the target language and it is part of the course syllabus.

Regarding the post-intervention questionnaires, the analysis displays some similar results than the previous ones. As Figure 4 shows, the reasons for learners to do homework from the workbook and communicative assignments vary. For the former, the main reason—with almost 25% of the students agreeing on this fact— is the need to practice out of class. The second reason, which is supported by around 17% of the pupils, is the fact that doing homework is mandatory for the course evaluation, while the third one relates to 16% of the participants who highlighted their desire to review what was studied in class. It is important to stress the fact that the students were able to choose all the options that applied to what happened in reality.

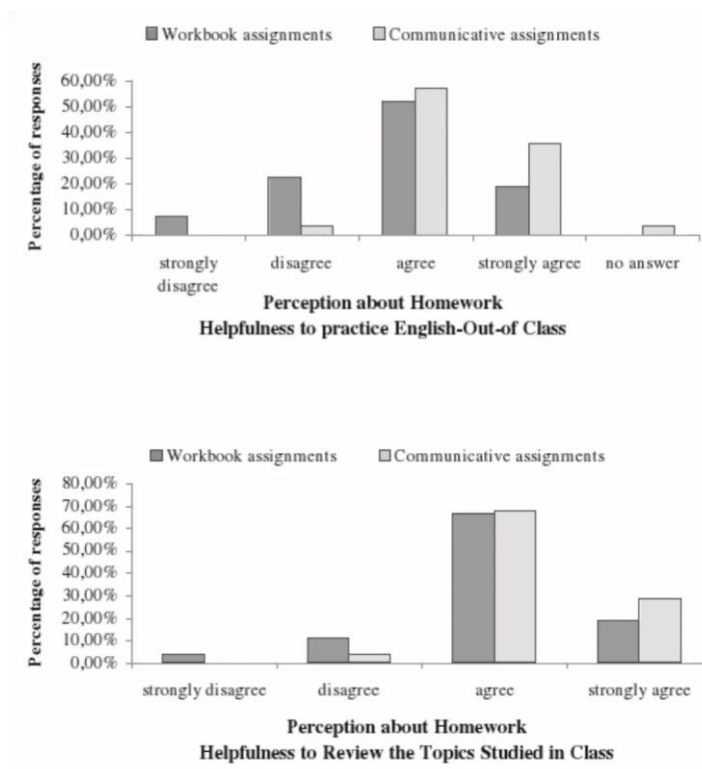
**Figure 4**  
**Students' reasons for doing workbook assignments and communicative tasks according to the information provided in the post-intervention questionnaires**



This outcome matches somehow students' responses when they were asked why they did homework in general terms (see Figure 2). Also, they emphasize that homework is part of the evaluation of the courses; therefore, they are obliged to do it.

A reason for doing communicative tasks is the need to practice out of class, and the third place is for two reasons: the desire to review what was studied in class and being mandatory for the course evaluation. The first two choices are supported by Figures 5 and 6 respectively.

**Figures 5 and 6**  
**Students' perception of homework helpfulness**

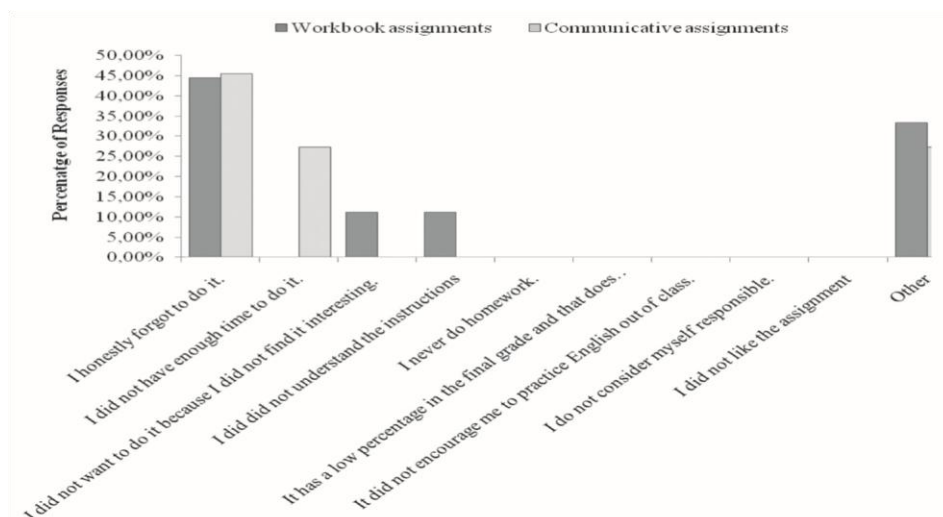


It is noticeable from Figures 5 and 6 that there is not a big difference between workbook and communicative assignments for the “agree” response. These results indicate that more learners believe that communicative assignments serve to practice English and what is studied in class than workbook exercises. Furthermore, from the options provided to students about the reason to do homework, having enough time to do the assignment is in the last place for both types of homework.

### Results and discussion for sub-question 3

Figure 7 shows in detail the different reasons that the students chose in order to indicate why they did not do homework; they chose all the options that applied to their situation.

**Figure 7**  
**Students’ reasons for not doing communicative tasks and workbook exercises according to the information provided in the post-intervention questionnaires**



As Figure 7 shows, the first reason for not turning in their homework is oblivion since around 45% of the students indicated that they had forgotten to do either workbook assignments or communicative assignments. In this case, as well as it was suggested in the analysis of results for the pre-intervention questionnaire, if the students consider that homework assignments are irrelevant, boring or unappealing, they will be less likely to do them. Moreover, the second reason for not doing communicative tasks is that students did not have enough time. An interesting point is that the two main reasons reported in the post-intervention questionnaire are the same as in the pre-intervention questionnaire. However, the order is inverted, and the difference is small. Then, there is an agreement between students' responses in the two questionnaires. These facts agree with Gass, Mackey and Ross- Feldman (2005), when they state that "[the] type of tasks that learners carry out affects their interactions for negotiation of meaning especially in the context of meaningful communication." (p.597) Therefore, the teacher must be careful in order to choose the correct task to fit the course's and students' requirements and needs. In this case, students do not have enough time, so they need an adjustment based on their situation.

#### Results and discussion for sub-question 4

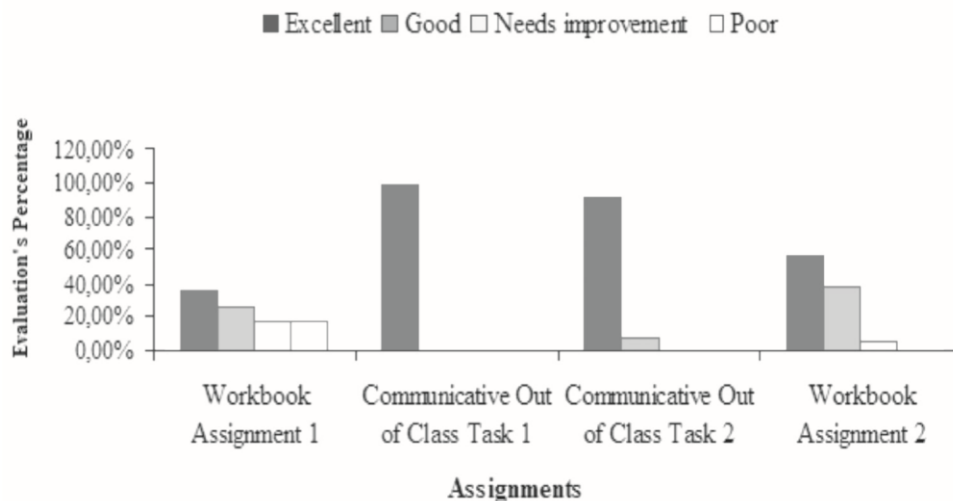
In order to determine how the students' performance in communicative tasks and workbook exercises was, two scales of evaluation were used. Both scales were adapted from the evaluation form used at the Conversation Courses.

These instruments include four descriptors (excellent, good, needs improvements and poor) which indicate the number of mistakes that the learners had to make in order to obtain a specific qualitative grade. Still, the scale for workbook assignments indicates that the mistakes taken into account were the ones related to the specific grammatical structures that should be practiced while the scale for communicative out of class assignments specifies that the types of mistakes made were the ones that hindered communication or may have caused misunderstandings. This specification was made because the aim of communicative tasks is that learners communicate effectively, not perfectly. (Harmer, 2001 and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

As Figure 8 shows, the students' performance in communicative out of class tasks was much better than their performance in workbook assignments. In fact, 100% of the students received "excellent" as grade in the first communicative assignment and around 92% obtained "excellent" in the second communicative assignment while only around 36% of them received this result in the first workbook

assignment and around 56% in the second workbook assignment. As Figure 8 shows, their grades ranged from “excellent” to “poor” in the first workbook assignment and from “excellent” to “needs improvement” in the second workbook assignment.

**Figure 8**  
**Students’ performance in the workbook assignments and in the communicative out-of-class tasks**



As it was stated in the review of the literature, tasks are designed to achieve an outcome while using the target language (Willis, 1996), and they facilitate learning (Crabbe, 2007). This seems to be true since the participants in this study made fewer mistakes in communicative tasks than in the workbook exercises assigned for homework.

It is important to highlight that the contents assessed in the first workbook assignment and in the first communicative tasks were the same. Similarly, the topics evaluated in the second workbook assignment and in second communicative task were identical. If the results are compared, there is a difference in performance favoring the participants in communicative tasks.

At the beginning, it was thought that in the case of the first workbook assignment and the first communicative task, the learners may have had a better performance in the communicative task because the learners had the chance to practice the grammatical structures assessed by means of the workbook assignment and the activities developed in class. This seemed logical because Muranoi (2007) points out that “output practice (i.e., any activity designed to provide L2 learners with opportunities to produce output) is effective for developing L2 learner’s well-balanced communicative competence.” Nevertheless, once the students did the second communicative task and the second workbook assignment in this respective order, the previous explanation does not seem to be related to the improvement in performance from one type of homework to the other. It was evident that the students performed better in the communicative task than in the homework from the workbook. As it was stated in the review of the literature, tasks are always activities that use the target language “for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome (Willis, 1996, p.23). Therefore, students are able to use language in a meaningful way while they do the tasks assigned. In this case, since the participants in this study were able to use the language in a natural way, that is, in situations that are closely related to what they could do in real life, the nature of the assignment probably exerted an influence in their performance.

## **Conclusions**

The participants recognized the importance and need to practice English out of class. They were conscious that homework helped them to rehearse and review what they studied in class as well. That is, they knew that it was important for them to do homework. Moreover, they showed that communicative-like assignments were more useful to practice and to review the subject matter. This means that instructors at the Conversation Courses should try to adapt communicative tasks to turn them into homework in order to provide the learners with enriching and appealing assignments and to enhance students' rate of response to do homework.

It was also noticed that the participants did not have plenty of time to do out-of-class work because of their condition of being working adults; therefore, short assignments seem to be more suitable for this population taking into account that homework constitutes a useful tool to complement the teaching and learning process. In addition, the study revealed that when most participants did not do homework, it was because they forgot to do it, or because they did not have time to do it.

Another aspect to emphasize is that although the difference was reduced, the return rate for the communicative tasks in general was higher than the one for the workbook assignments; therefore, the expected outcome of the project was reached, but more research should be carried out in order to be able to generalize that students' return rate is higher when they do communicative tasks instead of assignments from the workbook.

## **Limitations**

One of the limitations to develop this project was time. In fact, the researchers could carry out four interventions, but only two using communicative assignments. It would have been more enriching to have had the opportunity to design and assign more tasks in order to obtain more data. If other researchers attempted to do similar work, we recommend to employ more than two communicative assignments for analyzing how different types of tasks affect students' response rate as well.

Attendance and tardiness were issues as well. Several students arrived late to class; therefore, the instructor could not start the class by checking homework if she wanted to. Absent students, not all of them though, brought their homework next class or sent it through e-mail.

Another limitation was the individual nature of communicative assignments. It would be interesting to conduct research where learners really interact with other people and mostly with native speakers if possible. This could guarantee that communication occurs in its most natural context possible.

In addition, a real limitation and problem was that the sub-questions were stated after the instruments were prepared; therefore, some of the questions and information collected was not used in the results and discussion section. For future research stating the subquestions at the beginning of the project would be beneficial for the organization and analysis of the project. Besides that, in all questionnaires, some of the students did not answer the whole document; therefore, there were some data that could not be analyzed, and this represents a margin of error in all the results obtained from the questionnaires.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1

#### Questionnaire about the Assigination of Homework

Before you answer this questionnaire, we want to thank you for investing some minutes of your time to share with us some valuable information that will be useful for our study. Your answers to the questions below constitute part of statistic information that we will be using for investigative purposes, and this information will be totally anonymous and confidential.

Gender: M\_\_\_ F\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_

**I PART. Instructions:** Write an X in the option that corresponds to your previous experiences before enrolling in the level in which you are right now.

1. Where have you learned English?

- a. ( ) Conversation Courses at the University of Costa Rica
  - b. ( ) Another institutionSpecify:
- 

2. How many courses or levels have you taken in the Conversation Courses Program at the University of Costa Rica?

- a. ( ) 0
- b. ( ) 1
- c. ( ) 2-3

d. ( ) 4-7

**II PART. Instructions:** Write an X in the option(s) that correspond(s) to your previous experience(s) by doing homework.

1. The frequency with which I do assigned homework is \_\_\_\_\_. **(Choose only ONE option)**

- a. ( ) never
- b. ( ) almost never
- c. ( ) almost always
- d. ( ) always (go to question 3)

2. When I do not bring the assignments in, it is because \_\_\_\_\_. **(You can choose more than one option)**

- a. ( ) they do not help me to learn
- b. ( ) the teachers do not keep a record of students who do homework
- c. ( ) they have a low percentage of the grade and it does not affect me
- d. ( ) I do not deem them to practice English out of class
- e. ( ) they are boring
- f. ( ) I am not very responsible
- g. ( ) I do not have time to do them
- h. ( ) I do not understand the instructions
- i. ( ) I forget to do them
- j. ( ) I leave them at home
- k. ( ) another/other reason(s)

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you answered**

**NEVER in question 1, go to question 4.**

3. I do out-of-class assignments because \_\_\_\_\_. **(You can choose more than one option)**

- a. ( ) they help me to learn
- b. ( ) they are mandatory for the course's evaluation
- c. ( ) they can help me to pass at the end of the course
- d. ( ) I need to practice English out of class
- e. ( ) they seem interesting
- f. ( ) I am very responsible
- g. ( ) I have enough time to do them
- h. ( ) I easily understand the instructions
- i. ( ) I remember to do them
- j. ( ) another/other reason(s)Specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. When I do not bring an out-of-class assignment in the due date indicated by the teacher, \_\_\_\_\_. **(Choose only ONE option)**

- a. ( ) I do it to practice despite the fact that the teacher does not allow me to deliver it another day
- b. ( ) I do it and I deliver it to my teacher so that she/he can realize how interested I am about the course. I do not care if she/he checks it or not
- c. ( ) I do not do it because the teacher does not check it another day
- d. ( ) I talk to my teacher to convince her/him to let me hand my homework in another day

5. In general, the out-of-class assignments' purpose is \_\_\_\_\_. **(You can choose more than one option)**

- a. ( ) to practice what was studied in class
- b. ( ) to finish something that was not fully developed in class
- c. ( ) to study a topic that will be introduced in the following lesson

- d. ( ) I do not know the exact purpose  
 e. ( ) another option: \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. I prefer out-of-class assignments in which I have to work \_\_\_\_\_. **(Choose only ONE option)**  
 a. ( ) alone  
 b. ( ) in pairs  
 c. ( ) in groups

**III PART. Instructions:** There is a chart presented below that is divided into three parts. Based on the column that is in the middle: "Type of homework assigned," write an X to indicate the frequency with which it has been assigned (left column) and another X to indicate the degree with which each type of homework has helped you to practice English out of class (right column). Choose only **ONE** option in each case.

For example:

Frequency with which it has been assigned	Type of homework assigned	This type of homework helps me practice English out of class....
Never Few Many Always times times		Never Few Many Always times times
x	Dramatizations	x

Frequency with which it has been assigned	Type of homework assigned	This type of homework helps me practice English out of class....
Never Few Many Always times times		Never Few Many Always times times
	Dramatizations	
	Oral Presentations	
	Recording oneself	
	Interviews	
	Listening exercises on The Internet	
	Watching TV programs	
	Another/ Other option(s), specify:	

**IV PART. Instructions:** Some affirmations are presented below. Write an X in the column that corresponds to the frequency with which you have had these experiences exclusively in the conversation courses taught in the University of Costa Rica or another institution that teaches languages to adults. Choose only **ONE** option for each affirmation.

	Never	Few times	Many times	Al-ways
The writing skill has been practiced in the English courses' out of class assignments.				

---

The reading skill has been practiced in the English courses' out of class assignments.

---

The oral skill has been practiced in the English courses' out of class assignments.

---

The listening skill has been practiced in the English courses' out of class assignments.

---

In the English courses workbook exercises have been assigned for homework.

---

The teachers checked my homework.

---

The exercises from the workbook are enough to practice at home what is studied in class.  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

---

If you were the teacher of the course, what kind of homework would you assign to your students? Specify.

Type of Homework	Why?

End of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

## Appendix 2

### Homework Questionnaire A

Before you answer this questionnaire, it is important to thank you for investing some minutes to give valuable information. All what you write in this document will be treated confidentially and anonymously and will be used only for investigative purposes.

Gender: M \_\_\_ F \_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_

**Instructions:** Write an "X" in the option that corresponds to your experience by doing the homework assigned.

- 1- When did you do your assignment? a. ( ) During class  
b. ( ) Some minutes before the class started  
c. ( ) In my free time at home  
d. ( ) At work

Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2- How much effort did you put to complete the assignment? a. ( ) No effort (0%)  
b. ( ) Minimum effort (25%)  
c. ( ) Sufficient effort (50%)  
d. ( ) A lot of effort (75%)  
e. ( ) All the effort possible for the task (100%)

- 3- Were the instructions clear enough for you to do the assignment? a. ( ) All of them  
b. ( ) Most of them

- c. ( ) Some of them
- d. ( ) None of them

4- What reasons made you do this assignment? (**Check all that apply**) a. ( ) I wanted to review what I studied in class.

- b. ( ) I had enough time to do it.
- c. ( ) It seemed challenging.
- d. ( ) It seemed easy to do.
- e. ( ) I always do homework.
- f. ( ) It was mandatory for the course's evaluation.
- g. ( ) I needed to practice English out of class.
- h. ( ) I am a very responsible student.
- i. ( ) It seemed interesting.

Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_ 5- I think the homework assignment \_\_\_\_\_.

	Strongly dis- agree	disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
was easy				
was difficult				
helped me to learn new things				
helped me to review the topics studied in class				
helped me to practice English out of class				
was not useful				
was enjoyable				
was boring				

End of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

### Appendix 3

#### Homework Questionnaire B

Before you answer this questionnaire, it is important to thank you for investing some minutes to give valuable information. All what you write in this document will be treated confidentially and anonymously and will be used only for investigative purposes.

Gender: M \_\_\_

F \_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_

**Instructions:** Write an "X" in the option that corresponds to your experience by doing the homework assigned.

- 1- Why you did not hand your assignment in? (**Check all that apply**) a. ( ) I honestly forgot to do it.
- b. ( ) I did not have enough time to do it.
  - c. ( ) I did not want to do it because I did not find it interesting.
  - d. ( ) I did not understand the instructions.

- e. ( ) I never do homework.
- f. ( ) It has a low percentage in the final grade and that does not affect me to pass the course.
- g. ( ) It did not encourage me to practice English out of class.
- h. ( ) I do not consider myself responsible.
- i. ( ) I did not like the assignment.

Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2- Were the instructions given in class to complete the assignment clear enough for you? a. ( ) all of them
- b. ( ) Most of them
  - c. ( ) Some of them
  - d. ( ) None of them

3- I think that I would have done the assignment if \_\_\_\_\_.

	<b>Strongly disa- gree</b>	<b>disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
it had been more interesting				
it had been more challenging				
it had been easier				
it had included different activities				
it had been shorter				

End of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

# Effectiveness of the Use of Graphic Organizers and Summaries: A Case Study of Adult EFL Students in a Reading Comprehension Course

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## Abstract

This study is aimed at providing an answer to the question of how the use of partially-completed graphic organizers and summaries can help students get the gist of different texts. The review of the literature makes reference to the benefits of using graphic organizers and summaries to understand the gist of texts. The information gathered supports the premise that graphic organizers should be used as a while-reading strategy while summaries should be used as a post-reading strategy. Summaries are helpful for readers to show real comprehension of texts as well as for teachers to evaluate their students' understanding of the main ideas of different readings. Additionally, the results show that students value the advantages of using both strategies to read texts in English.

**Key words:** graphic organizers, summaries, main ideas, reading strategies, texts, reading comprehension

## Resumen

Este estudio pretende responder la pregunta de cómo el uso de diagramas parcialmente completos así como también los resúmenes pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a obtener la idea principal de diferentes textos. El marco teórico hace referencia a los beneficios de usar diagramas y resúmenes para comprender la idea principal de los textos. La información recopilada apoya la premisa de que los diagramas deben ser usados como una estrategia de lectura mientras los resúmenes deben ser usados como una estrategia de post-lectura. Los resúmenes son útiles para los lectores que muestran una comprensión real de los textos así como también para que los docentes evalúen el entendimiento de las ideas principales de diferentes lecturas por parte de sus estudiantes. Además, los resultados muestran que los estudiantes valoran las ventajas de usar ambas estrategias para leer textos en inglés.

**Palabras claves:** diagramas, resúmenes, ideas principales, estrategias de lectura, textos, comprensión de lectura

Recepción: 29-1-13

Aceptación: 12-11-14

This research was carried out with a group taking the course called "Strategies of Reading Comprehension in English II" (LM-1032) from the Section of English for Other Majors (SIPOC) at the School of Modern Languages from the University of Costa Rica, specifically on the Rodrigo Facio Campus. In LM-1032, advanced reading comprehension strategies are taught to students who

study other majors rather than English. They have to analyze rhetorical patterns and discourse, which means that they should be more critical when analyzing texts; they are actually expected to interact with the text in order to create meaning from print. Identifying main ideas of different types of texts is a topic that has to be constantly reviewed and reinforced in class because this is a way to raise awareness about its relevance when carrying out other exercises that involve critical thinking. However, a lot of learners struggle to accomplish this task. Some of the major reasons of this problem may be the lack of practice or even of solid bases in the strategies that they need to know in order to register this course and the lack of proficiency in the foreign language. Indeed, the course has to be taught in Spanish to ease the students' understanding of the explanations provided by the instructor.

Langdon and Chou (2001) stress that identifying main ideas does not constitute a simple task for learners of different ages (p. 114). In order to tackle this problem, instructors should teach different strategies to help students improve their understanding of texts in a foreign language. One of the strategies that may be helpful for learners is the use of graphic organizers, which Jiang and Grabe (2007) define as a "visual representation[s] of information in the text" (p.34). Indeed, the improvement of reading comprehension skills has been a benefit ascribed to these tools. Jones, Pierce and Hunter (1988) acknowledge the importance of using graphic organizers to comprehend texts. Additionally, some researchers (e.g. Goodnough & Woods, 2002; Griffin, Duncan & Kameenui, 2001; Robinson, Katayama, Beth, Odom, Hsieh, & Vanderveen, 2006) have contributed to provide insight about the usefulness and effectiveness of graphic organizers in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, summarizing is another helpful strategy to enhance students' understanding of texts; this is an advantage highlighted by Griffin et al. (2001), Idris, Baba and Abdullah (2007), Pirozzi (1995) and Singhal (2006). For this reason, both graphic organizers and summaries were the strategies chosen in this study to aid students understand the main ideas of the texts used in class.

## **Review of the Literature**

Graphic organizers have gained attention from experts in the field of reading comprehension and content-based instruction. For example, Jones et al. (1988) argue that students who construct graphic organizers are able to understand the main ideas and details of a text, the connection between them, and the aspects that are not clear (p. 20). They also point out that these tools are important because they enhance learners' involvement in processing a text and help them "comprehend, summarize, and synthesize complex ideas" (p. 21). This positive point of view about the use of graphic organizers is supported by the results obtained in the studies conducted by Robinson et al. (2006), Goodnough and Woods (2002) and Griffin et al. (2001) to determine their effects on classroom environments. Authors such as Griffin et al. (2001), Idris, Baba and Abdullah (2007), Pirozzi (1995) and Singhal (2006) point to the use of summaries as a tool to show true reading comprehension. Hence, an analysis of the usefulness of both graphic organizers and summaries will be presented in order to shed light on what different authors have stated about these tools.

Robinson et al. (2006) conducted four experiments focused on the advantages of using partial and complete graphic organizers in a classroom setting, on the usefulness of these tools to help university learners to have a better performance on tests of reading comprehension, and on the impact of the performance of some partial graphic organizer tasks on the learners, specifically to take graphic organizer notes on their own. The results obtained showed that the students who

completed partial graphic organizers got higher scores in examinations and quizzes covering course content in contrast to those who wrote summaries or viewed complete diagrams containing the notes that they needed to study. Additionally, a lot of learners switched from taking non-graphic notes to graphic notes. For these authors, graphic organizer tasks may help instructors to teach learners course content and relevant metacognitive skills such as identifying text structure. This investigation mainly focuses on the use of graphic organizers as study tools in content-based classroom environments dismissing the impact of their application for other reading purposes. However, if the learners in this study improved their performance on different evaluations, it means that they were able to comprehend well the texts that they read in class. Even though these authors do not provide information about the learners' perceptions about the effectiveness of the use of diagrams and the reasons why they resorted to taking graphic notes instead of non-graphic notes, it can be suggested that the format of the strategy may have played a relevant role in their improvement on text comprehension. As Robinson et al. (2006) point out, graphic organizers notes help students to focus on relevant information and to "notice important across-concept relations that are not as apparent when viewing linear forms of notes" (p. 103). Thus, learners have to deeply analyze the information in the graphic organizer to understand how the ideas are interconnected; this may enable them to grasp the main ideas of texts when implemented in class as while-reading exercises.

Goodnough and Woods (2002) focused on the use of mind maps in content-based classes to help students understand new and difficult concepts. They carried out a 10-month interpretative case study using teacher-created as well as individual and group student-generated maps in class in order to enhance science teaching and learning. Most learners, sixth graders, perceived mind maps as fun, interesting, motivating and learning-enhancing tools. This strategy was considered a means to show their creativity. Furthermore, these students were able to increase their level of attention, better organize their thoughts and ideas, improve their memory, understand deeply the subject matter, have a better approach to share ideas during assessment, and improve note-taking. On the other hand, some students pointed out that interpreting them was confusing, and that they were not helpful tools to learn. Nevertheless, teachers have to take into account that satisfying all students' needs is a very difficult task. Moreover, if they find a strategy that helps all or at least the majority of learners to achieve a specific goal, they should teach it and raise awareness of the importance of its use. Compared with the research conducted by Robinson et al. (2006), the learners in both studies benefited from the use of these visual tools regardless of their different educational levels, which indicates that graphic organizers and mind maps can be useful and effective for students of dissimilar ages. However, while the study conducted by Robinson et al. (2006) involves reading comprehension, the research carried out by Goodnough and Woods (2002) focused on the use of the mind mapping strategy "to introduce new topics through teacher-generated maps created prior to instruction or during instruction" (p.7). In other words, the investigators used this strategy as a means to teach the subject matter rather than as a tool to read texts in class.

A third study that focused on the use of graphic organizers as study tools in content-based classroom environments is the one conducted by Griffin et al. (2001). Even though graphic organizers were used to teach social studies, reading comprehension was involved in the process, which differs from the use made of graphic organizers in Goodnough and Woods's research (2002). Griffin et al. (2001) wanted to find out whether "graphic organizer instruction facilitate[d] comprehension, recall, and transfer of information contained in an expository textbook" (p. 98) and whether "explicit instruction [was] necessary for independent generation and use of graphic organizers by students" (p. 98). The researchers found out that the learners receiving explicit graphic organizer instruction

obtained the highest mean scores on an immediate posttest and an immediate recall measure. Additionally, students' performance on a delayed posttest and an immediate posttest was similar since the learners in all study conditions remembered about the same information (p. 105). Nevertheless, the ones who were in three treatment condition groups had a better performance on a measure transfer than those who were in the traditional basal instruction condition group, in which they were asked "to write sentences using the key vocabulary words identified in each chapter subsection" (p. 102), and to answer "what if" questions in groups before reading the text as well as post-reading literal comprehension questions. Moreover, they were instructed "to read a map without contour lines" (p. 103) and "to read a chart and analyze the data" (p. 103). These results are meaningful because they refer to the usefulness of graphic organizers to ease text comprehension; however, due to the fact that this study as well as the other two investigations previously described focus on using this strategy in content-based lessons, the outcomes achieved may have been influenced by two different factors. These may be the explanations provided by teachers about the subject matter and the chances that the learners had to rehearse the information studied in class as well as to read from the textbooks in order to create diagrams.

Moreover, students in the investigations conducted by Griffin et al. (2001) and Robinson et al. (2006) read texts in their native language, which is less demanding in terms of cognitive processing than reading texts in a foreign language. Indeed, in students' success in understanding main ideas and supporting details in texts written in a foreign language will depend on their own analysis of the information, on their good use of reading strategies and probably on their level of proficiency in the target language.

Unlike the authors previously cited whose point of view about the use of graphic organizers is mainly encouraging, Pirozzi's viewpoint (1995) about this strategy is more discouraging in terms of students' real comprehension of texts. In fact, he argues that diagramming does not necessarily help the reader completely understand the text because it only serves to organize textbook material and to identify the connection between different sentences and ideas in a passage. He suggests that summarizing should be used to show true comprehension of the text. Moreover, Idris et al. (2007) assert that "summarization is one of the best learning techniques to evaluate students' comprehension" (p.530). According to Gardner (1998), a "summary is a brief restatement, in [the writer's] words, of the main ideas in a reading passage" (p.254) in order to provide the reader with "an accurate sense of the content and emphasis of the original" (p.254). Probably, summaries help readers understand texts because of the effort that they have to make in order to paraphrase the most important ideas of the reading. In this research project, however, a summary will be mainly considered a short version of the original text with its main ideas. In other words, it does not matter whether the learners write the summaries in their own words or not; what really matters is whether their summaries include the most important points mentioned in the reading. Based on these aspects, it is possible to affirm that graphic organizers constitute helpful tools for students to improve their comprehension of texts and summaries are effective tools for teachers to measure their learners' understanding of texts.

Another conclusion derived from the previous information is that it seems that graphic organizers should be used as a while-reading strategy, and summaries should be implemented as a post-reading strategy. Singhal (2006), however, sees both strategies separately since she suggests that both of them can be used during the post-reading stage. She states that graphic organizers are advantageous for increasing comprehension and for helping readers remember information by means of visual representations. Furthermore, she suggests that a written summary is a strategy that helps readers get main ideas and supporting details from texts, but she does not specify whether both strategies

can be implemented complementarily or not. Nevertheless, due to the fact that both strategies have a similar impact on readers, it is possible to combine them to enhance students' comprehension of different types of texts. In fact, Griffin et al. (2001) concluded that providing learners with summarization training, explicit instruction or oral practice instruction as a complement to graphic organizer instruction may be a relevant factor in the design of graphic organizer instruction. Even though this comment is directed towards the use of diagrams in content-based classes, it reinforces the fact that both diagrams and summaries can be used together in order to help students comprehend the main ideas of texts even when they read for other purposes.

Since readers of English as a foreign language usually struggle to comprehend the main ideas of texts, educators should find a solution to help them tackle this problem. By doing this, learners will be able to feel more comfortable and confident when reading different types of texts and instructors will be capable of motivating them to keep on reading in the target language. For this reason, the primary objective of this study is to answer the following research question: How can the complementary use of partially-completed graphic organizers and summaries help students get the gist of different texts? Four sub-questions derive from this main question:

1. What factors, according to the students' perception, hinder their comprehension of the main ideas of the texts used in the interventions?
2. What are the students' perceptions, before and after the interventions, of the effectiveness of completing graphic organizers to get the gist of texts?
3. What are the students' perceptions, before and after the interventions, of the effectiveness of writing summaries to get the gist of texts?
4. What are the students' perceptions of carrying out both tasks complementarily in order to get the gist of the assigned texts?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted with a group of 23 students, 10 men and 13 women, taking the course LM-1032 in the Section of English for Other Majors (SIPOC) at the School of Modern Languages from the University of Costa Rica (Rodrigo Facio Campus). Most of these students were adults whose ages ranged from 18 to 40 years old. All of them were enrolled in different majors. Only one student was not enrolled in any major because she works at the university. These participants attended classes twice a week, 3 hours per day during 15 weeks.

### **Procedures**

Before starting with the interventions, the pre-intervention questionnaire was given to the students in order to get information such as their perceptions about the use of graphic organizers and summaries (see Appendix 1). In another lesson, the researcher explained to the students what graphic organizers are and how they are used. The students were given a handout with the most relevant information about this strategy. They were also given another handout with a short text and its corresponding graphic organizer that the teacher created so that they analyzed it in groups. Indeed, they were asked to identify in the text the information that was provided in the graphic organizer. After they finished, the researcher asked them questions to check what they did. It is

important to mention that they were not taught how to summarize because they had already been taught, in general terms, how to do it some weeks before the interventions, and they were supposed to know this from a previous course that they had to pass (LM-1030 Strategies of Reading Comprehension in English I) in order to register LM-1032. However, the teacher reviewed the characteristics that an appropriate summary should possess. After introducing both strategies, the researcher made three interventions. In each intervention, the teacher asked the students some questions about the text that was going to be provided as a pre-reading exercise to help them activate their background knowledge. Then, they were given a copy of an expository text with a partially-completed diagram. The teacher asked them to complete the graphic organizer and once they finished doing this while-reading exercise, they had to write a summary of the text as a post-reading exercise. All handouts were collected in order to check them and to make copies of them before returning them to the learners. When the handouts were returned, the teacher provided feedback about the students' performance on the completion of both exercises. The first two interventions were made consecutively; that is, they were made during the two days of the week when they attended classes. The third intervention was made a week later due to time constraints to return the second intervention checked. The teacher in the three interventions did not set a limit of time for the learners to do the tasks; that is, they were given the time that they needed to do what they were requested. Finally, the post-intervention questionnaire was given to the students in order to get information about their perception of the two tasks assigned: completing graphic organizers and writing summaries of the texts that they read in class. (see Appendix 2).

In relation to the interventions, in the first one, students were given a reading taken from Pirozzi (1995). The teacher included a diagram with seven cells that she created; three of the cells were in blank so that the learners completed them. For the second intervention, the learners were given a text that was chosen by a student who brought it as homework the second day of classes because the teacher wanted to have an idea of the topics that they liked to read. The researcher decided to pick one of these readings in order to take into account their interests. In addition, they were provided with a copy of the diagram with fourteen cells that the teacher created; eight out of the fourteen cells were in blank. For the third intervention, the instructor gave them a reading from Scientific American magazine, which was a source used to choose some of the readings that they analyzed in class. Furthermore, students were given a teacher-created diagram with 18 cells. For this intervention, students were provided with just four complete cells. It is also essential to emphasize that seven cells correspond to aspects that were listed in the text, which means that the learners did not have to make an effort to look for them in different parts of the text; therefore, those cells were counted as one in order to analyze the data. In other words, instead of counting a total of fourteen cells, the researcher just counted eight in order to grade the diagrams.

## **Instruments**

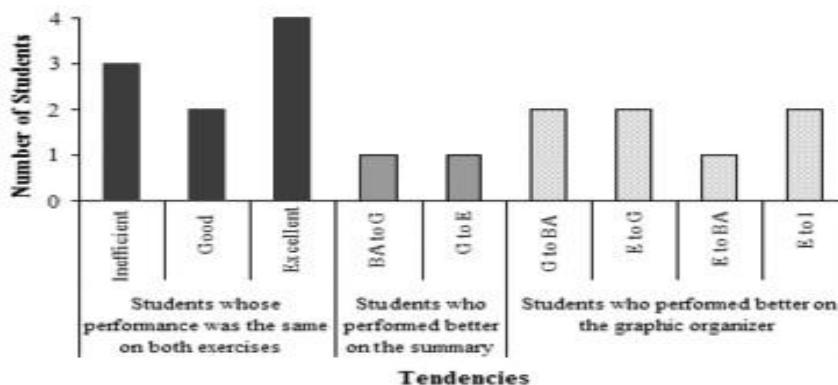
To collect the data, eight instruments were designed: a pre-intervention questionnaire, a post-intervention questionnaire, three handouts used in each of the interventions (they are not included in the Appendixes section, but they are available upon request), a scale of evaluation for each of the three graphic organizers (see Appendix 3), a scale of evaluation for the summaries (see Appendix 4), and a list in order to collect administrative data (e.g., the number of students who participated in each intervention, the number of cells that they correctly completed in each graphic organizer and the qualitative grades that they obtained in both the graphic organizers and the summaries).

# Results and Discussion

## Results and discussion for the first intervention

Based on the results obtained in the first intervention, three tendencies were found: students whose performance on both the graphic organizer and the summary was the same, learners who performed better on the summaries, and students who performed better on the completion of the graphic organizer. Figure 1 shows in detail the results for each tendency.

**Figure 1 Tendencies derived from the comparison of students' performance on the graphic organizer as well as in the summary**



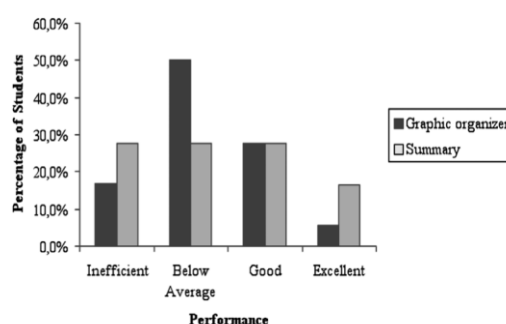
As Figure 1 shows, students who obtained “excellent” and “good” in the graphic organizer as well as in the summary showed complete or almost complete understanding of the gist of the text; however, three out of nine learners in this tendency had an “inefficient” performance on both exercises, which means that they did not understand the main ideas of the reading. It is important to stress that these three learners had a low level of English, which could have affected their performance on both exercises. Indeed, their lack of vocabulary and understanding of grammatical structures in English could have hindered their comprehension of the text as well as their understanding of its rhetorical structure, which did not let them differentiate its main ideas from secondary ones in order to complete the graphic organizer and to write the summary.

In the case of those students who had a better performance on the summary than in the graphic organizer, they probably improved their understanding of the gist of the reading due to the fact that they had to read the text more than twice in order to do both exercises. In the case of those learners who had a better performance on the graphic organizer than in the summary, the least serious case was the one in which the students had an “excellent” performance on the completion of the graphic organizer, but they received “good” in the summary because these learners were able to understand most of the main points of the text. Nevertheless, the other learners showed a lack of understanding of its gist. In fact, they had different problems. One of them was that they misinterpreted the information provided in the reading. Moreover, they lacked supporting details, and in some cases they provided information that was not supported by the text. Therefore, teachers should not merely rely on graphic organizers to measure how well students understand the gist of texts. As Pirozzi (1995) argues, diagramming does not necessarily help the reader completely understand the text because it mainly serves to identify the connection between different sentences and ideas in a passage; hence, he recommends the use of summarizing as a strategy that serves to show true comprehension of the text. Educators should take into account this recommendation especially

because it seems that summaries are helpful tools for them in order to evaluate learners' comprehension of texts as Idris et al. (2007) assert.

An interesting fact arises from the separated analysis of the results of the graphic organizer and the summary. Taking into account the "excellent" and "good" performances as a whole, more students had a high performance on the summary than in the graphic organizer. However, they represent less than the 50% of the participants in this intervention, which means that the majority of the learners did not understand well the gist of the text. Figure 2 shows in detail this fact.

**Figure 2 Students' performance on the graphic organizer and the summary of the first intervention**



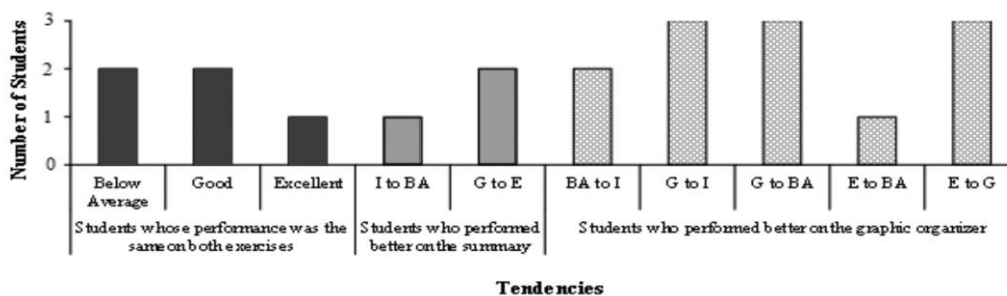
Most of the students who showed a richer understanding of the text were the ones with a good level of English, or the ones who attained higher grades in the course's evaluations. Nevertheless, there were some who had a low level of English and who struggled to pass the quizzes and exams, but they still had a high performance on the summary, which suggests that the use of a visual aid such as the graphic organizer could have exerted a positive influence on their comprehension of texts, which was then evident in their summaries. On the contrary, learners who had a poor understanding of the main ideas of the reading may have been affected negatively by their level of proficiency in English as well as by the complexity of the rhetorical structure of the text.

### **Results and discussion for the second intervention**

The tendencies that were analyzed in the first intervention were also found in this intervention. However, there are variations in terms of the different qualitative grades that the students attained. Compared with the results of the first intervention in terms of the learners whose performance was the same on both the graphic organizer and the summary, the results in this intervention improved in the sense that none of the participants had an "inefficient" performance on both exercises, but the number of students who obtained "excellent" in both exercises decreased from four to one. Regarding the second and third tendencies, similar to the results in the first intervention, the number of learners who had a better performance on the summary was small compared to the number of students who had a better performance on the graphic organizer. As Figure 3 shows, the majority of learners in the third tendency had either "good" or "excellent" performances on the graphic organizers, but most of them went down to "below average" and "inefficient" in the summary. This seems to indicate that even though they were able to understand the connections among the ideas provided in the graphic organizer, they were not able to take advantage of this tool in order to write the summary although it included the main ideas and supporting details of the text. In general terms, they showed that they understood the main idea of the text, but they failed to

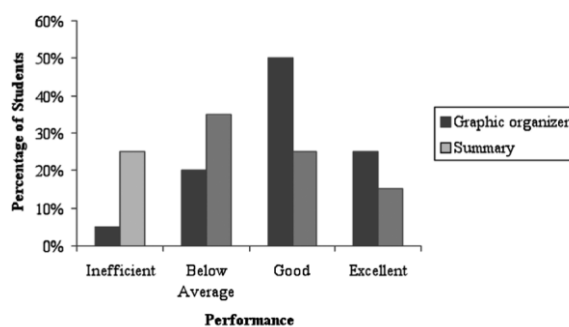
provide enough supporting details, and the ones that they mentioned were irrelevant, too general, misinterpreted or not supported by the text.

**Figure 3 Tendencies derived from the comparison of students' performance on the graphic organizer as well as the summary of the second intervention**



Taking into account the “excellent” and “good” performances as a whole, more learners had a high performance on the graphic organizer than in the summary, which is the opposite of what happened in the first intervention. To be specific, 75% of the participants in this intervention had an outstanding performance on the graphic organizer in contrast to the 40% of the students who wrote “good” and “excellent” summaries. This indicates that less than half of the 20 learners who participated in this intervention understood the main ideas of the text with their corresponding supporting details. Figure 4 shows in detail this fact.

**Figure 4 Students' performance on the graphic organizer and the summary of the second intervention**



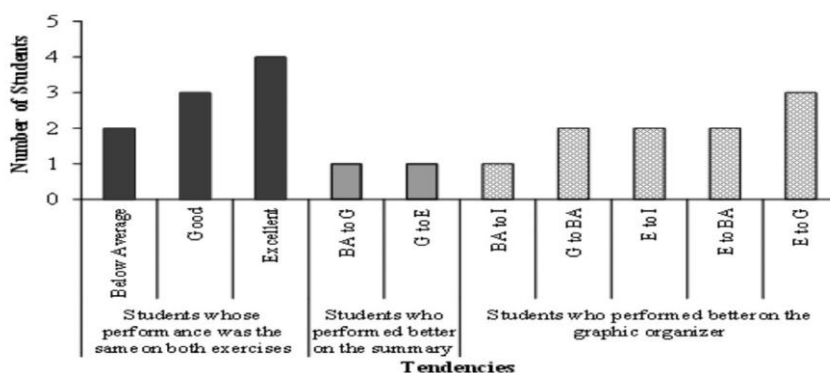
The rest of the students who had an “inefficient” or “average” performance on the summary were able to identify the main idea of the text, but they had problems with the supporting details. Probably, the text was very complex in terms of structure and this factor caused them problems to provide the accurate supporting details. Another factor that may have exerted a negative influence on their performance was the space provided in the handout to write the summary. Even though they were told that they could use the other side of the page if they needed more space, most of them tried to write the summary in the eight lines provided. This situation constitutes a drawback because there are learners whose handwriting is big, and they provided information that was too general, or excluded important details in order to write the summary on the space given.

Consequently, teachers should be careful when choosing the layout of the handouts that they create because this is a factor that can affect students' performance on the task assigned.

### Results and discussion for the third intervention

The three tendencies that were analyzed in the first and second interventions were also found in this last intervention. Nevertheless, variations in terms of the different qualitative grades that the students attained were also found compared to the previous two interventions. Figure 5 shows this in detail.

**Figure 5 Tendencies derived from the comparison of students' performance on the graphic organizer and summary of the third intervention**

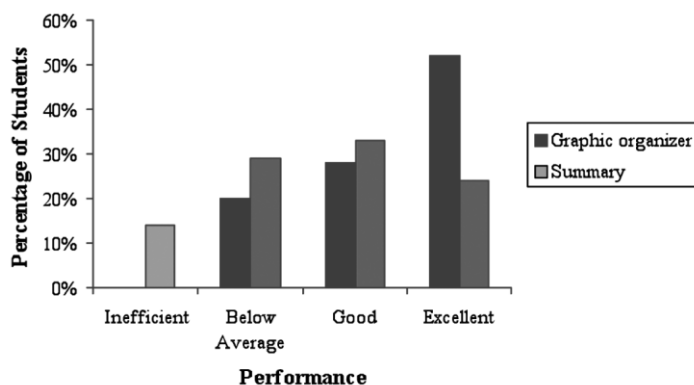


Compared with the results of the second intervention in terms of the students whose performance was the same on both the graphic organizer and the summary, there were no variations in the grades obtained; that is, their performances ranged from “below average” to “excellent.” However, the number of learners who had an “excellent” performance increased to four, which was the same number obtained in the first intervention. Probably the third diagram was clearer to interpret and to complete than the second one in terms of connections among ideas and the headings provided, and the reading was easier for them to understand. Both factors may have contributed in their “excellent” performance on both exercises.

In the case of the second and third tendencies, the results are similar to the ones in the first and second interventions; in fact, the number of students who had a better performance on the summary was small compared to the number of students who had a better performance on the graphic organizer. In the case of the second tendency, the patterns of improvement were the same as those in the first intervention; that is, they ranged from “below average” to “good” and from “good” to “excellent.” In terms of the third tendency, the majority of learners had either “good” or “excellent” performances on the graphic organizer, but most of them went down to “below average” in the summary. Even though they stated the main idea of the text, they failed to provide enough supporting details, which can also be related to the limited space provided to write the summary or their willingness to write a complete summary. In other words, it is easier and faster to write very general ideas than going into details especially when they invested a lot of time to complete the graphic organizers. They probably felt tired to continue working with the summary because they had already worked on other reading comprehension exercises before carrying out the two tasks for this intervention. Another possible explanation is that many students prefer to do reading

comprehension exercises in which they just have to choose options instead of writing, which is the skill that they had to use for both the graphic organizer and the summary.

**Figure 6 Students' performance on the graphic organizer and the summary of the third intervention**



Taking into account the “excellent” and “good” performances as a whole, more students had a higher performance on the graphic organizer than in the summary as shown in Figure 6, which is similar to the result obtained in the second intervention. To be specific, 80% of the participants in this intervention had an outstanding performance on the graphic organizer in contrast to the 57% of the learners who wrote between good and excellent summaries.

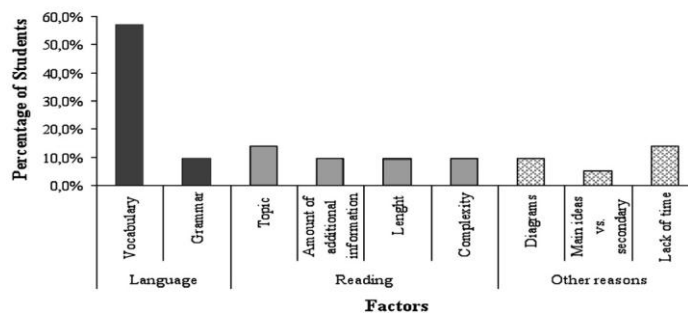
Compared with the results in the first and the second interventions, there was an improvement in terms of the overall performance on the graphic organizer as well as in the summary. In this particular case, more than a half of the participants were able to understand the gist of the text, which is the opposite of what happened in the first and second interventions. It seems that constant practice helps students to better analyze the text in order to differentiate main ideas from irrelevant information. Nevertheless, their improvement could have been linked to the level of complexity of the reading in terms of vocabulary as well as in terms of its grammatical and rhetorical structure. Another factor that may have exerted an influence on their improvement is the topic of the reading since many of them have experienced sleep debt (the text was about sleep deprivation), which provides them with enough background knowledge in order to interact with the text. This situation allows them to understand its gist more accurately than when they cannot establish a connection with the topic of the text.

Despite the uncertainties related to the factors that influenced the learners' improvement in their performance on both exercises, the results obtained contribute to reinforce the relevance of the assertion made by Idris et al. (2007) about the use of summarization as a tool to evaluate students' comprehension. Without the summaries, the results would have probably been more dramatic in terms of the understanding of the gist of the reading. It is advisable for teachers not to rely on the students' performance to complete graphic organizers to measure how well they understand the main ideas and supporting details of the texts used in class. On the other hand, those students who had an inefficient or below average performance on the summary referred to the main idea of the text, but the major problem that they had was with the supporting details. Compared with the second intervention, they lacked supporting details, and the ones that they wrote were too general to help the reader understand what the text is about.

## Results and discussion for sub-question 1

Students were asked in the post-intervention questionnaire what factors exerted a negative influence on their comprehension of the main ideas in the texts that were provided. The factors that they mentioned were divided into three categories: factors related to their knowledge of the language, factors pertaining to the reading, and other factors. Lack of vocabulary was the most troublesome factor for them, as indicated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 Factors that according to the students' perception hindered their comprehension of the gist of the text**



However, other aspects such as the topic of the readings and lack of time constituted limitations for them in order to comprehend the main ideas of the text. Even though they were not given a specific amount of time to complete the exercises, some of the learners probably felt that they needed more time in order to translate the reading. Indeed, many of them still depend a lot on the dictionary because they prefer to translate the majority of unknown terms into Spanish in order to have an idea of what the text is about. Moreover, their frustration about time may have been related to the fact that they knew that they had to finish both exercises because their handouts were going to be collected. When they know that the teacher will not do this, some decide to do as much as they can, but they do not care if they are not able to finish or not.

As it can be observed in Figure 7, other factors such as the amount of additional or irrelevant information provided in the texts as well as the incapability to differentiate between main and secondary ideas affected learners to understand the gist of the texts. They also mentioned that their length, and their complexity constituted constraints to achieve this goal. Finally, the use of diagrams had a negative effect on some learners' comprehension of the reading. A student in particular mentioned that the diagram was confusing; hence, she/he was even more confused to comprehend the text. This is similar to what happened in Goodnough and Woods's study (2002). Even though some students appreciated the use of mind maps in class, there were others who had a negative perception of them. Due to the fact that all people think and learn differently, it would be advisable for teachers to let their learners design their own graphic organizers. However, instructors should take into account that the use of graphic organizers may be related to the students' learning styles. Therefore, they should teach different strategies so that their students choose the one that fulfills their needs and that helps them have a better understanding of the gist of texts in English. Moreover, teachers should look for solutions in order to tackle the kinds of problems that the students mentioned. For example, if the problem is with vocabulary, they should look for simpler readings; if the learners' level of proficiency in English is low, or if they want to use more complex readings, providing a glossary can be a solution to help learners comprehend the information provided more accurately. These types of solutions should match the level and the goals of the

course, and teachers should also encourage students to look for their own solutions so that they become more autonomous.

## Results and discussion for sub-question 2

This section presents the results to answer the question about the students' perceptions, before and after the interventions, of the effectiveness of completing graphic organizers to get the gist of texts. The first aspect to consider is that even though the majority of the participants in the study never or almost never use graphic organizers to get the gist of texts in English as Table 1 shows, more than a half of the 22 students who completed the pre-intervention questionnaire were positive about the degree of usefulness of graphic organizers. Table 2 shows this in detail.

**Table 1 Percentage of Frequency with which the Participants Use Graphic Organizers to Read Texts in English according to the Pre-Intervention Questionnaire**

Frequency	Never	Almost never	Almost always	Always
Percentage of students	59%	32%	9%	0%

**Table 2 Perception about the Degree of Usefulness of Graphic Organizers according to the Pre-Intervention Questionnaire**

Degree of Usefulness	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Useless
Percentage of students	14%	41%	41%	4%

When they were asked whether the use of graphic organizers would help them understand the main ideas of a text or not, the majority of learners answered affirmatively the question, which is shown in Table 3. Compared with their perception about the degree of usefulness of this tool, there is a dramatic increase in terms of their positive view about graphic organizers.

**Table 3 Answers about the Perception of Graphic Organizers' Usefulness to Understand the Gist of Texts according to the Pre-Intervention Questionnaire**

Answer	Yes	No
Percentage of students	82%	18%

Those who answered affirmatively pointed out different factors. The more salient ones refer to the usefulness of graphic organizers as a means to better summarize the text, and to order its ideas logically. This is in agreement with what Jones et al. (1988) argue, so there is awareness of the possible benefits ascribed to this reading comprehension strategy. Additionally, a student also considered the use of graphic organizers as an easy, entertaining and comprehensive way to identify main ideas. Finally, it was stated that these tools would help readers establish a connection between ideas, and to get acquainted with the text because of the time invested to work with it. Time, however, was an issue among those learners who answered negatively the question. In fact, a student wrote that graphic organizers would not help the reader understand the main ideas of the text because it takes time to find them. Another reason in disfavor of the usefulness of these tools is

related to the fact that they are complex, and this particular student mentioned that she/he prefers to highlight the main ideas instead of creating graphic organizers.

In the post-intervention questionnaire, students were asked whether the use of graphic organizers helped them understand the gist of the texts or not. Compared with the results obtained in the pre-intervention questionnaire, their perception about the usefulness of these tools did not vary in the sense that the percentages of positive and negative answers did not vary. The only variation is observed in Table 4 since there was a student who did not take a defined position about her/his experience by completing graphic organizers.

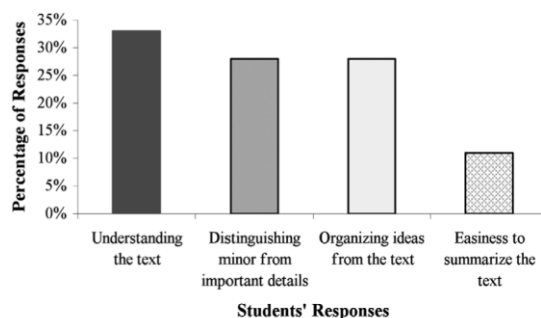
**Table 4 Answers about the Perception of Graphic Organizers' Usefulness to Understand the Gist of Texts according to the Post-Intervention Questionnaire**

Answer	Yes	No	More or less
Percentage of students	85%	10%	5%

It seems that their expectations about the helpfulness of graphic organizers to get the gist of texts were fulfilled due to the fact that their perception remained positive. As Figure 8 shows, there were three salient points that justified their affirmative responses. First, these tools help understand the reading in general terms. Second, they help them distinguish between minor and important details.

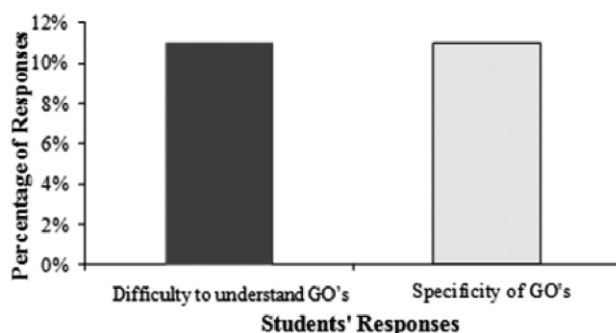
Third, graphic organizers let them organize the ideas of the texts. Another aspect that was highlighted is that these tools facilitated their summarization of the text. These aspects are in agreement with what Jones et al. (1988) as well as Robinson et al. (2006) point out about the usefulness of graphic organizers.

**Figure 8 Students' positive responses about the usefulness of completing the three graphic organizers**



Regarding the negative responses, one aspect that was emphasized in both the pre-intervention and the post-intervention questionnaires refers to the difficulty to understand graphic organizers, which also hindered their comprehension of the text. As figure 9 shows, the percentage of responses is small, but still it constitutes a reminder for teachers that fulfilling all learners' needs is complicated; consequently, they should teach different strategies to help students improve their reading comprehension skills.

**Figure 9 Students' negative responses about the usefulness of completing the three graphic organizers**



Another factor that students pointed out as a hindrance to understand the gist of the text was the level of specificity of the graphic organizers. Some of them stated that the diagrams were very specific; therefore, they had problems to find the information in the text that completed the blank cells, and this specificity led them to make mistakes.

In general terms, as Table 5 shows, 86% of the 21 learners who completed the post-intervention questionnaire were positive about the degree of usefulness of graphic organizers. There was an improvement in their perceptions compared with the pre-intervention questionnaire since none of them considered this strategy useless, and a small percentage of students considered that it is not very useful. This result is significant since more learners acknowledged the value of the use of graphic organizers to read in English.

**Table 5 Perception about the Degree of Usefulness of Graphic Organizers according to the Post-intervention Questionnaire**

Degree of Usefulness	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Useless
Percentage of students	24%	62%	14%	0%

### Results and discussion for sub-question 3

This section presents the results to answer the question about the students' perceptions, before and after the interventions, of the effectiveness of writing summaries to get the gist of texts. Similar to the results of the frequency with which students use graphic organizers to read texts in English, the frequency with which the learners write summaries after reading texts in English is dramatically low. Indeed, 64% of students indicated that they almost never use this strategy and 34% of the participants never use it. Although the reasons why they do not use either of the two strategies are unknown, they need more instruction and practice on how to use and exploit these tools so that they improve their reading skills and their comprehension of texts especially because their perception about the degree of usefulness of summaries is mostly encouraging. As Table 6 indicates, the majority of students consider that summaries are either useful or very useful.

**Table 6 Perception about the Degree of Usefulness of Summaries according to the Pre-Intervention Questionnaire**

Degree of Usefulness	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Useless	No Answer
----------------------	-------------	--------	-----------------	---------	-----------

<b>Percentage of students</b>	41%	36%	14%	4,5%	4,5%
-------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	------	------

Students were asked whether summarizing a text would help them understand its main ideas, and 91% of the learners answered positively. The most salient answer referred to its helpfulness to dismiss irrelevant information. Other aspects were highlighted. A student, for example, pointed out that by means of this tool, the information could be processed and assimilated. There was a male learner who stated that it simplifies the reading, but he did not develop this answer. Perhaps, he meant by simplification the process of interpreting ideas, which can be presented by means of complex structures and technical vocabulary, in order to present them in simpler and even colloquial terms. Another student considered that summarizing helps to outline the text. Finally, there was a student who indicated that writing a summary involves re-reading the text, which contributes to understand it much better. At least, many of them were aware of the possible benefits that summarization provide to their comprehension of texts. However, there were two students who answered negatively. One of them stressed that she/he preferred to highlight texts, which was the same that she/he answered in the question about the usefulness of graphic organizers. It seems that she/ he is determined to use this strategy rather than others. Furthermore, another student asked an interesting question: "If the summary includes the main ideas of the text, and if one does not understand them, how can one write a summary?" At least in class, they are provided with readings that are accessible for them in terms of complexity of English. This is a reminder for teachers in order to be careful when choosing texts. In other words, the readings should be suitable according to their learners' level of English and needs. To get this type of information, teachers should administer a diagnostic test at the very beginning of the course, and they should also conduct a survey to know what the learners' field of study and reading interests are. If instructors do not take this into account, their students will probably fail to achieve the desired goal of understanding the gist of the texts, and they will surely feel frustrated to read in English.

In the post-intervention questionnaire, students were asked whether summaries helped them to understand the gist of the texts or not. Compared with the results obtained in the pre-intervention questionnaire, their perception about the usefulness of these tools did not vary. In fact, 95% percent out of the 21 learners who answered this question answered affirmatively. However, there was a student who did not take a strong position, and she/he provided a "more or less" answer.

This result is encouraging because it seems that their expectations about the use of these tools were fulfilled. In fact, some of their responses reinforce what they stated in the pre-intervention questionnaire. For example, it was pointed out that summaries force them to be precise in order to synthesize the text without omitting main ideas. It was also stated that summaries let them have a holistic view of the text, organize its information, simplify its ideas, establish a connection between ideas, speed up the reading process, review and remember information. Regarding the student who answered "more or less," she/ he stated that the usefulness of summaries depends on the overall understanding of the text. Probably, this is related to the level of complexity of the vocabulary of the text and its organization, which is a factor that obviously exerts an influence on their comprehension depending on their level of proficiency of English. The most important aspect about these results is that awareness about the usefulness of this tool was raised, and that they did not change their positive perception about its use. What changed was their perception about the degree of usefulness of summaries. As Table 7 shows, compared with the results obtained in the pre-intervention questionnaire, the percentage of learners who considered summaries very useful decreased from 41 to 28; nevertheless, the reason is unknown. The encouraging part is that 85% of

the 21 students who completed the post-intervention questionnaire were positive about the degree of its usefulness, which is similar to the results obtained in the pre-intervention questionnaire.

**Table 7 Perception about the Degree of Usefulness of Summaries according to the Post-intervention Questionnaire**

Degree of Usefulness	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Useless	No answer
Percentage of students	28%	57%	10%	0%	5%

#### Results and discussion for sub-question 4

After analyzing the learners' perception about the use of graphic organizers and summaries separately, it was fundamental for the researcher to know their perception about the degree of necessity of using both strategies complementarily. As Table 11 shows, the results are encouraging since they acknowledged that it was necessary and very necessary to use them complementarily to understand the main ideas of the readings.

**Table 8 Perception about the Degree of Necessity of Using Graphic Organizer and Summaries Complementarily to Get the Gist of the Assigned Texts according to the Post-intervention Questionnaire**

Degree of Necessity	Very necessary	Necessary	Unnecessary	Totally unnecessary
Percentage of students	29%	62%	9%	0%

It seems that using graphic organizers as a while-reading strategy followed by summaries as a post-reading strategy helps students to have a better understanding of the gist of the text. Therefore, using them together seems to be an effective way to address the learners' need of improving their comprehension of texts rather than using them separately. Nevertheless, studies on the effectiveness of using both strategies together or separately should be conducted in order to determine the effectiveness and usefulness of both options.

## Conclusions

It seems that the complementary use of both strategies helps learners understand the gist of texts especially because students improved their performance on the third intervention in both the graphic organizer and the summary compared to their performance on the first and second interventions. It seems that constant practice helps learners to better analyze the text in order to differentiate main ideas from irrelevant information. However, there were students who had high performances on the graphic organizers, but they showed their lack of comprehension of the main ideas of the text by providing information that was extremely general, information that was misinterpreted, or information that was not supported by the text. Moreover, there were cases in which supporting details were missing. Consequently, summarizing is an effective strategy for learners to show true comprehension of text and it is a useful tool for teachers to evaluate their students' comprehension.

It was noticed that there are certain factors that hinder students' comprehension of texts, such as their lack of vocabulary, and their inability to differentiate main ideas from irrelevant information. Moreover, the length, the complexity and the topics of the readings can exert a negative influence too; hence, teachers should look for solutions in order to tackle these types of problems. Teachers should start by choosing readings that are suitable for the students' level of proficiency in the target language. Once they teach different reading strategies, they should progressively provide students with more complex texts. The idea is to challenge students so that they can improve their reading skills and they become more autonomous. To achieve this, scaffolding is very important. Because the topic of the readings is also relevant, teachers should help learners activate their background knowledge so that they establish a connection with the text. Additionally, instructors should provide sufficient instruction on how to use graphic organizers and how to write concise, coherent and effective summaries, and they should give learners enough time to carry out both tasks. Nevertheless, they should keep in mind that it is difficult to please learners and to fulfill all their needs; therefore, teachers should teach different strategies to help students improve their reading comprehension skills based on their learning styles. It is also advisable for researchers interested in this topic to conduct studies in which there is a control group and a monitor group in order to compare results about the students' performance on summaries with or without completing graphic organizers before. Another suggestion is to ask students to complete graphic organizers designed by the teachers as well as to design their own diagrams to compare their perceptions of both tasks.

Despite the problems that the learners' encountered, their perception about the usefulness of both strategies was highly positive before and after the interventions. This result is significant since more students acknowledged the value of the use of graphic organizers to read in English. For this reason, educators should raise awareness about the relevance of using these types of strategies to read texts in English, and they should also encourage students to use them in and outside the class.

## **Limitations and Recommendations**

One of the limitations to develop this project was the lack of information about the students' actual level of English proficiency because this is a key aspect to consider when analyzing the reasons why readers are unable to understand the gist of texts. Furthermore, even though summarizing should be addressed in the course, this topic is superficially developed in class because students are supposed to learn it in a previous course. Moreover, lack of time was also an issue because there was not enough time for the application of the instruments and the development of the project. When the researcher conducted the study, she had already given instruction on writing summaries one or two weeks before the interventions, and the students were learning other types of discourse rather than exposition, which was the type of discourse of the three readings chosen for the interventions. Neither there was enough time to give students more instruction on how to use and complete graphic organizers and to write summaries, nor there was space to provide them with enough feedback after the interventions. In fact, the researcher could only make three interventions by providing students with partially-completed organizers as while reading activities. Thus, if other researchers attempted to do a similar work, it is suggested to ask students to build their own graphic organizers after practicing with partial-completed diagrams to compare the results obtained in the interventions in terms of their perception about the usefulness of graphic organizers to understand the gist of texts, and their performance on both tasks.

Attendance was also an issue because it was irregular. This situation affects the results in the sense that there were students who only participated in one or two interventions, and the investigator

cannot measure if they improve or worsen their performances on both graphic organizers and summaries.

Another limitation was providing learners with a small space to write the summaries. It was noted that students who used more than the space given were the ones who had “good” or “excellent” performances compared to the learners who only used the few lines available. There were cases in which students wrote very good summaries without exceeding the space provided, but they had small handwriting. For further research, students should be given more space to write so that they do not feel tempted to provide very general ideas to stick to what they have in the handout especially because there are students who have big handwriting.

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## Appendix 1

### Questionnaire about Reading Strategies

Before you answer this questionnaire, thank you for investing some time to provide information for a research Project. Your answers to the questions below will be totally anonymous and confidential.

Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ / Age: \_\_\_\_\_ / Major: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART I.** Instructions: Mark an X in the option that best answers the questions below.

1. When you read in English, is it difficult for you to understand the main idea(s) of a text?

- a.  never
- b.  almost never
- c.  almost always
- d.  always

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How often do you use graphic organizers to read texts in English? a.  never

- b.  almost never
- c.  almost always
- d.  always

3. How often do you write summaries after reading a text in English? a.  never

- b.  almost never
- c.  almost always
- d.  always

**PART II.** Instructions: Answer the following questions.

1. Do you think that the use of graphic organizers helps you or would help you to get the gist of a text? Why? Why not?

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2. Do you think that summarizing a text helps you or would help you to get the gist of a text? Why? Why not?

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**PART III.** Instructions: There is a chart presented below that is divided into three parts. Based on the column that is in the middle: "Strategy," mark an X to indicate what you think about the level of usefulness of the strategy (left column) and another X to indicate what the implementation of that strategy to read a text in English would make you feel (right column). Choose only ONE option in each case.

For example:

I think that the strategy is...				Strategy	Implementing this strategy to get the gist of a text makes me feel...		
Very use- ful	Useful	A little useful	Useless		Very Comfort- able	A little comfort- fortable	Uncomcomfort- able

X

Outlining

X

I think that the strategy is...				Strategy	Implementing this strategy to get the gist of a text makes me feel...			
Very useful	Useful	A little useful	Useless		Very comfortable	Comfortable	A little comfortable	Uncomfortable
				Graphic organizer				
				Summary				

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire about Reading Strategies

Before you answer this questionnaire, thank you for investing some time to provide information for a research Project. Your answers to the questions below will be totally anonymous and confidential.

Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ / Age: \_\_\_\_\_ / Major: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART I.** Instructions: Mark an X in the option that best answers the questions below.

1. How many graphic organizers with their corresponding summaries did you do in class?

- a.  1
- b.  2
- c.  3

2. I think that doing the graphic organizer and the summary for the texts I read was \_\_\_\_\_ to understand the gist of the text.

- a.  totally necessary
- b.  necessary
- c.  unnecessary
- d.  totally unnecessary

**PART II.** Instructions: Answer the following questions.

After completing the graphic organizers and writing the summaries of the texts assigned in class:

1. Do you think that the use of graphic organizers helped you to understand the gist of the texts? Why? Why not?

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2. Do you think that summarizing a text helped you to understand its gist? Why? Why not?

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3. What factors do you think exerted a negative influence to understand the gist of the texts assigned in class?

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**PART III.** Instructions: There is a chart presented below that is divided into three parts. Based on the column that is in the middle: "Strategy," mark an X to indicate what you think about the level of usefulness of the strategy (left column) and another X to indicate what the implementation of that strategy to read a text in English made you feel (right column). Choose only ONE option in each case.

For example:

I think that the strategy is...				Strategy	Implementing this strategy to get the gist of a text made me feel...			
Very less useful	Useful	A little useful	Useless		Very comfortable	Comfortable	A little comfortable	Uncomfortable
	X			Outlining		X		

I think that the strategy is...				Strategy	Implementing this strategy to get the gist of a text made me feel...			
Very useful	Useful	A little useful	Useless		Very comfortable	Comfortable	A little comfortable	Uncomfortable
				Graphic organizer Summary				

### Appendix 3

#### For the Graph

##### Descriptors for the completion of the diagram in the first intervention

Excellent	Good	Below Average	Inefficient
3 cells correct	2 cells correct	1 cell correct	0 cells correct

##### *Descriptors for the completion of the diagram in the second and third interventions*

Excellent	Good	Below Average	Inefficient
8-7 cells correct	6-5 cells correct	4-3 cell correct	2-0 cells correct

### Appendix 4

#### Scales of evaluation for the Summary

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**Performance****Features**

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Excellent Summary demonstrates a strong focus and concisely catches all the main points of the original article.

The main idea is clearly stated.

The main idea is supported by specific and relevant details.

Details are presented in a logical order.

Ideas are connected to make the writing flow.

All the information provided is supported by the text. The student accurately translates the text.

Good

Restated main idea doesn't differ from the first sentence.

The main idea is mostly supported with specific and relevant details giving the reader adequate understanding of content of original article.

Important details might be missing.

Ideas are in logical order.

The majority of the information provided is supported by the text.

The student shows a few problems of accuracy to translate the text.

Below Average

Main idea is unclear — not specifically stated in the writing.

age

Supporting details are only minimally supportive; they are vague or overly too general.

The student provides a few ideas that are irrelevant.

The student provides information that is not well-interpreted.

The student shows a lot of problems of accuracy to translate the text.

The student provides some information that is not supported by the text.

Ideas are in a random order and not logical.

Ineffective

There is not a clear topic sentence to indicate the main idea of the summary.

The summary only contains some details, which are weak. There is not a clear connection between the topic sentence and its supporting details.

Irrelevant information is provided.

The student provides information that shows lack of understanding of the original text.

The student provides information that is not supported by the text.

The student shows a totally weak accuracy to translate the text.

Ideas are not in logical order.

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# Experiences of Teaching an English for Specific Purposes Course to Students with Disabilities

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## Abstract

To complete the master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University of Costa Rica, the teachers designed and taught an ESP course for ten students enrolled in a master's program in Disability Studies. Three learners have visual impairments, and one has hypoacusis. Different curricular accommodations were made for them to work autonomously, but the results show that some could not always do so. However, their attitude towards learning English improved. This paper presents the challenges and outcomes of the lessons and materials used to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive classes, as well as recommendations to work with this population.

**Key words:** disabilities, visual impairment, hearing disability, autonomy, tasks, curricular accommodations, curricular modifications, inclusiveness, English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

## Resumen

Para completar el programa de la maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en la Universidad de Costa Rica, las docentes diseñaron e impartieron un curso de IFE para diez estudiantes en la maestría en Estudios sobre Discapacidad. Tres estudiantes tienen discapacidad visual y uno tiene hipoacusia. Se hicieron diversas adecuaciones curriculares para que ellos fueran autónomos, pero los resultados muestran que algunos no siempre lo lograron. Sin embargo, su actitud hacia el aprendizaje del inglés cambió positivamente. Este artículo presenta los retos y logros de las lecciones y materiales usados para crear conciencia sobre la importancia de clases inclusivas así como recomendaciones para trabajar con esta población.

**Palabras claves:** discapacidades, discapacidad visual, discapacidad auditiva, autonomía, tareas, adecuaciones curriculares, modificaciones curriculares, inclusividad, Inglés con Fines Específicos (IFE)

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## Review of the Literature

This project takes into consideration the characteristics of both English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). ESP, as stated by Day and Krzanowski (2011), “involves teaching and learning the specific skills and language needed by particular learners for a particular purpose” (p. 5). ESP, according to Robinson (as cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), “is ‘normally goal-oriented’ and ESP courses develop from a needs analysis” (p. 3), which serves to determine, as precisely as possible, the tasks that the learners have to carry out “through the medium of English” (p. 3). For this reason, the Task-Based Approach is used as a complement to ESP because it seeks to encourage students to negotiate meaning and to use language in tasks that are meaningful and that involve real communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 224). These tasks should be carefully planned based on the learners’ field of study or occupation. For this reason, the concept of disability studies should be defined in order to get a better understanding of the basis of the academic and job-related tasks designed for the target population.

Disability studies constitutes an “active, integrative, interdisciplinary academic endeavor [that] analyzes disability from the perspective of the social sciences, humanities, and arts” (Rembis, 2010, p. 1). The term “disabilities” is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) as a complex phenomenon that involves impairments (problems in body function or structure), activity limitations (difficulties encountered in the execution of a task or action) and

participation restrictions (problems of involvement in life situations). Therefore, the aim of disability studies is to raise awareness of “the experiences of disabled people, and to advocate for social change” (Society for Disability Studies as cited in Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012, p. 71). One of the key characteristics of disability studies, according to Ferguson and Nusbaum (2012), is that it must be interdisciplinary; that is, it should involve a variety of academic disciplines. The advantage of interdisciplinary work is that it “allows [people] to develop a deeper and much broader understanding of disability as part of [their] shared, human experience” (p. 75).

Another essential aspect that should be considered in the field of study of this population is related to inclusive education. Inclusion serves to combat discrimination by fostering participation of all people in any context. Therefore, as Barton (n.d.) states, inclusive education should be regarded as “a means to an end, that of the realization of an inclusive society” (p. 5). It is not “about the assimilation or accommodation of individuals into an essentially unchanged system of educational provision and practice” (p. 5), but it should involve the decision-making of necessary changes that should be implemented and the way in which they should be made (p. 5). For this reason, the concepts of accommodations and modifications as well as the role that they play in the success or failure of a course must be addressed.

### Curricular Accommodations and Modifications

While accommodations are adaptations in teaching strategies in order to

help students to succeed at different tasks, modifications are changes made to what is expected from or taught to learners; to be specific, these changes can be in terms of "content[s], level of skill or number of skills required by the program" (Beech, 2011, p. 13). Both modifications and accommodations contribute to making the teaching and learning process inclusive and motivating for students.

In Costa Rica, curricular accommodations are defined as adjustments made to the educational offering based on the characteristics and needs of each student, which aims at addressing individual needs (CENAREC as cited in Meléndez et al., 2012). There are three specific types of curricular accommodations. According to CENAREC (as cited in Meléndez et al., 2012) and Rodríguez and Solís (n.d.), accommodations that provide access are not only meant to create the necessary physical conditions to provide students with access to physical spacing and furnishing, but they also take into account the provision of resources, devices or materials that aid learners with motor, visual or hearing impairments. Non-significant accommodations are adjustments made to the teaching methodology and evaluations without changing the curricular objectives (Chaverri, 2009; Rodríguez & Solís, n.d.). Significant accommodations, in contrast, change the official curriculum by eliminating contents and general objectives in order to choose others that meet each student's needs (CENAREC as cited in Meléndez et al., 2012). Knowledge of these types of adjustments is an essential requirement to help students in the process of learning a foreign language.

### Learner Autonomy

Fostering autonomy in a class is fundamental to help students to assume active and responsible participation in and outside the class, which in turn will lead to the accomplishment of goals. Autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec as cited in Aliponga, Gamble & Ando, 2011; Dinçer, Yeşilyurt & Göksu, 2010; Reinders, 2010). As Jacobs and Farrell (2001) point out, the learner plays a primary role in the process, and learner autonomy "encourages learners to develop their own purposes for learning and to see learning as a lifelong process" (Learner Autonomy, para. 2). Fostering autonomy does not mean expecting the learners to do everything on their own. Reinders (2010) argues that the learners need instruction and "support before they are comfortable with and able to assume greater responsibility for their learning" (p. 42). Therefore, the teacher's role is to make use of scaffolding to foster autonomy (Lacey, 2007, p. 8), and she/he should also offer the learners "opportunities to make significant choices and decisions about their learning" (Nunan, 2003, p. 290). The teacher also has to focus on designing lessons based on differentiation (Turloiu & Sif Stefánsdóttir, 2011, p. 12); in other words, she/he should address the learners' needs by acknowledging their differences, abilities, skills, and backgrounds (p. 12) because these aspects exert an influence on their acquisition of knowledge (Tomlinson, 2001). However, to determine the success of a course, it is also important to pay attention to students' behaviors and actions that indicate that they are gaining autonomy.

Based on all the above, the following research question was posed: How effective were the curricular accommodations provided by the student teachers to increase student learning autonomy in order to perform the tasks in the course?

## Object of Evaluation

### General Information

English for Disability Studies was an ESP course required for an interdisciplinary master's program in disability studies at a public university. This was a 60-hour course which consisted of 30 sessions of two hours each. It was a team-taught course aimed at teaching reading, listening, and speaking strategies that could help students to carry out academic as well as some professional tasks.

In this course, two units were developed. Eighteen sessions were devoted to develop the first unit, "Reading to Succeed Academically!" This unit focused on helping students to show understanding of texts about disability-related topics. Ten sessions were devoted to teaching the second unit, "What an Interesting Lecture about Disabilities!;" this was focused on listening and speaking skills.

### Population

This course was taught to a group of ten Costa Rican learners enrolled in a master's program in Disability Studies. These students needed to read texts in English from different sources in order to write their graduation project or

thesis in Spanish. In this group, there were two students with low vision, one student who is blind, and one student with hypoacusis (a hearing impairment). Additionally, there was a student with autism, and another with dyslexia. This group was very heterogeneous in terms of their level of proficiency in English, as well as in terms of their needs and preferences.

## Methodology

### Procedures

In order to design the course, the researchers had to conduct a needs analysis in which different stakeholders were interviewed to get information about the target population. The learners participated in these interviews, and they also completed two questionnaires in order to gather more data about their needs, lacks, preferences and other aspects that were considered necessary to analyze in this first stage of the process. Based on the results of these interviews and questionnaires, the researchers designed and administered a diagnostic test; this was aimed at identifying the students' level of proficiency in different aspects of the language such as listening, vocabulary, reading, grammar and speaking in order to design tasks and activities for the course that matched their proficiency levels.

After this second stage, the third stage corresponded to the design of the course syllabus. To do this, the instructors used texts and videos about disability-related topics according to their students' interests. In the fourth stage, the instructors taught the

course. During this process, students completed two self-assessment sheets and two course evaluation forms. The learners did different reading, listening and speaking tasks; they also took written and oral quizzes along the course. Moreover, thirteen out of thirty sessions were observed by three supervisors; these were three university instructors in the field of English teaching who were appointed to provide the student teachers with feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the classes observed. These supervisors completed two evaluation forms during the development of each class, and then they met with the student teachers afterwards to give them feedback.

### Instruments

Since this project focuses on the outcomes of the course, the only instruments that will be described are the ones used in the fourth stage of the whole process. In order to answer the research question, seven instruments were used to collect data from the participants in this study: a midterm course evaluation, a final course evaluation, two self-assessment instruments, two evaluation forms used by the supervisors, and an observation form given to the supervisors to assess learning autonomy. Each student was assigned a code to complete their corresponding instruments. Some of the instruments were adapted, so that the students with visual disabilities were able to complete them.

Midterm and final course evaluations. These instruments (not included in the Appendixes, but available upon request) are three-page-questionnaires

which have five sections intended to gather data about the students' perception of the teachers' performance, the topics and skills addressed in the course, the materials and activities used in the course, the evaluations administered in class, and general recommendations that the learners thought the teachers might adopt. Students filled out the midterm course evaluation in class. The final course evaluation was sent by email, and the learners were given a week to send their responses back.

Self-assessment instruments. These instruments (they are also available upon request) are four-page-questionnaires which have two sections intended to gather data about the students' perception of their performance on the first and second units of the course and in class. The same procedures that had been followed to complete the course evaluations were implemented for the self-assessment forms. The first self-assessment was not adapted for the three students with visual disabilities because two observers from the master's program and a classmate helped them to read and to complete the instrument.

Supervisors' evaluation forms. These two forms were designed by the supervisors of the practicum. The first one focuses on the individual work of the student teacher in charge of the lesson observed (see Appendix A). It consists of a list of 21 aspects related to her/his personal characteristics, teaching, class management, and interaction with the students. The second form focuses on teamwork (see Appendix B), and it consists of a list of 12 aspects related to lesson planning and materials. Both forms include a grading

scale which ranges from "excellent" to "poor," and space for the supervisors to write strengths and weaknesses observed in class.

Observation form about learner's autonomy for the supervisors. This form was designed to measure the frequency with which learners showed 10 characteristics related to autonomy in class (see Appendix C). It has a Likert scale with an option indicating "does not apply," and five levels of frequency: always, usually, sometimes, rarely, never. The supervisors completed it by taking into account either the whole group or only students with disabilities (one of the supervisors wrote the name of the person in the corresponding box indicating the perceived frequency).

#### Curricular Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Several accommodations were made especially to help students with disabilities to complete the tasks assigned in this course more effectively and independently. Each of the accommodations was suggested by the students and improved throughout the course. To help the student who has hypoacusis, the re-arrangement of the desks in the classroom enabled him to read the lips of his classmates and instructors. However, this student was sometimes busy reading instructions or using other materials, and for that reason, he missed many oral instructions. Therefore, it was essential to provide him with all the information and instructions in written form. In the second unit, he was given the script of the audios used in class. Since he was a high achiever, the student

teachers challenged him by teaching him other reading comprehension strategies in class. It was necessary to create additional handouts for him to continue working at a more advanced level while his classmates were finishing the tasks. This accommodation was not implemented from the very beginning of the course because it took some weeks to find out what he was able to do.

In order to help three students with visual impairments, all their materials were sent by e-mail before each class so that they could save the documents in case they wanted to study or otherwise prepare beforehand. However, these learners commonly received the materials just the night before or even only a few hours before each class because of the limited time that the student teachers had to plan the lessons. This situation reduced the effectiveness of this accommodation because they were not always able to read or save the materials before the class. Moreover, this digital material had to be different in format because these three students used screen readers to complete the exercises. Therefore, numeric symbols and asterisks were used to help them to find the words or phrases that were highlighted in the texts or sentences. These symbols were also used in gap-filling exercises instead of parentheses to enclose the words or phrases that they had to use to complete sentences or dialogues. Additionally, the texts that they had to read in the first unit and their corresponding exercises were saved in different files to help them go easily from file to file instead of scrolling up and down when reading the text and answering each of the exercises. Furthermore, tables, figures, bullets,

images, or text boxes were not used because their screen readers do not identify those elements, or sometimes provide confusing and inaccurate information. When pictures were used in a quiz to evaluate vocabulary, the target terms were provided in Spanish for them to translate to English.

Regarding the two students with low vision, one of them told the student teachers that she was not going to bring her computer to classes. Thus, she asked for printed materials in bold Arial 22. This version could include tables, text boxes, enlarged pictures, and lines for her to write answers on. Nevertheless, she also had access to the digital version described above to use outside of class.

In the case of the listening exercises, students with visual disabilities had difficulties in completing outlines because they had to listen to the audio as well as to the screen reader reading the instructions and hints to do the exercise. Consequently, the format of the exercises was simplified by giving them freedom to write main ideas and supporting details. This adaptation was also made for the student with low vision who required print documents in Arial 22 because she read at a slow pace.

The blind student required more curricular accommodations because of his very low proficiency level of English. The teachers decided to change and even to eliminate some of the exercises prepared for the rest of the students in order to help him complete the tasks assigned in class. Moreover, all the instructions were written in both English and Spanish in every handout for him not to have to depend on the instructors.

### Curricular Accommodations for all the Students

Regarding general curricular accommodations, there were others made for the whole group, such as giving extra time to finish exercises and quizzes, eliminating and simplifying exercises, reducing cognitive load, choosing partners to work in pairs, and developing group activities in order to help students with visual impairments to play games or to read information that was not otherwise accessible for them. Instructions and explanations were simple and straightforward (e.g. describing pictures in presentations, as well as being clear and specific when giving explanations instead of using vague terms such as demonstratives). These accommodations were provided because most of the learners had a low proficiency level in English, so they needed more support to complete the tasks in the course.

### Results and Discussion

Supervisors' perceptions of the curricular accommodations for students with disabilities. To find out the supervisors' perceptions of the autonomy of the students with disabilities, one instrument was used in the last supervised session. However, using this instrument only once reduces the validity of the results since more data from the supervisors was needed to compare students' achievements in different class sessions. Table 1 shows that the two students with low vision were the most autonomous learners in this subgroup. They worked independently, participated and asked

questions, listened to the instructors' explanations, and cooperated with the student teachers and their classmates. Nevertheless, one of them was more autonomous than the other. The learner who worked during the whole semester with her computer took more risks and showed confidence when communicating in English. The other student took risks and sometimes or usually showed confidence based on the data collected

by the supervisor; this happened during most of the classes of this course, as observed by the student teachers. Student teachers agreed on the fact that not having access to her computer prevented her from becoming as autonomous as her classmate because the screen reader could have helped her to complete tasks faster and without visual fatigue.

**Table 1**  
Supervisor's Perceptions of the Autonomy of Students with Disabilities  
in One Supervised Class, November, 2013

The student:	Frequency and Student				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. Works independently without requesting the instructor's help.		Dyslexic St. <i>Blind St.</i>	<i>Blind St.</i>		Low vision Ss. Deaf St.
2. Actively participates in the activities.		Dyslexic St. <i>Blind St.</i>	Deaf St.		Low vision Ss.
3. Asks questions when needed.	Dyslexic St. <i>Blind St.</i>				Low vision Ss.
4. Pays attention to the explanation provided by the instructors.		Blind St.	Dyslexic St. Deaf St.		Low vision Ss.
5. Takes risks to communicate in English.		Dyslexic St. <i>Blind St.</i>	Low vision St.		Low vision St.
6. Cooperates with the instructors in the process of teaching and learning.		Dyslexic St. Deaf St. <i>Blind St.</i>			Low vision Ss.
7. Cooperates with other classmates when working in the class activities.	<i>Blind St.</i>	Dyslexic St.	Deaf St.		Low vision Ss.
8. Shows confidence when sharing ideas in English.	Dyslexic St.	<i>Blind St.</i>		Low vision St.	Low vision St. Deaf St.

As Table 1 shows, the blind student was rarely autonomous in the ESP class. This is because he seldom

participated in the activities, paid attention to oral instructions, took risks to communicate what he thought,

cooperated with the instructors, or showed confidence when sharing his thoughts. These situations were all repeated throughout the course. As mentioned before, his proficiency level was very low, and he preferred not to participate or cooperate with his classmates. He seldom worked independently.

Even though the student teachers tried to simplify work for the blind student and to help him as much as possible, his performance was not always the optimum. On several occasions, the supervisors recommended encouraging this student to participate, taking him into account in more than one activity, and asking him to speak in English. However, his attitude towards the target language was not always positive, and he worked at a slower pace compared to his classmates. Therefore, it was not easy to integrate this student into class activities as suggested by the supervisors.

Compared to this learner, there was another student who faced different challenges to learn English;

this student was a senior citizen with dyslexia. The difference is that her attitude was positive, which helped her to participate more in some class activities. She was very studious and committed, but her proficiency level in the language was very low. Thus, she was seldom autonomous. Regarding the student with a hearing impairment, according to the data in Table 1, he was not very autonomous that day. Nevertheless, he did not attend classes for two weeks, and that is probably the reason that his performance was not the best. Since he was the most proficient learner in the group, he understood and finished the exercises very fast and, in most cases, correctly.

Supervisors' perceptions of the curricular accommodations for all the students. To analyze the students' general performance and autonomy, a similar instrument was used by another supervisor in only one class. It includes general information about the learners. In Table 2, it can be seen that students were usually autonomous during

**Table 2**  
Supervisor's Perception of All Students' Autonomy  
in One Supervised Class, November, 2013

The students:	Frequency
1. Work independently without requesting the instructor's help.	Usually
2. Actively participate in the activities.	Always
3. Ask questions when needed.	Usually
4. Pay attention to the explanation provided by the instructors.	Usually
5. Take risks to communicate in English.	Sometimes
6. Cooperate with the instructors in the process of teaching and learning.	Always
7. Cooperate with other classmates when working in the class activities.	Always
8. Show confidence to share ideas in English.	Usually
9. Give suggestions to improve activities.	Rarely
10. Use the strategies taught in class.	Usually

the development of the class. Nevertheless, the supervisor suggested that the speaking task that they were performing should have combined reading and speaking because most of them were just reading the information on the handout instead of expressing their ideas spontaneously. Indeed, the supervisor pointed out that these learners could have been more autonomous by performing their roles without reading. However, the proficiency level of most of them did not enable them to participate in that way because they needed guidelines to express what they were thinking, or to give an answer effectively.

Due to the fact that data about learners' autonomy was gathered from only two observations, it is also important to analyze the results obtained from the evaluation form that the supervisors regularly used. Table 3 shows to which extent the lessons of this course led to participants' autonomy.

**Table 3**  
Supervisors' Perception of the Students' Autonomy in 13 Supervised Classes, 2013

The class led to student autonomy	
Number of Observations	Obtained Points
5	10
3	9
2	8.5
2	8
1	7

As displayed in Table 3, the student teachers obtained either nine or ten points in eight out of 13 supervised classes; that is, most of the grades are either "excellent" or "above average," and the average grade of all observations

is nine; this suggests that most of the lessons designed for the course were properly planned to foster students' autonomy. Some of the comments made by the supervisors were the following: "they are not afraid of speaking English in the class," "most students were able to work individually," "great effort to help students by adapting handouts and incorporating all of them in the class," and "students seemed more comfortable with the lesson, and communicated more." These positive comments seem to indicate that the student teachers provided their learners with useful tools to help them to work individually and confidently.

Nevertheless, there are other aspects that hindered learner autonomy. For example, the supervisors suggested on many occasions that the student teachers had to work hard on "balancing the cognitive load" because, at the beginning of the semester, the students were asked to do many tasks in a short time, and they were not prepared at that moment to complete complex and challenging exercises. Furthermore, the student teachers were advised to "keep working on simplifying instructions on handouts" and oral instructions as well. Also, it was necessary to "keep working on making the activities inclusive for people with disabilities" and to "give them enough time to complete the tasks." However, the group was very heterogeneous, and sometimes it was very difficult to have all the students interact with others, participate actively, and finish their work on time. These recommendations were taken into account to improve the quality of the ESP course, and to help the participants to achieve the objectives of the course and to learn as efficiently as possible.

Not only were the previous suggestions taken into account, but the students' recommendations to help them to be more independent were also followed. This information was collected in the midterm course evaluation, and it was also provided orally by some students during the course. For instance, in that course evaluation only three students with visual disabilities asked the student teachers to "give explanations of the topics developed in class more slowly," "give more time based on each student's level of proficiency and to ask them to work with another person whose level is similar to their own," and "improve time management because there were a lot of materials to complete and people with visual disabilities were not able to finish on

time." These students added these suggestions in the "Teacher's Performance" section. Even though this section was not related to learners' autonomy, these were aspects that needed to be improved to help students become more autonomous.

The most relevant suggestions offered by the students are shown in Table 4. Time management was an issue in the development of this course. Many students thought that there was not enough time to complete the tasks, the post tasks, and the quizzes. Therefore, the student teachers decided to simplify the lessons. However, when vocabulary was activated to read a new passage or to listen to a new audio, these learners took more time than expected.

**Table 4**  
**Students' Recommendations for the Student Teachers to**  
**Include Adjustments that Can Promote Students' Autonomy**  
**while Learning English. Final Course Evaluation, November, 2013**

Recommendations	Number of Students	Examples
Improve management of time and give extra time if necessary.	4	Give enough time to complete the tasks in class. Start classes by taking the quizzes. Give time to interact and clarify doubts among students.
Give clearer instructions and in Spanish for students with a low proficiency level in English.	2	Write the instructions of the handouts in Spanish. Give instructions slowly.
Improve accessibility for students with visual impairments to understand and perform better in the classroom.	2	Describe images in detail. Take into account the amount of light in the classroom.
Take into account the proficiency level of each student in every class.	2	Help very proficient students because they seemed bored waiting for slower students. Help students with a low proficiency level of English because they seemed confused.

Furthermore, some of the participants stated that they wanted to take the quizzes at the beginning of the class; however, it was not possible because many of these learners customarily arrived late. The problem for some students was that the ones who needed an accommodation or had a low proficiency level of English spent a lot of time completing the quiz, perhaps 30 minutes more than the rest of their classmates. This issue generated annoyance among some students because spending more time at the end of the class meant having to wait for another bus, and thus getting home later.

Instructors' performance when fostering autonomy. As shown in Figure 1, most of the students considered the instructors' performance while fostering their autonomy as "excellent." Providing useful feedback, proper accommodations, and promoting students' autonomy are three relevant and necessary aspects to help students to work independently while learning English.

**Figure 1**  
Student teachers' performance while fostering learners' autonomy



Final Course Evaluation, November, 2013

Regarding feedback, at the beginning of the course it was very difficult

for the student teachers to provide learners with immediate feedback. The main reason was that the student teachers felt pressured to finish all the activities planned to complete the task cycle, so whenever their students took more time than expected to do the exercises, the student teachers continued the class by assigning other tasks instead of making corrections. The student teachers worked on that throughout the course by correcting words or phrases that were misused and asking students to repeat and drill when necessary. Nevertheless, it was not enough, as shown in the figure above. Three students out of 10 considered that the performance of the teachers when providing feedback needed improvement. Probably, this aspect affected the performance of those three students who needed more feedback to work more independently.

The participants in this course evaluated providing proper accommodations as "good" and "excellent," which shows that the learners considered that many of the curricular accommodations were effective. However, some other accommodations should have been improved, especially for the students with disabilities. These learners needed much more help to become more independent in the classroom. Specifically, they needed to be given enough time to complete the tasks. Some of them also needed a more reduced cognitive load to perform the tasks easily. Compared to the students' opinion about the accommodations made during the course, the same opinions were given for the item concerning promoting learners' autonomy. These students expressed their anxiety about the course and of the target language before starting the course

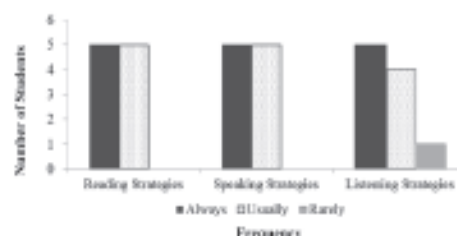
and during the first weeks of class. Little by little, they gained confidence and improved their skills in English; this is why many students at the end of this course showed a more positive attitude towards it and towards English. They seemed more autonomous during the last classes; this was a major goal of the course. Consequently, not only did curricular accommodations help students to be more autonomous, but also the participants' patience and effort, the instructors' performance, and the strategies taught in the class.

Strategies that helped to foster autonomy. Teaching learning and communication strategies is fundamental in ESP because students need tools and techniques to learn and to understand a foreign language. By learning different strategies, these students are better prepared to participate in a discussion, to read a text more efficiently, to understand a conversation or audio more easily, and to express what they feel or think more freely. This is why the student teachers were encouraged to include strategies in every class and to practice them several times until all the learners were able to understand how and why they needed to use them.

For the first unit, which was the longest, the students were taught seven strategies (schema activation, predicting, using cognates, scanning, summarizing, paying attention to collocations, and identifying referents) because it was essential to have students read effectively and understand each of the passages about disability-related topics. Then, for the second unit, five new strategies (back channeling, asking for clarification, asking for repetition, asking for confirmation, and note-taking) were taught, and two strategies were

recycled (schema activation and predicting) to help the learners to identify relevant information from audios and to express their ideas about the content of the audios. In the final course evaluation, the students were asked about the frequency with which the reading comprehension strategies, the oral communication strategies, and the listening comprehension strategies taught in the course fostered their autonomy during the process of learning English. As Figure 2 shows, their perceptions are generally positive. Only one student stated that the listening strategies rarely fostered her autonomy; this might be related to the complexity of the note-taking tasks.

**Figure 2**  
Students' perceptions of the frequency with which reading, speaking and listening strategies fostered their autonomy in the process of learning English

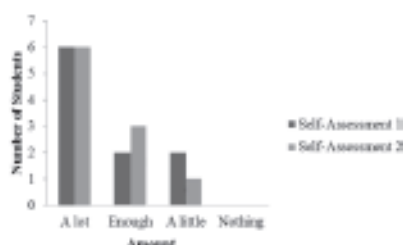


Final Course Evaluation, November, 2013

In the self-assessment instruments, the students were asked how much they were using the strategies taught in the course to work independently. Figure 3 shows that more than half of the students claimed that they used the strategies a lot or enough to work independently.

After analyzing information about the students' perceptions of their general

**Figure 3**  
**Students' perceptions of how much**  
**they used the strategies taught in**  
**the course to work independently**



Self-Assessment Forms, 2013

performance in the course and the comments from the supervisors' observations and evaluation forms, one might conclude that the strategies taught in the course, and the curricular accommodations made, sometimes helped students to perform tasks autonomously. However, because of the lack of information collected, one cannot draw definite conclusions about the effectiveness of curricular accommodations to foster learner autonomy. Actually, the small number of observations from the supervisors in this regard may constitute a limitation for the validity of these results. The problem was that when the student teachers came up with the evaluation question on autonomy and started to look for information to design the instruments for the supervisors, more than 75% of the sessions had been taught. By the time the observation sheet was created, their professors had already observed most of their classes since they had to continue supervising other groups that were also doing the practicum. It is important to highlight the fact that none of the groups knew the specific dates that they were going to be supervised. Therefore, the student teachers were unaware that their

supervisors had already completed the required number of observations for this particular population.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

In terms of the effectiveness of making curricular accommodations to increase learning autonomy, the analysis of the learners' perceptions of their general performance in the course as well as of the supervisors' observations about the students' autonomy to perform the tasks in class seems to indicate that the strategies taught in the course and the curricular accommodations made were sometimes helpful. Nevertheless, as previously stated, lack of information from the supervisors constitutes a significant limitation in this project.

In the case of learners with and without physical disabilities whose level of language proficiency is very low, tasks and materials must be simplified to help these students succeed in them. Moreover, instructions have to be clear and concise to help them complete the tasks assigned. Teachers should also plan the lessons by considering the time that these students might require to complete work. This suggestion also applies when administering quizzes and tests. Moreover, if there are students who are more proficient than others, they need to be challenged, so that they can participate more in class. Feedback should be constantly provided, so that students know what their strengths and weaknesses are; if not, they will continue making the same mistakes, and they will likely not have the opportunity to experience the

sense of achievement that rewards the effort made when learning.

If teachers have the opportunity to teach a group of students with disabilities, the best suggestion for them is to establish good communication with these learners. Nevertheless, each student has different needs, and even when instructors make a major effort to meet every person's needs, a fully inclusive class will not likely be feasible. Moreover, the instructor should be clear with these students about their rights and duties to avoid misunderstandings because they may complain about certain adaptations, especially the ones related to time.

When working with students who have visual disabilities, some recommendations must be considered while using multimedia presentations. For example, everything included in the slides needs to be described during the presentation, especially images, tables and figures. Moreover, teachers should pay careful attention to what they say. They cannot use vague language such as "as you can see here" "that is an example of..." while pointing at something. They have to specify what they want people to see. If the learners have low vision, the background of the slides has to be black and the text should be white. Instructors have to ask them about the type of font and size they can read. Moreover, the information provided in this format can be saved in a word-processing document. This recommendation was very useful because the blind student was not able to read the information in the text boxes in Power Point presentations. The lighting of the room also matters; fixtures in the area where the presentation is projected should be turned off.

Teachers have to make an effort to learn and to understand how the text-to-speech software works to find effective solutions to adapt and design suitable documents for such learners because the adaptations are not just a matter of eliminating elements that can confuse the students; they actually require careful planning. In addition, if PDF files are used, they must not be saved as images because the text-to-speech reader does not scan the information in that format. Another important aspect to consider is sending the materials to be used in class by e-mail at least one or two days before the class so that the learners can download them and study them. If they are not given this chance, teachers should invest time in class to allow them to save the documents in their computer otherwise these students will fall behind compared to their classmates. This delay could affect their performance in classroom activities.

In the case of the student with hypoacusis, one of the stakeholders who was interviewed to design the course stressed that the teachers needed to wear their hair tied back, and that they had to avoid wearing colorful lipstick because these are distractors. However, our student said that these recommendations were irrelevant because accessories and makeup did not distract him. Hence, educators should always ask learners about recommendations that can be implemented in class so that they actually meet their students' needs. Furthermore, instructors have to provide explanations while facing a learner with a hearing impairment, so that this person can read the teacher's lips. The desks may be arranged in the shape of a half-moon so that the person

can read everybody's lips. Moreover, the use of scripts when videos are used in class is necessary. It is also helpful to provide students with hearing impairments with instructions and other relevant information in print to make sure that they can follow the teacher. When listening tasks should be carried out in class, teachers can adapt the exercises by asking such learners to do reading comprehension exercises that go beyond literal information and that contribute to their academic and professional growth. For example, the student teachers taught their learner the difference between the three types of inferences that people can make. He was pleased because he felt challenged, and he was acquiring new knowledge. In fact, discourse analysis was a very useful and interesting topic for him because of his proficiency level.

In order to help students to become autonomous, curricular accommodations are not enough. Instructors should be sensitive to diversity as well as flexible in order to make changes when needed, especially when the adaptations do not work well. A negative attitude towards the difficulties encountered in the process constitutes a barrier when working with students with disabilities. Each class is a trial and error opportunity to grow personally and professionally by making improvements.

Teachers should not limit themselves to plan their lessons. If they, for example, have students with visual disabilities, they could try using materials such as visual aids or games because other learners can benefit from these tools. All students are equally important, and each person learns differently. Hence, variety and dynamism

are necessary to catch their interest. Moreover, the use of different grouping techniques is helpful for lower achievers to play a more active role in class and to effectively complete tasks. Some research and even exchange of ideas with other colleagues can be very useful to design inclusive activities. Patience and creativity are also essential to address the professional challenges that instructors face when planning for such a heterogeneous group of students. Even though all experiences and groups are different, these recommendations could help to bring success to a course.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A

#### Supervisors' Evaluation Form to Assess Student Teachers' Individual Work

Bolaños, Marín, & Rodríguez

#### Student Teacher Observation Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## GRADING SCALE

10: Excellent      9: Above average  
 8: Average        7: Needs Improvement  
 6.9 or less: Poor   NA: Not applicable

## Important Notes:

1. After the grade has been calculated, up to two full points might be deducted for problems in language use, and / or errors in subject matter being taught. The following scale will be used to grade your teaching session after the grade has been averaged:

- 0.50 : one to three errors
- 1.00 : four to six errors
- 1.50: seven to nine errors
- 2.00 : Language problems in subject being taught

Errors which have already been corrected by an observer

2. After the grade has been calculated, up to two full points will be deducted if a student teacher arrives late.

3. Positive / professional attitude toward feedback from observers is a must. One foil point will be deducted if a disrespectful attitude is shown during feedback sessions.

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS      POINTS

1. Communication skills:  
 Clarity, tone, and audibility of voice      \_\_\_  
 Eye contact with the students              \_\_\_  
 Body language                                    \_\_\_
2. Interest in and enthusiasm for the class being taught                              \_\_\_
3. Initiative, resourcefulness, and creativity to adapt to unanticipated situations                              \_\_\_
4. Well informed about the field                              \_\_\_

## TEACHING

5. The class material and objectives were explained in an understandable way.                              \_\_\_
6. The lesson followed a logical,

- smooth sequence (progressively building toward the objectives).      \_\_\_
7. The lesson was well paced.                              \_\_\_
8. The teacher followed appropriate procedures to carry out tasks.      \_\_\_
9. The teacher helped the students develop different strategies required for their specific needs.                              \_\_\_
10. The teacher asked and answered questions carefully and satisfactorily.      \_\_\_
11. The teacher promoted English for real communication, focusing on the students' field.                              \_\_\_
12. The class led to student autonomy.    \_\_\_
13. The teacher provided enough comprehensible input with vocabulary presented in context.                              \_\_\_
14. The teacher elicited student responses effectively.                              \_\_\_
15. The teacher perceived and corrected salient errors appropriately, taking in to account the students' needs.                              \_\_\_
16. The teacher took into account the students' input and comments.  
 a. students were given the chance to provide their input and make  
 b. suggestions regarding field-related functions.                              \_\_\_

## CLASS MANAGEMENT

17. The instructions were clear and concise, and students were able to follow them.                              \_\_\_
18. The teacher set up activities appropriately (grouping, distribution of materials).                              \_\_\_
19. The teacher provided useful language to effectively carry out group work.      \_\_\_

## TEACHER/STUDENT INTERACTION

20. The teacher encouraged and ensured full student participation in class.    \_\_\_

21. The teacher showed awareness of individual and group needs by responding accordingly. \_\_\_\_\_

STRENGTHS                      WEAKNESSES

### Appendix B

#### Supervisors' Evaluation Form to Assess Student Teachers' Individual Work

Bolaños, Marín, & Rodríguez

#### Student Teacher Observation Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### GRADING SCALE

10: Excellent                      9: Above average  
8: Average                          7: Needs Improvement  
6.9 or less: Poor                  NA: Not applicable

#### TEAMWORK

LESSON PLANNING/                      POINTS  
MATERIALS

1. The objectives were clear and precise. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The objectives, materials, and activities (as a unit) work toward students' needs with a clear ESP focus. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The task cycle was appropriately designed (pre-task, task, post-task, feedback, evaluation). \_\_\_\_\_
4. There was balance and variety in activities to provide for individual learning styles. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Activities integrate the language skills when appropriate. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Materials and activities are appropriately designed or adapted

according to students' proficiency level. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Materials and activities show authenticity in purpose, sources, and outcomes. \_\_\_\_\_

8. The instructions in the handouts are clear, short, and contextualized. \_\_\_\_\_

9. The lesson plan shows clarity, conciseness, coherence, and an appropriate use of language. \_\_\_\_\_

10. The language corresponding to the teaching points, functions, materials, and activities is correct and appropriate. \_\_\_\_\_

11. The designated assistant effectively supported the instruction. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Suggestions from preceding lesson plans were incorporated here. \_\_\_\_\_

STRENGTHS                      WEAKNESSES

### Appendix C

#### Observation Form about Learner's Autonomy for the Supervisors

D. Barrantes & N. Díaz

#### LEARNER AUTONOMY

Read each statement and mark with an X the frequency that best shows how often the student carries out each activity. Mark only one option for each item.

The student(s)...	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Does not apply
1. Work(s) independently without requesting the teachers' help.						
2. Actively participate(s) in the activities.						
3. Ask(s) questions when needed.						
4. Pay(s) attention to the explanations provided by the teacher.						
5. Take(s) risks to communicate in English.						
6. Cooperate(s) with the teacher in the process of teaching and learning.						
7. Cooperate(s) with other classmates when working in the class activities.						
8. Show(s) confidence to share ideas in English.						
9. Give(s) suggestions to improve activities.						
10. Use(s) the strategies taught in class.						

Comments:

# HACIA NINGÚN LUGAR

JOSÉ FABIÁN ELIZONDO GONZÁLEZ



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A las minorías de las sociedades del mundo, quienes son castigadas y condenadas al ostracismo por rebelarse y nunca aceptar ser ciudadanos de segunda clase.

*For if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them.*

Tomás Moro, *Utopía*

Un sentido agradecimiento a todas las personas que me apoyaron de una u otra forma en la creación y publicación de este libro y a los demás colegas que me brindaron su ayuda.

La palabra escrita no debe morir y, por ello, agradezco infinitamente a las editoriales que todavía creen en la protesta textual, esa lucha inmortal que plasma las realidades más crudas que el *statu quo* desea censurar, amordazar e ignorar.

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## Presentación

### ¿HACIA NINGÚN LUGAR?

La concepción detrás de la frase “hacia ningún lugar” nace del vocablo griego *utopos*, el cual dio origen al libro *Utopía* de Tomás Moro. Esta frase, entonces, refleja en su etimología la expresión *ningún lugar*: *u* (ausencia)/*topos* (lugar). Por ende, los personajes en este libro se encuentran en una tortuosa travesía individual y colectiva que se dirige ineludiblemente “hacia ningún lugar”, un sitio inexistente, en el año 2032, en la restaurada y distópica Costa Rica.

Los trece personajes en este libro de una u otra forma comparten una misma característica: ninguno quiere llegar a su casa de habitación el día de hoy, 29 de febrero de 2032, debido a un ineluctable sentimiento incriminatorio de culpabilidad. ¿En qué radica el génesis de esta sentencia autoimpuesta? La historia de *Hacia ningún lugar* hace un recorrido por las diferentes realidades de los habitantes de la Costa Rica del futuro, para así descubrir las razones detrás de tan culposo sentimiento en estos humanos oprimidos.

Antes de iniciar con la lectura, preguntémonos:

*¿HACIA DÓNDE SE DIRIGE USTED?*

*¿HACIA DÓNDE ME DIRIJO YO?*



► Entre incredulidad y hastío, Gerald removió su parche para limpiar el sudor en su rostro. ◄



# Ajuste de cuentas

—¡Buenos días! Bienvenidos a la edición matutina de *Nosotros Primero*, hoy domingo 29 de febrero de 2032. Empezamos con las noticias.

*Dos inmigrantes indocumentados son encontrados con mortales heridas en sus cuellos y abdomen. Al parecer, ambos fallecieron desangrados en el momento. Un presunto ajuste de cuentas habría acabado con la vida de estos individuos. Más adelante, estaremos en directo con el director de la Fuerza Pública y el OIJ para determinar el motivo de tan violento hallazgo. Desesperanza Hope está en el lugar del suceso. Pronto haremos el pase con ella.*

—Así es, compañera. Además, iniciamos con los incendios del año. Un siniestro toma posesión de ocho viviendas en Loma Linda de Los Ángeles. El implacable fuego está tratando de ser controlado por las unidades de Bomberos y la Cruz Roja. Se reportan personas cuyos paraderos no son conocidos hasta el momento. En breve estaremos en directo para conocer los detalles de tan trágico amanecer de domingo.

—¡Qué hijueputa mierda! Apenas se levanta uno es a escuchar esas noticias. ¡Seas tan güevón! Mae, ya tengo suficiente como para estar pensando en lo basura que es el ser humano.

Y así, en un exabrupto, Gerald Gerardo le bajó el volumen al radio mientras se ajustaba el parche en el ojo izquierdo. En el fondo se podía escuchar a Desesperanza Hope cubriendo la escena del homicidio. También se oyó el reportaje sobre un bebé encontrado en la basura, y cómo este se hallaba ahora delicado en el hospital. De no haber sido por los recolectores de basura, el bebé habría muerto en pocas horas.

Gerald Gerardo no le prestaba mucha atención a todo esto. Ya era hora de hacer su primera carrera del día. El bus estaba listo para salir, pero a las 5 a. m. Gerald todavía sentía que no pertenecía a este mundo. Un par de horas más de sueño habrían hecho la diferencia entre querer vivir y ser esclavo de sus necesidades. Gerald sabía que los horarios de chofer eran ingratos, pero una jornada de quince horas al día por varios meses estaban drenando lo humano en él. No obstante, ya era muy tarde para ponerse filosófico. Gerald encendió el motor del bus y miró por el retrovisor.

Con repulsión, lo único que Gerald veía era un monstruo. Un rostro desfigurado en contra de su voluntad. Hacía ya cuatro años que en este mismo autobús había sido brutalmente agredido en su última carrera del martes por la noche.

Cada vez que veía lo que quedaba de su rostro, recordaba la imagen de un joven enfermamente delgado y con sed de sangre en sus ojos, quien se abalanzó sobre su cara al poner un pie dentro del bus. Sin embargo, aunque Gerald intentó defenderse, el sediento fantasma logró su objetivo: herir a Gerald lo más que pudo para luego tomar posesión de los únicos diez mil colones recolectados.

Gerald podía revivir los instantes en donde las salivas, las sangres, sus propios antebrazos, las risas endemoniadas y el llanto ajeno se mezclaron para formar un solo recuerdo. Un momento que sabía a dolor y furia. Una memoria que sabía a injusticia.

Gerald pudo palpar el rojo. El rojo en sus ojos. El rojo en sus manos. El rojo en su boca. El rojo en su temor.

Gerald no pudo hacer más que detener el bus y llorar tímidamente mientras que la adolescente que presenció todo llamaba al 911 entre gritos y suspiros.



Hoy se cumplen cuatro años del ataque de Gerald. El 29 de febrero de 2028 fue el día que él dejó de creer en la humanidad. Y hoy, Gerald inconscientemente esperaba que este nuevo año bisiesto fuese todo lo contrario.

Sin embargo, lo que le preocupaba hoy eran tres cosas, principalmente. Primero, una sexta llamada de "Paco le presta"; segundo, un audio de su esposa para decirle que no pueden seguir sin arroz y frijoles un día más y, tercero, un atrevido pasajero que le pague con un billete de diez mil.

En un plano más secundario, Gerald todavía sentía culpa por lo que había sucedido el día anterior. Dado que le había quedado un faltante el viernes por la noche, el sábado Gerald no devolvió los vueltos como debía. De hecho, se aseguró de que su faltante saliera de los bolsillos de los pasajeros descuidados que nunca revisan su vuelto. Esta práctica no era algo común para él, sino una medida extrema. De no cumplir con el faltante, este se le rebajaría del salario en monto doble, un lujo que Gerald no se podía permitir.



Todo el día transcurrió con normalidad: el hambre de media mañana, los platanitos con chile para el almuerzo, el señor mayor olvidado que no supo hacia dónde iba ni cuál era el bus que necesitaba tomar, la madre adolescente que entregó los pases incompletos, los constructores inmigrantes bien perfumados y embalsamados en plastigel, el compita chofer que no trabajaba ese domingo y que iba a ver a sus hijas antes de que le quitaran el único día con ellas,

el turista perdido que solamente se manejó con dólares y no entendió por qué no pudo pagar con tarjetas de recarga, la señora que madrugó para ir a dejarle un cariñito al inocente hijo que se encuentra en la cárcel y la yogui ultra *fit* que viajó en bus hasta Cahuita para un retiro astral, vegano, libre de crueldad, cero emisiones con una ínfima huella de carbono, todo un escenario del cual hasta Santo Tomás Moro sentiría envidia.

Era un domingo como cualquier otro; sin embargo, Gerald Gerardo, quien en ocasiones pensaba en lo distinguido de su nombre, sabía que algo no estaba bien. A través del espejo, detrás del monstruoso rostro desfigurado, Gerald notó algo que nunca, en sus veinte años de experiencia como chofer, había visto: hacía ya más de una hora que once pasajeros lo acompañaban en su ruta. Sin hablar. Sin quejarse. Sin expresarse.

Gerald sabía que esta ruta era inusual. La llamaban la ruta "Hacia ningún lugar". Se decía que esta ruta se había bautizado de esta forma ya que solo se podía llegar a ella siguiendo el destino de quienes abordaban el bus en el día y momento exacto. Pero Gerald no creía en cuentos de gente de patio. Una ruta jamás podría ser definida por los pasajeros. ¿Qué pasaría si no los hay? ¿En qué dirección ir si nadie sabe para dónde se dirige? ¿Su ruta sería definida por extraños? ¿Podría él soñar con que tiene la posibilidad de tomar las riendas de su propio destino? Para sus adentros, Gerald sabía que la ruta era real. Sin embargo, la histeria colectiva lo hacía dudar.

Por esta razón, Gerald pensaba que este recorrido no se hacía muy frecuentemente ni era algo sobre lo que los otros choferes discutieran. No obstante, todos los conductores sabían que en algún momento tendrían que hacer la ruta "Hacia ningún lugar" y eso era una realidad. Existía el rumor de que muchos de los que hacían esta ruta renunciaban a sus trabajos. Se decía también que era mejor dejar todo atrás que ir "Hacia ningún lugar". Empero, para Gerald, esta era la primera vez en la ruta y en su mente ya lo peor había pasado. Nada podría ser peor que hace cuatro años.

No saber su destino era mucho mejor que viajar hacia la violencia, la injusticia y la inhumanidad.

Gerald pensaba en todo esto mientras ignoraba al monstruo en el espejo. Sin embargo, la duda lo enajenó. Entre incredulidad y hastío, Gerald removió su parche para limpiar el sudor en su rostro, un parche que observó con desprecio, pues era evidente que necesitaba un cambio desesperado. Por una fracción de segundo, Gerald bajó su guardia e inocentemente miró por el retrovisor.

Esa fue la peor decisión que Gerald pudo tomar el domingo 29 de febrero de 2032.



— Tremendamente disímil a la pavorosa imagen de sí mismo en el espejo, el nuevo pasajero tenía un rostro immaculado. —

## Agente Ernesto Leal Hurtado

Gerald Gerardo recordó que no le había preguntado a nadie de la central de buses sobre su ruta para esa tarde. Gerald llevaba más de una hora sin saber su rumbo. Llevaba más de una hora sin saber su destino. Entre lágrimas y sudor, Gerald se dio cuenta de que los once pasajeros ahora se habían percatado de quién era el que conducía el autobús: un reemplazable ogro sin rostro. Gerald había sido descubierto.

Las caras de aborrecimiento y pánico tomaron control del volante. En ese momento, Gerald, en un acto de desesperación, hizo un giro inesperado y tomó la entrada más cercana hacia la autopista. La autopista en la ruta "Hacia ningún lugar". Pero ni él ni los pasajeros estaban en condición de advertir lo que estaba sucediendo. Cuando se dieron cuenta, Gerald había manejado por encima de señales de tránsito, zonas verdes y leyes sobrenaturales. De hecho, a él, por un momento, le pareció ver en medio de la autopista a su hambrienta esposa, cargando a dos obesos niños en brazos, para luego dejarlos caer en dos cestas de basura en llamas. ¿Habría sido esto fruto de su imaginación?

Si bien la macabra escena sucedió en fracciones de segundo, a Gerald le pareció que duró una culposa eternidad. Sin embargo, lo que vio solo quedó en su mente como desgarradores borrones en un lienzo diabólicamente pactado en siglos lejanos. La forma descomunal de los ojos en el rostro de su esposa era inolvidable. No tenían pupilas:

el pecado y el hambre habían consumido lo que quedaba de ellas. Al mismo tiempo, entre los umbrosos pincelazos, a Gerald le quedó grabada la imagen de un par de niños mórbidamente desfigurados. Sus pequeñas cabezas estaban aplastadas por marcas de pinzas y permanentemente perforadas por ganchos de ropa, los cuales les causaban un incesante sangrado por las orejas. Sus hinchados pies no terminaban en dedos y talones, en su lugar, miles de gusanos se atragantaban con piel, pus y sangre, para caer en el fuego y convertirse en cenizas.

Justo cuando Gerald volvió en sí, escuchó a todos los pasajeros gritar en unísono: "¡Policía!". Y así, Gerald reaccionó a tiempo. Unos cuantos metros frente al bus se había estacionado un automóvil con placas del gobierno. De él, se había bajado apresuradamente un oficial del OIJ. Mientras que Gerald intentaba volver a la realidad, el oficial extendía su mano frente al bus señalándole que se detuviera. Por un momento, parecía que al oficial no le importaba la velocidad a la que iba el autobús, tampoco se inmutó al ver que el chofer no reaccionaba ni intentaba detener la máquina. Siempre con su mano en alto, a la altura de su rostro, más que detener el bus, él parecía atraerlo.

—Buenas tardes. Soy el agente especial Ernesto Leal Hurtado —dijo mientras enseñaba sus credenciales—. Tenemos información de que alguien en este bus ha cometido un crimen. Necesito ver sus cédulas de identidad. Pasaré uno por uno para verificar su información personal. Por favor no hagan movimientos bruscos durante la pesquisa. Les ruego que se queden en sus asientos, no utilicen el teléfono celular ni hablen entre ustedes.

A todo esto, Gerald pudo ponerle poca atención. Él todavía estaba procesando las imágenes en su cabeza. Sin embargo, con el rabillo del ojo, observó una placa turbia y un par de ojos vacíos caminando cada vez más hacia él. Una grada. Dos gradas. Tres gradas. Gerald sentía que el peso de la placa hundía el bus con cada paso que daba el agente. Por instantes, podría jurar que las llantas del bus colapsaron con la arribada de este par de ojos pesarosos. Tremendamente disímil

a la pavorosa imagen de sí mismo en el espejo, el nuevo pasajero tenía un rostro inmaculado: pómulos pronunciados, labios carnosos y esculpidos; así como una tez color caramelo, la cual se apreciaba tersa, una piel todavía acariciada por la juventud. Contrario a Gerald, el antagonista tenía un rostro memorable.

Sin embargo, ya no había tiempo para pensar en el envidiable rostro del oficial. Con un tono entre impaciente y paranoico, el agente susurró:

—Identificación, por favor.

Mientras que Gerald, en su desesperación e irrealidad, procuraba la cédula que sabía que no había traído por haberse quedado hablando con los colegas en el plantel, el agente Leal, en una simple mirada, contabilizó a los pasajeros del bus.

Parecía haber doce personas, incluyendo al chofer. Justo detrás del conductor, los asientos iban vacíos. Pero en ese mismo lado del bus, en el último asiento de la fila, había un joven que no dejaba de mover su pierna derecha. Este no tenía apariencia de un angélico colegial, sino todo lo contrario. Tenía los pies subidos en el asiento y escuchaba su música en alta voz. Leal notó que el rostro del joven era similar al de un asaltante de buses de la zona. ¿Podría ser el mismo que había atacado a un chofer de bus hace cuatro años? Leal sabía que las golondrinas siempre retornaban a su nido.

De igual manera, el oficial notó a un hombre que iba de pie cerca de la puerta trasera, aunque era evidente que había asientos libres en todo el bus. Este miraba su teléfono constantemente, a pesar de la instrucción de no hacerlo. Además, casi cubierta en su totalidad por el hombre, se encontraba una mujer joven con una mirada sumisa hacia el suelo que llamó la atención del agente Leal. ¿Tendría algo que esconder? ¿Por qué evitaba hacer contacto visual?

Hacia el centro del bus, Leal identificó a dos parejas. Una de ellas se mostraba atormentada. Era evidente que la muchacha había

estado llorando. Su cabeza reposaba en el hombro del joven, quien únicamente miraba por la ventana sin pestañear. La otra era una pareja de señores en sus cincuentas que le recordaron a sus padres. Leal fácilmente notó la impotencia y el enojo en los ojos de ambos. Mientras que la señora se aferraba a su rosario y murmuraba algo, sus ojos querían estallar en llanto. Su acompañante solamente miraba hacia delante, casi retando a Leal a requisarlos de primero.

En el asiento frente a cada una de las parejas, Leal identificó a dos hombres jóvenes, posiblemente en sus treintas. Cada uno de ellos mostraba pánico en su mirada. Ya él estaba acostumbrado a este tipo de reacción. La gente en Costa Rica ciertamente no estaba familiarizada con ver oficiales en sus medios de transporte y mucho menos a verse involucrados en allanamientos reales.

Finalmente, sentadas una detrás de la otra, justo al frente del bus, en el lado derecho, Leal contabilizó a dos señoras mayores, una tal vez de sesenta, casi setenta años, y la otra de unos ochenta años. Eran muy diferentes entre sí. Era notable que una venía saliendo de misa y que la otra podría necesitar una. La primera, con su chal aristocrático traído desde Marruecos, la segunda con una mudada de Pequeño Planeta.



Fue en estos segundos en los cuales Gerald recordó su crimen. Un crimen que por décadas no lo había dejado conciliar el sueño. Sin embargo, hasta comprender esta extraña visión, entendió por qué nunca nada había vuelto a ser como antes.

Para él, la vida con su esposa y sus dos hijos era prácticamente prohibitiva. Dado que su salario era lo único que los mantenía a flote, ellos vivían al borde de la pobreza extrema. En la mirada de Gerald se podían materializar las incontables noches en las que se fue a dormir sin cenar; así como las caras de los prestamistas exigiendo intereses por todas las deudas adquiridas. En ocasiones, Gerald se

arrepentía de haber traído hijos al mundo en estas condiciones, pero consideraba que los hombres de verdad no utilizaban nada relacionado con esas *ideologías de género*, como lo eran los preservativos.

Primordialmente, por estas razones, cuando escuchó a su esposa decir "estoy embarazada", Gerald deseó poseer una lámpara mágica con tres deseos. El primero hubiera sido una caja de cervezas para sobrellevar la noticia. El segundo, haberle hecho caso a su madre y haber estudiado para tener un trabajo mejor, uno en el cual el salario le alcanzara para mantener a un hijo más. Pero, en medio de su fantasía, su esposa, Kymberlyn, con lágrimas en sus ojos y una botella de veneno en su mano izquierda, lo interrumpió:

—Gera, son gemelos. ¿Y ahora qué vamos a hacer?

Fue en ese momento cuando Gerald pensó en su tercer deseo: que su esposa perdiera a los hijos. Sin embargo, por semanas, ninguno de sus deseos se cumplió. A lo cual, Gerald desesperadamente recurrió a la maga del barrio, la que hacía cualquier cosa desaparecer. Por trescientos mil colones, la maga se encargó de cumplir el tercer deseo.

Gerald y su esposa nunca más hablaron del tema. O de ningún otro. Algo en ellos se esfumó ese día. Además de la carga de un nuevo préstamo, el futuro inexistente de los gemelos pesaba más que cualquier deuda que Gerald y Kymberlyn hubieran concebido.

Ahora, mientras Gerald todavía buscaba su cédula, lo único que quería decir era "¡SOY YO! POR FAVOR, ARRÉSTEME, TERMINE CON MI SUPPLICIO". Sin embargo, justo cuando estaba a punto de confesar su delito ante sí mismo y al mundo, notó sorprendido por el retrovisor que alguien se estaba poniendo de pie.

De todas las personas en el bus, había otra que tampoco podía lidiar un segundo más con la presencia del agente Leal. Era hora de confesar. Sabía que habían detenido el bus por su culpa. Y ya no había vuelta atrás.



► *Nadie querría contratar a una doméstica que no tuviera la actitud correcta: una mezcla entre alguien temerario por su futuro y sus descendientes, en conjunto con la sumisión de alguien que puede ser deportado con una llamada.* ◄

## CAPÍTULO



# Lo invaluable

Antes de subirse al bus, Fátima estaba trabajando como de costumbre en la casa de los Loveday, ubicada en Santa Ana. A pesar de que Fátima debía viajar desde Desamparados para llegar a su nuevo trabajo, esta era una gran oportunidad. En estos días era cada vez más difícil encontrar trabajo en sus condiciones: una señora indocumentada en sus cincuentas. Nadie quería contratar a una doméstica que no tuviera la actitud correcta: una mezcla entre alguien temerario por su futuro y sus descendientes, en conjunto con la sumisión de quien puede ser deportado con una llamada.

Además, toda señora respetable, dueña de casa sabía que las empleadas a esa edad usualmente se comienzan a sentir empoderadas de los lugares en donde sirven y esta fue la razón por la cual Fátima había perdido su trabajo.

Después de treinta años de trabajar para la misma familia, estos no pudieron tolerar las exigencias desproporcionadas que Fátima estaba demandando: su merecido pago de vacaciones por sus treinta años laborados y un aumento de salario. Pero, para una familia acostumbrada a pagar por una esclavitud disfrazada, los derechos de un trabajador eran inventos de socialistas radicales (chancletudos).

Para Fátima, haber sido despedida de esa forma fue devastador. Después de entregarle su vida a esa familia, su pago había sido

el abandono. Ella honestamente no sentía rabia ni enojo. Para Fátima, su corazón había sido inundado con incredulidad, decepción, confusión, traición y melancolía. Exactamente en ese orden y después todo lo contrario. Fátima honestamente no se podía explicar qué tipo de gente tenía un corazón así de frío como para *amarla* y hacerla sentir un miembro más de la familia, siempre y cuando fuera la Fátima *buena*, la que aceptaba pagos por mucho menos de lo que establecía la ley, la que trabajaba horas extras sin cobrarlas, la que bañaba señores mayores aunque para eso se le pagaba a alguien más, la que venía sábados y domingos a limpiar la casa después de fiestas de cumpleaños a las que ella nunca era invitada y la que, por mucho que tuviera necesidades, nunca hablaba de un aumento salarial.

Pero Fátima se había corrompido. Una vez que empezó a escuchar a los abogados en el programa matutino *Buena Mañana*, ella se sintió cada vez más convencida de que un pequeño aumento y un pago (aunque fuera simbólico) de sus vacaciones eran cosas mínimas que tal vez sus empleadores le concederían, no solo porque eran sus derechos, sino también como premio por tanto empeño y entrega que ella les había demostrado en tres décadas de ser su más fiel amiga. O al menos eso creía ella.

Así que este nuevo trabajo significaba la vida entera para Fátima. Su madre y padre en Nicaragua dependían de su salario para comprar las medicinas para la pulmonía crónica causada por tanto utilizar la cocina de leña, así como para las drogas apaciguadoras de múltiples fallas cardíacas.

A pesar de que Fátima tenía otros cuatro hermanos en Nicaragua, ella cargaba con el peso de la salud y el bienestar de sus padres. Desde Costa Rica, siempre se preocupaba por llamarlos diariamente y asegurarse de que tuvieran todo lo que necesitaban. Para Fátima era frustrante ver que a nadie le parecían importar sus padres, y esto, al menos en la cabeza de Fátima, se debía en parte a que su padre ya había dividido los lotes y herencias entre hijos y nietos. Por ende, ya él había muerto en la memoria de quien no lo amaba. El abuelo había perdido todo su valor.

Fátima no venía sola en este bus. Modesto López estaba a su lado. No obstante, al ver al agente, Fátima ignoró a Modesto por completo. Modesto era su pareja. Él era un *marido de alquiler*. No había cosa que Modesto no pudiera hacer. Siempre con una sonrisa en su rostro que dejaba ver el destello de oro en sus dientes, Modesto a nada le decía que no. Con una actitud envidiable, él hacía lo imposible por complacer a todo el mundo, cosa que no hacía feliz a Fátima, especialmente cuando se trataba de trabajar en los días de culto.

Modesto había estado en Costa Rica por poco tiempo, pero por su tipo de trabajo había encontrado patronos dispuestos a ayudarlo a conseguir su permiso laboral, el cual llevaba ya seis años en proceso. Casualmente, mañana tenía su cita en Migración. ¡Por fin! Modesto había esperado este momento toda su vida. Él quería después ayudarle a Fátima con todo el proceso para, eventualmente, casarse en Costa Rica y vivir en un lote que tenía visto y casi apartado en San Rafael de Desamparados.

Modesto vivía de ilusiones y esto era lo que lo mantenía radiante. Él no podía esperar a que llegara el momento en donde ambos pudieran ser felices, legalmente felices, en Costa Rica. A pesar de haber sido estafado por tres abogados ticos en el pasado, Modesto estaba a un día del primer paso para lograr su felicidad: una cita... veinticuatro horas. Esto era todo lo que lo separaba de su proyecto de vida. Modesto realmente no tenía nada que lo atara de vuelta en Nicaragua. Sus padres ya habían fallecido y el resto de su familia había inmigrado a diferentes partes de Costa Rica en los últimos diez años. Costa Rica era su hogar. Lo que Modesto no sabía era que iba a tener que dejar su trabajo hoy, pedir permiso para salir temprano, dejar todo abandonado y pedir un carro prestado después de una terrorífica llamada telefónica: una llamada de Fátima.

En horas de la mañana, Fátima estaba terminando su primer mes con los Loveday. Lo que ellos no sabían era que Fátima había estado buscando por seis horas un anillo que se suponía había sido traído desde Inglaterra por la tátara-tátara-tátara abuela de la señora Loveday. Y hoy los señores estaban de vuelta de su viaje por el sureste asiático.

Como si hubiera sido ayer, Fátima escuchaba a la señora Cristal Loveday claramente dándole la siguiente instrucción en su primer día de trabajo:

—Lástima, perdón, Fátima, es que todavía no me he aprendido su nombre, esta es la repisa milenaria de los Loveday. No hay qué ni quién más importante bajo mi techo que esta repisa. ¿Está claro?

Sin dejar que Fátima comprendiera la situación, la señora Cristal continuó:

—Se rumora que estas doscientas piezas inglesas que usted puede ver acá (por favor no se acerque tanto) podrían fácilmente superar los cien millones de dólares. Por supuesto, no las hemos llevado a valorar por miedo a exponer nuestro nombre y legado. Siempre he pensado que los ladrones, las joyerías y las casas de empeño trabajan en conjunto, así que jamás confiaría mi vida en las manos de un criminal. No habría nada peor. O sea, la peor pesadilla que todos en esta familia podríamos tener es que alguna de estas piezas llegue a desaparecer. En otras palabras, que alguien se las llegue a robar. En especial, el anillo de bodas de mi *great-great-great grandmother*. ¿Lo ve por encima de la diadema y gargantilla de zafiros? En fin, mejor no lo vea mucho. Desafortunadamente, a las últimas seis sirvientas que pasaron por acá las tuvimos que dejar ir por su obsesión con esta repisa. Le voy a explicar para que usted me entienda. Cada vez que yo venía a la casa, claro está después de pasar unas semanas en el extranjero, siempre veía a las sirvientas corriendo hacia la repisa. O sea, ¿será que habían colocado algo en su bolso y en donde me escuchaban llegar corrían a devolverlo? Prefiero no saberlo. Por cierto, le cuento que esta repisa se debe limpiar dos veces al día. Por favor anótelo. LIMPIAR REPISA TERCER MEZZANINE QUINTO NIVEL. DOS VECES AL DÍA. Pero bueno, volviendo al tema. Le advierto todo esto para que no se obsesione como las otras. De hecho, ni me acuerdo cómo se llamaban. No duraron mucho, honestamente.

Con todo esto pasando una y mil veces en su mente, Fátima contaba y recontaba la cantidad de piezas en la repisa: 30, 50, 100, 150, 180, 199. 15, 25, 50, 100, 125, 150, 175, 199. Esto no le podía estar pasando hoy. HOY que la señora Cristal estaba de vuelta. HOY que había limpiado la repisa por segunda vez. HOY que iba a ir a comer pupusas con Modesto para celebrar el día de pago y el permiso de trabajo.

Fátima repasó en su mente todo lo que había hecho ese día. Necesitaba encontrar el momento en donde esa pieza se había perdido. La pregunta era *cuál* pieza faltaba. Sin embargo, en segundos, Fátima supo cuál era el elemento faltante. Como si un saco de cemento hubiera caído en su estómago, Fátima sintió el peso de su familia y la enfermedad de sus padres carcomer cada milímetro de su cuerpo. La pieza faltante era el anillo de bodas de la “algo algo moder”; Fátima nunca entendió qué era eso, pero sabía que era la pieza favorita de la señora Cristal.

Para su infortunio, en el momento en que Fátima requisaba cada milímetro de su pomposo e intricado uniforme ya desamarrado en el suelo y se quitaba los zapatos para ver si el anillo se había caído por accidente, la señora Cristal entró por la puerta hacia el tercer mezzanine del quinto nivel y vio a Fátima prácticamente desnuda frente a la repisa.

Antes de que la señora dijera algo, Fátima corrió hacia la puerta principal y salió de la casa para nunca más volver a ver hacia atrás. Lo único que pudo llevarse con ella fue su rosario, el cual siempre colgaba de su pecho; su celular, bien ajustado a su mal ajustado brasier, y sus zapatos.

Fátima sabía que era cuestión de segundos para que la señora se diera cuenta de que su anillo favorito había desaparecido. Y esto le iba a costar su vida. Sabía que la señora no dudaría en llamar a la policía. Mientras Fátima corría en su ropa interior por las autopistas de Santa Ana, se imaginaba a escuadrones completos de la policía y a oficiales de migración persiguiéndola hasta derribarla en plena carretera, para luego llevarla a prisión y deportarla a su natal Nicaragua.

Fátima solo podía llorar y correr sosteniendo su rosario. Pero hasta Dios parecía haberla abandonado. ¿Por qué si ella no había cometido ningún crimen, se sentía culpable?

Cuando Fátima no pudo correr más, se percató de que todavía tenía saldo en su tarjeta prepago. Con los únicos colones que le quedaban, llamó a Modesto y a como pudo le dejó el siguiente mensaje de voz:

—Modesto, mi amor. ¡Contestá! ¡Estoy muerta! Y vos también. Estamos muertos. La jueputa chochada de anillo de la *moder* esa se perdió. Modesto, se perdió. ¡Estoy *arrecha*! Te lo juro que yo ni lo toqué. Me tuve que salir corriendo. Aquí ando por la calle en calzones. Mi diosito, ni sé dónde estoy. ¡Por favor, ayudame! Tenemos que irnos para Nicaragua antes que nos alcance la polici...

—Usted se ha quedado sin saldo. Por favor, recargue en su centro de conveniencia más cercano o utilice nuestras plataformas de recarga en nuestra página web.

### *Clic.*

Cuando Modesto escuchó este mensaje, la sonrisa se extinguió de su rostro junto con cada uno de sus sueños. Pero por Fátima, él renunciaba a su propia vida. Así que tomó un carro prestado de uno de sus patronos y buscó a Fátima por todo Santa Ana. Cuando la encontró llorando mientras se cubría con una bolsa de basura de la municipalidad, Modesto la abrazó y, en silencio, dieron luto a todo lo que dejarían atrás. Camino a devolver el automóvil prestado, Fátima cometió el error de encender la radio. Desesperanza Hope estaba en su edición del medio día y daba un informe sobre un posible robo de piezas antiquísimas, valoradas en millones de dólares, en los alrededores de Santa Ana. Ante esto, Fátima y Modesto reaccionaron de una forma: apagando el radio. Ellos sabían que la policía los iba a encontrar tarde o temprano. Ahora dependía de ellos llegar a la frontera cuanto antes. Así, Modesto le compró a

Fátima una ropita cómoda en la primera tienda de ropa americana que encontraron, devolvieron el carro y se montaron en el primer bus que se les cruzó en su camino, el bus "Hacia ningún lugar".



Cuando Fátima vio al oficial subir las gradas del autobús, ella supo que hasta aquí llegaba su viaje. La señora Cristal había sido capaz de encontrarla y criminalizarla. Bajo qué cargos, ella no lo sabía. Ella no sería capaz de robarse nada, ni las insignificantes monedas de dos mil colones que se encontraba regadas por la casa. Por eso, al ver al oficial, Fátima sacó su rosario. Esta era la última oportunidad para que su *diosito* la ayudara. Él sabía que Fátima era buena y que no merecía nada de lo que le estaba pasando. Con todas sus fuerzas, Fátima tomó su rosario y lo sostuvo frente a ella; su última plegaria. Sin embargo, al hacer esto, algo inesperado tintineó en el suelo del autobús, justo en medio de los zapatos de Modesto.

Como en cámara lenta, los ojos de Fátima y Modesto se vieron encantados con el brillo inesperado de su peor pesadilla.

Modesto perdió el habla cuando vio lo que había caído en medio de sus burros de construcción: el anillo más opulento que había presenciado en su existencia. Él supo fácilmente que ese anillo valía más que él y toda su ascendencia, si fuera cuantificada y luego humillada.

Modesto no pudo admirar el objeto maldito por mucho tiempo, ya que se vio forzado a volver a la realidad al escuchar una voz de ultratumba que decía: "agente especial... crimen... identidad... movimientos bruscos...". Modesto, entonces, presionó fuertemente la rodilla de Fátima en señal de desesperación y auxilio. Su diosito no los había escuchado. Él se había olvidado de ellos y, peor aún, los estaba castigando.

En ese momento, ocho teléfonos celulares de diferentes pasajeros comenzaron a sonar y con la música de los timbres, Fátima

recordó el momento exacto cuando el anillo pudo haberse alojado en su ropa interior. Fue en ese momento cuando presionó su rosario más fuerte y cuando sus lágrimas de angustia e injusticia querían declarar su inocencia.

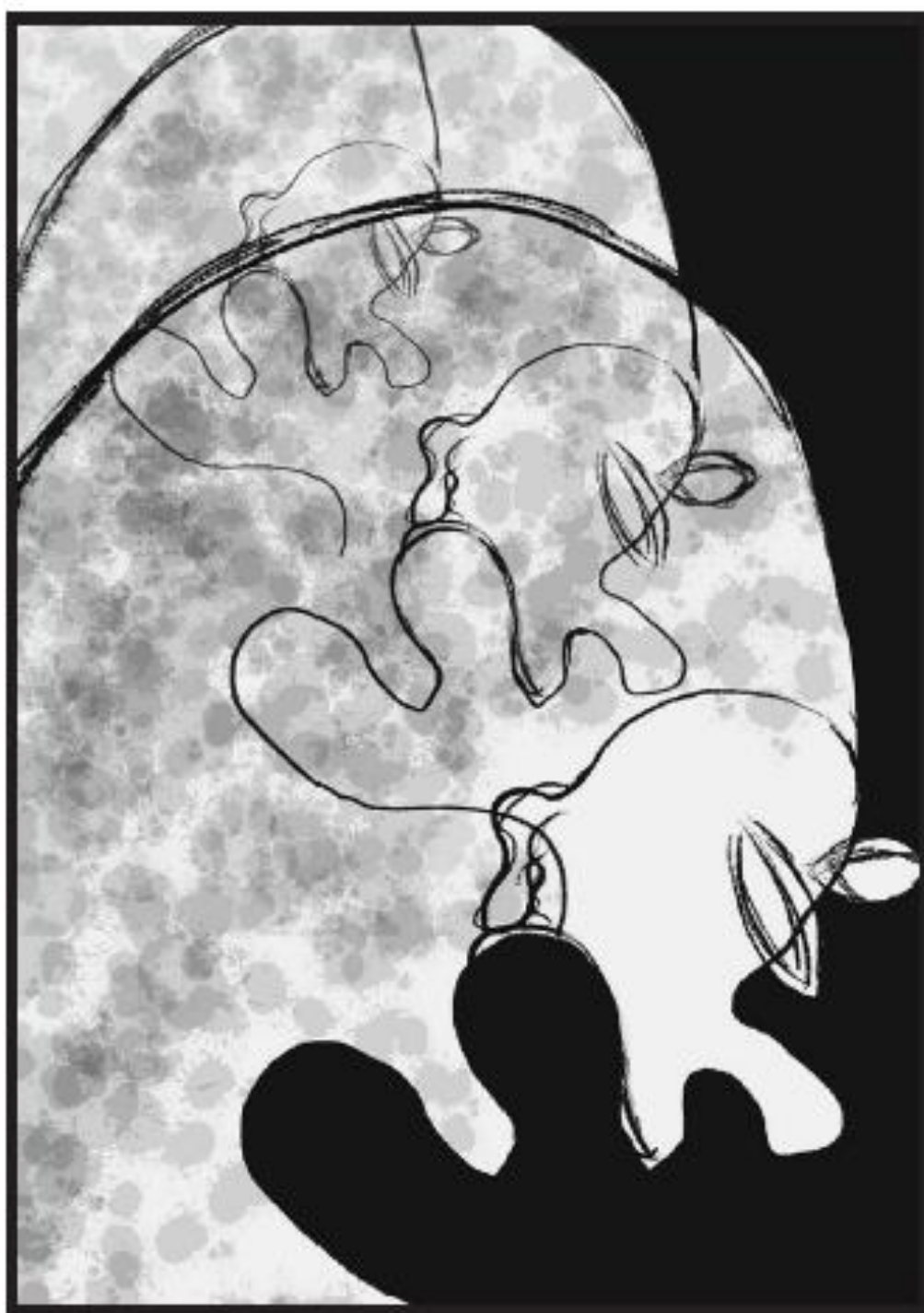
Fátima recordó estar limpiando varias piezas a la vez para terminar rápido, ya que hoy era día de pago y la emoción la consumía. Después de tantos meses de desempleo, hoy podría celebrar y tal vez comprar parte del diario. ¡Qué emoción!

Empero, su concentración se disipó cuando escuchó ocho teléfonos sonar al mismo tiempo: era la señora Cristal advirtiéndole que ella y su esposo estaban a pocas horas de llegar. En el momento en que Fátima perdió su concentración, ella recordó haber dejado caer algunas piezas, pero nunca pensó que una querría irse con ella.

Ahora que el oficial estaba ahí, el anillo había aparecido. En los pies de Modesto. Salido del cuerpo de Fátima. Ella supo que ahora sí tendrían evidencia para llevarlos presos. A ella por hurto y a él por cómplice. Todo estaba perdido. Por ende, solo había una cosa por hacer: confesar. Fátima siempre había visto en los casos de la *Doctora Polos* que quienes confiesan tienen una condena menor. O al menos eso era lo que había aprendido de la televisión.

Al ponerse de pie para confesar, antes de decir nada, el autobús se llenó con un grito estremecedor:

“¡NOOOOOOOOO MÁS!”.



► El grito provenía de la chica casi cubierta por el único hombre que venía innecesariamente de pie. Una vez que ella gritó, el extraño se quedó petrificado en medio pasillo. ◄

## CAPÍTULO



# No más

Ante tan estruendoso grito, Modesto solamente acató a hacer una cosa: mientras todos pusieron su atención en la joven que estaba cerca de la puerta del bus, Modesto se agachó, tomó el anillo en sus manos, lo guardó en la funda de su cuchilla portátil y haló a Fátima de su mano derecha hacia el asiento. Fátima, por su parte, no sabía qué estaba sucediendo, pero al mismo tiempo, en sus adentros, se sentía aliviada. Alguien más necesitaba la atención y ella podía cedérsela a quien la quisiera.

El grito provenía de la chica casi cubierta por el único hombre que estaba innecesariamente de pie. Una vez que ella gritó, el extraño se quedó petrificado en medio pasillo.

Al retroceder, su pene erecto quedó expuesto. En su estupefacción, su teléfono celular cayó al suelo, dejando ver en la pantalla imágenes pornográficas de menores de edad en actos sexuales. Se podía ver que las imágenes venían de un grupo de *WhatsApp* y estas llegaban acompañadas de emojis sugestivos de berenjenas y gotas de sudor.

Cuando la chica, Belén, dejó salir su exabrupto, fue porque ya había tenido suficiente. Desde que el enfermo sexual se subió al bus, ella notó que él la miraba como si fuera un blanco al que, de alguna forma, estaba apuntando. Y así fue. Óscar Domingo, el acosador, no dudó en detenerse frente a Belén en el momento en que la vio. Desde que se instaló al frente de ella, Óscar comenzó a balancear su pene hacia

el hombro de Belén. Mientras que él disimulaba sus acciones al tapar lo que estaba haciendo con su otra mano en la que sostenía su teléfono a la altura del hombro de la chica, ella indudablemente se daba cuenta de la erección que Óscar estaba teniendo contra el cuerpo de ella.

Ella, como medida de protección al sentir pánico y miedo por su vida, pretendió quedarse dormida en ciertos trayectos del camino para ver si así el acosador la dejaba en paz. En cierto momento, Belén subió las piernas y las prensó con el asiento de adelante, de manera que pudo abrazar sus rodillas y quedar en posición fetal ante tal ataque, como medida de defensa contra el acosador. No obstante, esto tuvo el efecto contrario. Con los ojos entreabiertos, notó que Óscar se aprovechó de que ella no estaba viendo y sacó su pene erecto por medio de la bragueta y lo rozó directamente en su antebrazo, su hombro, sus manos, su ropa. En ocasiones, Óscar llegó a rozar la oreja de Belén y su cabello.

Y aunque esta experiencia era definitivamente traumatizante para Belén, no era nada en comparación con lo que ella vivía en casa.

Desde que Belén tenía unos cuatro años, ella odiaba cada vez que su madre salía a trabajar, e inclusive cuando iba a tomar café con sus amigas del vecindario. Lo odiaba porque sabía que no la podía acompañar y detestaba quedarse sola en su casa con sus hermanos y su padre. En especial con su padre. A pesar de que le había dicho en varias ocasiones a su madre que ella no se sentía bien en casa sola con su padre, su madre simplemente le decía que no todo era siempre juegos y diversión. Había que ayudar con las labores de la casa y papá era estricto con eso. Sin embargo, la mamá de Belén nunca pudo leer los gritos de ayuda correctamente. A Belén no le importaba participar con las cosas de la casa. Con cuatro años sentía que limpiar su cuarto era la mejor manera de ayudarle a su madre. Lo que odiaba con su alma era cuando su padre la llamaba al cuarto de él.

Las primeras veces, Belén corría hacia el cuarto de su padre. Ella pensaba que iba a recibir algún premio por haber acomodado

sus peluches o por haber tendido bien la cama. Pero la realidad era otra. Su padre, quien le juraba que lo que iban a hacer era algo entre ellos dos y que nunca nadie se podía enterar de esto porque era súper especial, le indicaba a Belén cómo masturbarlo hasta que él estuviera satisfecho. A ella primero le pareció un honor compartir algo tan único y especial con su papá. Él le había hecho creer que esto era la expresión de cariño más íntima entre un padre y su hija.

Sin embargo, conforme los meses y años fueron pasando, Belén empezó a notar que su padre se tornaba más violento y empezaba a tocarla en lugares que en la escuela le habían dicho eran especiales y que nadie debía nunca tocar. No si ella no quería. Y se estaba dando cuenta de que definitivamente no quería que su padre la tocara de ninguna forma. Belén comenzó a sentirse utilizada y violentada. Intentó decirle que no a su padre en varias ocasiones, pero cada vez que lo hacía este tomaba la mano de Belén por la fuerza y se masturbaba bruscamente. Todo escaló para mal cuando una de estas veces el padre de Belén la tomó por sorpresa y forzó su pene en ella. Por más que ella lo intentó golpear, morder y rasguñar, su padre la sometió con un golpe a la sien. Belén, en su inconsciencia, sentía el ardor en su cuerpo y en su alma.

Ese día, cuando su madre llegó del trabajo, Belén no tenía voz. Ella ya no tenía nada. Todo le había sido arrebatado. Con doce años, Belén conoció el infierno. Y aunque quería contarle todo a su madre, la culpa la carcomía. Tal vez fue su culpa haber sido violada. Tal vez, de no haber puesto resistencia, todo estaría bien ahora. Ella se imaginaba a sus otras compañeras del colegio masturbando a sus papás, tíos y abuelos y pensaba que tal vez ninguna de ellas iba a ser tan ingenua de revelarse y decir "NO MÁS". Pero ella lo hizo. Y la consecuencia fue mucho más grave de lo que nunca pensó. Tal vez si lo hubiera hecho con más ganas y más frecuentemente, hoy sería diferente. Tal vez de haber dejado a su padre acariciarla en todos los lugares que él quisiera, él no habría tenido que utilizar la violencia.

En pocas palabras, Belén pensaba que todo había sido su culpa. Y decirle algo a su madre o abuela podría ser peor, ya que podrían

culparla por no haberse dejado hacer todo lo que él quería. Tal vez ellas vivían lo mismo, pero sabían llevarlo como se debía: como se suponía que una mujer llevaba estas cosas. Empero, muy dentro de sí, Belén sentía que todo estaba mal. Tan mal que era mejor ni hablar del tema e intentar bloquear su vago y perdurable episodio de abuso con la persona que decía era la que más la quería en esta vida.



¡CLIC! ¡CLIC! Sonó la cámara fotográfica del teléfono de un pasajero.

—¡Ahora sí, mi perrito! Ese *nepe* se va a ser famoso. ¡A cachete con popi, miersh! Dijo el pasajero en el último asiento del bus, mientras compartía la foto del acosador erecto en pleno autobús.

Óscar Domingo, quien extrañamente no perdía su erección, no pensó que esto le pudiera estar pasando hoy. Al menos no a ÉL y menos HOY.

El día de hoy, Óscar venía del trabajo. Era inusual que los llamaran a las bodegas de la compañía para despachar mercadería un domingo. No obstante, trabajo era trabajo. No era como que Óscar tuviera una opinión sobre cuándo y cuántas horas él debía trabajar. A pesar del sacrificio que esto implicaba, a Óscar le gustaba ir al trabajo los domingos. Especialmente porque en esos días y a cierre de mes las practicantes de contabilidad de colegios técnicos se quedaban hasta tarde haciendo cierres mensuales.

Las *chiquitas*, como él las llamaba, tenían entre quince y dieciséis años y estaban en su módulo final de práctica profesional. Una situación que comprometía a la empresa y a las familias de las practicantes a resguardar y velar por la seguridad de las practicantes ante cualquier abuso. Óscar entonces siempre tenía mucho cuidado al tomarles fotos en los pasillos y al espiarlas en los baños. Él sabía que una carta de amonestación más por acoso sexual en el trabajo no sería bien recibida por el Departamento de Recursos Humanos, ni

por su esposa. La última vez que Óscar fue amonestado, él la convenció de que había una muchacha de limpieza que se recogía el cabello hacia un lado, dejando ver su cuello, cada vez que se agachaba. En palabras de Óscar, ella era una provocadora que lo único que quería era sacarle plata con una demanda. Pero él bien conocía las técnicas de *esas* mujeres y nunca, pero nunca, le puso un dedo encima. Su esposa, en pro de la negación, decidió creerle esta historia antes de tan siquiera considerar el hecho de que su esposo fuera un acosador. La realidad había sido muy diferente a la ficción que Óscar le contó a su esposa.

Óscar, en su afán de torturar a sus víctimas, se obsesionó con una de las muchachas de la limpieza. Aunque no era una *chiquita*, él consideraba que esta presa sería fácil de cazar. Poco a poco, Óscar inició su ataque llamándola con nombres poco halagadores, tales como *princesa*, *mi reinita*, *muñequita*, *mamita*, *sadiquita*. Claramente, a Magaly, la muchacha encargada de la limpieza de la bodega, estos nombres le parecían repulsivos. Sin embargo, dado su puesto y el poco tiempo que llevaba trabajando para la empresa, ella sabía que era completamente reemplazable. Por ende, prefirió no decir nada y aguantar semejante acoso, sin importar sus consecuencias.

Como Magaly parecía ignorar los halagos de Óscar, él decidió tomar medidas extremas e ideó un plan infalible. Después de acosar exhaustivamente a Magaly por algún tiempo, aprendió qué hacer para doblegarla. Magaly era del tipo de empleada que no dejaba nada para mañana. Siempre proactiva, procuraba hacer la limpieza de la bodega a como diera lugar, sin importar la cantidad de horas extra que esto le tomara; en su mente esto algún día se traduciría en “ponerse la camiseta” por la compañía y tal vez le darían más trabajo en un lugar menos oscuro y disimulado. Conociendo esta debilidad de Magaly, Óscar aprovechaba para derramar cualquier líquido de los productos que transportaban en lugares en donde él pudiera verla arrodillarse en su cara o frente a su bragueta. Con más y más frecuencia, Magaly comenzó a notar que muchos de los derrames no eran de productos líquidos que transportaba la empresa, sino de charcos de semen.

Después de varios incidentes, Magaly había entendido la trama de Óscar, pero no podía hacer nada al respecto. Este era su trabajo y por más que sucedieran este tipo de cosas, ella sentía que no se podía quejar porque para esto era, esencialmente, para lo que le estaban pagando. Sin embargo, Óscar estaba tan extasiado con lo que veía, que llevó su plan al siguiente nivel. A Óscar le excitaba verle el cabello suelto a Magaly, pero debido al trabajo, ella usualmente lo llevaba amarrado en una cola o en moño. Óscar, entonces, recordando sus aventuras cuando estaba en el colegio, comenzó a robarle las colas a Magaly, tanto de su casillero como directamente de su cabello, con el fin de masturbarse con dichas colas y acabar en ellas, convirtiéndolas en un trofeo digno para tan impresionante cazador. Pero fue en esta gran etapa furtiva que varias colegas de Magaly se dieron cuenta de lo que estaba sucediendo e interpusieron la denuncia por ella.

Antes de esta amonestación, su esposa también había perdonado el hecho de que Óscar hubiera enviado una serie de fotografías pornográficas al chat de *WhatsApp* de la familia. Todos los miembros, incluyendo novias y novios, *peoresnada*, y hasta las ex de los primos novieros vieron el *pack* de una estudiante de un colegio público de Aserri. La esposa de Óscar fue la última en darse cuenta de tal evento familiar. Fue su madre quien le indicó que le dijera al cochino, cerdo que tenía por esposo que no volviera a poner un pie en su casa y que por favor borrara la cochinada de un grupo en donde había niños que vieron la porquería de tío que tenían.

Sin embargo, hoy todo era felicidad en la casa de los Domingo. Todos estaban esperando a que Óscar volviera del trabajo. Hoy era el cumpleaños de su esposa y él estaba a cargo de traer el pastel de cumpleaños. Lo que ellos no sabían era que lo que Óscar llevaba no era un pastel, sino una carta de despido y su nueva popularidad en redes sociales. Por restructuración de personal, a Óscar lo estaban dejando ir. Lo que él no sabía era que la razón real de peso para su despido fueron las incontables quejas de las *chiquitas* que se sentían inseguras y amenazadas con la presencia del señor despachador don Óscar Domingo.



¡CLIC! ¡CLIC! Volvió a sonar la cámara fotográfica del teléfono del mismo pasajero.

—¡Diay, mi caballo! Si ya no va a mostrar nada *acois*, ¡mejor tápese la jugada! —y así, Óscar volvió a la realidad, solo para darse cuenta de que todos los ojos estaban en él. Desde el conductor, quien se había levantado el parche porque no creía lo que estaba viendo con su desconfiado ojo derecho, hasta la señora de ochenta años que no dejaba de persignarse. Óscar no supo cuánto tiempo había transcurrido, pero sabía que había sido suficiente para arruinarle la vida.

Justo cuando subía el zíper en su bragueta, Belén cayó en el suelo del bus entre las filas de asientos.

Ante tal escenario, el agente Leal no pudo quedarse de brazos cruzados. Él ignoró el hecho de que Gerald no pudo procurarle una identificación y caminó hacia Belén, pasando al costado de Fátima y Modesto, quienes solamente se tomaban de la mano y sostenían el rosario con un agarre indestructible.

Sin embargo, varios asientos antes de llegar al lugar en donde Belén había colapsado, el agente Ernesto Leal se percató de algo inusual.



◀ Yo también soy un ogro. ▶



## Moravia, la capital del mundo

Al borde de la desesperación, Soledad, quien venía acompañada de su novio, tenía un secreto que confesar. Con lágrimas en sus ojos y espinas en su garganta, dijo en voz baja:

—Flaco, bebé no deja de llorar.

—Gorda, no digás eso.

—Es en serio, ¡óigalo! ¿Me va a decir que ese no es bebé? —dijo Soledad mientras sonaban las bocinas de los autos en la autopista.

—Mi amor, eso no es bebé. Esos son los carros y la gente a la distancia. Actuá normal. No vaya a ser que alguien nos escuche hablar del tema acá —aunque Armando pronunció esas palabras en voz alta para calmar a Soledad, eran más para sí mismo que para ella.

—¿Y qué si nos escuchan? Prefiero eso a vivir siempre escondiéndolo —dijo Soledad sin pestañear. Ante esta respuesta, Armando solo pudo ver por la ventana y desear volver al pasado. Más específicamente a esta mañana, antes de tomar el bus.

Empero, el día de Armando y Soledad estaba a punto de cambiar. Cuando estos dos prisioneros del pasado notaron que había un oficial de la policía intentando detener el bus en plena autopista, no gritaron ¡Policia! para que Gerald se detuviera. Su grito fue de pánico. Lo último que hubieran querido hoy era encontrarse con un oficial.

De haber sido por ellos, habrían pisado el acelerador con más fuerza para no detenerse. De todas formas, el oficial no pareció asustarse por la velocidad ni por el posible impacto del bus. Más bien, tanto Soledad como Armando hubieran dicho que, de ser posible, el oficial parecía atraer al bus hacia delante con una fuerza magnética o algo sobrenatural, pero el bus pareció simplemente embestirse y (re)encontrarse con él.

Al escuchar las palabras del agente Leal, Soledad únicamente pudo apoyar su cabeza en el hombro de Armando y pretender estar dormida, aunque sus lágrimas y nariz roja la delataran. Soledad era el tipo de persona que cuando lloraba (por felicidad, risa o llanto) se le aparecían grandes manchas rojas alrededor de sus ojos y nariz, por esta razón su novio la llamaba "mapachín". Armando, por su parte, solo pensó en esquivar la mirada del agente, quien por el momento parecía buscar erráticamente algún rostro en la multitud.

Justo cuando pensaron que al ignorar al oficial su crimen desaparecería, ocho teléfonos de diferentes pasajeros (el de Soledad incluido) sonaron al unísono, lo que ella interpretó como ocho lamentos de bebés siendo separados de sus madres. En un inicio, Soledad no quería sacar su teléfono del bolsillo. Ella no quería decir nada porque muy probablemente Armando le diría que no hay bebés llorando, sino que eran las bocinas de los autos en plena autopista. Sin embargo, poco segundos después, Armando le preguntó:

—¿Qué dice el mensaje, Gorda? Una señora se está levantando y todo. ¡Mirá! ¿Tendrá algo que ver con el mensaje que todo el mundo recibió? Para ver el teléfono.

Era demasiada la curiosidad y la cadena de eventos extraños como para resistirse a mirar, así que Soledad sacó su teléfono del bolsillo, lo desbloqueó con una secuencia de pestañeo de ojos y leyó el mensaje en compañía de Armando:

"El PANI le informa: Bebé...".

Ninguno de los dos pudo continuar leyendo el mensaje.

Con su rostro y moral quebrados en mil pedazos, Armando, con manos temblorosas, tomó el teléfono de las manos de Soledad y, cuidadosamente, lo guardó lejos de ella. Soledad no pudo más que romper en llanto, un llanto tan reprimido que dolía presenciarlo. Armando se frotó los ojos con frenesí. Lo hizo como si este acto fuera a borrar sus recuerdos, como si sus ojos pudieran olvidar el crimen que él y Soledad habían cometido ese día.

Ya que volver en el tiempo no era posible, Armando decidió que era hora de confesarle su pecado al oficial. El mensaje de texto era claro. Él había sido enviado para llevarlos ante la ley y Armando estaba de acuerdo. Soledad no parecía salir de su trance, así que Armando solamente le informó:

—Mi amor, le voy a contar todo al oficial. ¿Okey? Ya no puedo más. Tomá tu teléfono. Llevo tres días sin dormir y honestamente no creo que vuelva a hacerlo el resto de mi vida. ¿Querés decirle algo vos? —pero Soledad solo contestó con una lágrima que recorrió su rostro desde su ojo izquierdo hasta mojar su cuello.

Lleno de dolor y culpa, Armando dijo en voz alta:

—¡No busque más!

Sin embargo, este grito fue opacado en su totalidad por un desgarrador “¡NOOOOOOOO MÁS!” que provenía de un par de asientos atrás de la pareja. Tanto Armando como Soledad se quedaron sin palabras al ver la escena que sacaría a cualquiera de su mundo por unos cuantos segundos.

Cuando Soledad pudo despegar la vista de la grotesca imagen que se erguía ante todos los pasajeros, ella no pudo evitar ver cómo en la pantalla del teléfono de Óscar incontables imágenes de niñas desfilaban desnudas entre penes, semen y depravación. Su estómago solo pudo reaccionar con violentas arcadas por la repulsión que le causó ver esas fotografías. Armando, por su parte, dado que estaba a la par de la ventana, no alcanzaba a ver las imágenes en el

teléfono de Óscar, pero sí podía ver el pánico en su cara. Su mundo se había desquebrajado y por primera vez parecía entender lo que él les había hecho a tantas mujeres: violentarlas, exponerlas, abusarlas, denigrarlas, minimizarlas, traumatizarlas.

Armando entonces vio como Belén caía al suelo en medio pasillo, a lo cual él reaccionó, por inercia, poniéndose de pie en el asiento para ver si ella se encontraba bien. Al hacer esto, Armando descuidó lo que venía resguardando durante todo el viaje: la última evidencia de su crimen. Cuando Armando se levantó, un bolso maternal cayó en los regazos de Soledad y casi rueda hasta el suelo; el bolso estaba ahora a la vista del agente Leal.

Tanto Armando como Soledad quedaron petrificados. Era evidente que el agente Leal había visto el bolso. Ahora caminaba hacia ellos y la pareja no tenía más que decir que la verdad. Con pasos firmes y morales, el agente Leal caminó por lo que pareció una eternidad desde el primer asiento del bus hasta el asiento en donde Soledad y Armando se encontraban. Para su sorpresa, al oficial pareció no importarle, o no entender, su culpabilidad, dado que no se detuvo cuando pasó a su lado. Su prioridad era Belén. Estaban a salvo.

Sin embargo, en ese segundo de paz, Soledad bajó la guardia. Al escuchar otro autobús que pasó extremadamente cerca, sonando su bocina incesantemente, Soledad gritó, “¡BEBÉ!” y Armando intentó taparle la boca para disimular semejante grito.

Fue ahí cuando el agente Leal, después de confirmar rápidamente que Belén se encontraba bien y de indicarle a Óscar que se apartara de ella lo más posible, se devolvió y se detuvo ante Soledad y Armando.

—¡Uy, mi sádico, se le soltó la llorona en medio bus! —gritó el pasajero en el último asiento.

El agente Leal ignoró el comentario debido a que en ese momento le llegó una transmisión a su radio personal. Con tal de enfocarse en lo que tenía al frente, el agente le bajó casi todo el volumen

a la siguiente transmisión mientras que les solicitaba la cédula a Soledad y a Armando:

*“Compañeros, estamos recibiendo las coordenadas del intento de homicidio de la mañana de hoy. Según información enviada por el PANI en su mensaje de texto masivo, un bebé fue abandonado en un basurero en Los Colegios de Moravia. En este momento confirmamos la apertura de la investigación por intento de homicidio. Tenemos las grabaciones de 8 cámaras de algunos comercios locales. Parece ser que los supuestos padres son una pareja de muchachos jóvenes, cuya identidad no ha sido verificada hasta el momento. Por favor presentarse en el sitio cuanto antes. Cambio y fuera”.*

Aunque el volumen de la transmisión era casi inaudible, todos los pasajeros del bus lo escucharon. Sin embargo, al agente lo único que le interesaba era la tarea que tenía en mente en este momento: las cédulas de Armando y Soledad. Entre terror e incredulidad, Armando buscó las cédulas en el bolso maternal, mientras que Soledad solamente podía leer los mensajes de su tía que empezaron a llegar a su celular. El oficial estaba justo a su lado, tan solo con bajar la mirada, el agente Leal podría leer cada palabra en ellos.

*Sole, en donde anda? Ay dígame q ud. no es la del video, mi amor.*

**Cual video, tia?**

*Diay eso del bebé en Moravia. Esta en Faceboot y me lo pasaron por Whatsapp! Donde esta el gordo? Esta con uds? Hay q congoja! Llameme ya!*

...

**escribiendo**

...

**escribiendo**

...

*Por que Armando no contesta? Armandito tanvien esta en el video! Ahi la virjen purisima! SOLE, conteste. Que me le hisieron a Mathias?*

...

**escribiendo**

...

...

**Última vez conectada, 29 feb, 3:30 p. m.**

*Tia Gladys*

*Llamada perdida, Hoy 3:30 p. m.*

*Tia Gladys*

*Llamada perdida Hoy 3:31 p. m.*

*Tia Gladys*

*Llamada perdida Hoy 3:32 p. m.*

*Tia Gladys*

*Llamada perdida Hoy 3:33 p. m.*

*Tia Gladys*

*Mensaje de voz Hoy 3:34 p. m.*

*Tia Gladys*

*Mensaje de voz Hoy 3:35 p. m.*

—¿Está todo bien? —le preguntó el oficial Leal a Soledad, mientras él veía por la ventana del asiento de Armando. Soledad solo pudo

taparse la boca con la mano izquierda y sostener la respiración. Al mantener la mirada hacia el frente, inevitablemente hizo contacto visual con Gerald Gerardo quien la veía fijamente sin parpadear. Soledad, entonces, en una revelación interior, identificó a su par y solo pudo decir con una voz casi imperceptible:

—Yo también soy un ogro.

—Señor oficial, aquí están las cédulas —dijo Armando tratando de distraer al agente después de la revelación de Soledad. Cada vez más, Armando estaba convencido de que el agente todavía no sabía quiénes eran ellos y ni qué crimen habían cometido.

En el instante en el que el agente Leal tuvo las cédulas en sus robustas manos, recibió una segunda transmisión y nuevamente bajó el volumen hasta llegar a un sonido casi inaudible:

*"Compañeros, se confirma la identidad de los supuestos padres del bebé que habría sido dejado en la canasta de reciclaje fuera de una casa en Los Colegios de Moravia, la capital del mundo para abandonar recién nacidos en basureros municipales. Se trata de los josefinos Armando Castillo Rodríguez y Soledad Gómez Flores. Gómez Flores reaparece en los registros del OIJ después del asesinato de su madre hace un año. El aparente feminicidio se dio en su casa de habitación, el cual fue perpetuado por el esposo de la víctima, padrastro de Gómez Flores. Se rumora que fue un crimen pasional. La señora, Inocencia Flores, habría quedado embarazada a sus cincuenta años y su entonces esposo negó el argumento al decir que ningún niño volvería a quitarle su lugar, como había sucedido cuando nació Soledad, y decidió apuñalar a Inocencia y a su hijo en gestación al frente de múltiples testigos en una fiesta familiar. El supuesto asesino todavía no se ha ubicado a pesar de todos los esfuerzos policiales, pero se rumora que visita su casa de habitación con frecuencia, lo cual no ha podido ser determinado por la policía. Por otra parte, el señor Castillo salió de un albergue del PANI en donde era abusado y maltratado por los oficiales. Se rumora que Castillo había estado robando suplementos de recién nacido en los*

*comercios locales. Por favor, en caso de visualizarlos, arrestarlos en el acto. Cambio y fuera".*

El agente Leal tomó las cédulas en su mano y comparó la información con lo que acababa de escuchar. Entonces, así, penetró con su mirada la historia oculta en los ojos de Armando y Soledad.



► Por horas, Isaac se sentía sobrehumano  
y más fuerte de lo que él sabía que era en realidad. ◄

## CAPÍTULO



# Fólder blanco

Mientras que el agente Leal analizaba con detenimiento las cédulas en sus manos, le pareció escuchar algo fuera de lo normal detrás suyo. Con el rabillo del ojo podía ver a uno de los pasajeros moviendo frenéticamente su pierna derecha. Una vez más, para sorpresa de Armando y Soledad, el agente Leal pareció ignorar el hecho de que los nombres de los criminales en la transmisión fueran idénticos a los suyos. Él, entonces, les devolvió las identificaciones y les dio la espalda.

Una vez que se sintió a salvo, Soledad le preguntó al oficial si podía ir a ayudar a la muchacha que estaba en el piso, ya que sería inhumano abandonar a alguien en un momento tan frágil. Leal simplemente se encogió de hombros y dejó que Soledad socorriera a Belén mientras él descifraba el misterio del joven que movía la pierna.

A los ojos del agente, el joven no era nada fuera de lo común. Parecía estar en sus veintes, delgado, sin barba, con lentes cuadrados con una prescripción considerable, vestido con una camisa de cuadros de manga corta y con las faldas bien metidas en unos jeans holgados y desteñidos. El joven daba la impresión de ser un muchacho de alguna zona rural de Costa Rica que había migrado a la ciudad. Sus medias blancas debajo de los zapatos de vestir y la hebilla del cinturón con un símbolo agrario lo delataban. Leal pudo observar su reloj Casio

con calculadora y un fólder blanco en su mano que traía escrito por fuera un nombre completo y un número de cédula:

*Isaac Rojas Rojas*

*2-888-IRR*

Se podía observar que la tinta estaba corrida y diluida por lo que parecían gotas de agua, las cuales dibujaban patrones de manchas en múltiples direcciones. Leal podía ver que el joven Isaac llevaba otro documento manchado en su mano debajo del fólder, pero no alcanzaba a verlo.

Isaac, con todas sus venas capilares de su rostro a punto de estallar, miró la turbia placa del agente y amargamente preguntó:

—Me imagino que ya sabe quién soy yo, ¿verdad?

—¿Isaac Rojas? —preguntó Leal, utilizando la información en el fólder—. Identificación —dijo después de modo cortante.

—¡ESTO NO ES JUSTO! —estalló Isaac con vergüenza y frustración, mientras por su rostro bajaban lágrimas incontenibles.

Lo que el agente Leal no sabía era por qué reaccionó con tal exabrupto la simple solicitud de la cédula de identidad.

Antes de subirse al bus, Isaac había perdido toda posibilidad de salvarse a sí mismo y a su familia. A pesar de ser un joven increíblemente trabajador, Isaac todavía era un estudiante universitario, aunque llevara ocho años en la misma carrera: Enseñanza de las Matemáticas. En el colegio siempre le dijeron que era un joven brillante para los números y por eso decidió tomar el camino de esta noble ocupación. Otra razón por la cual Isaac resolvió iniciar su camino académico en esta rama fue porque esta fue la única carrera en la que había sido admitido en la nueva Universidad Desconcentrada de la Gran Provincia de Alajuela (UDeGPA). Para Isaac, su futuro

se resumía en seguir cortando caña genéticamente modificada con su padre o asistir a la UDeGPA.

Desde el punto de vista de Isaac, cortar caña no era completamente malo. Debido a los cambios genéticos hechos en la plata, cada vez que Isaac se pinchaba con alguno de sus tallos, sus dedos y manos se ensanchaban desproporcionalmente, lo cual siempre le parecía fascinante. Por horas, Isaac se sentía sobrehumano y más fuerte de lo que él sabía que era en realidad. Siempre había considerado que sus padres eran héroes. Ellos, a pesar de no tener estudios, lo sacaron adelante como pudieron, sin importar el precio. Las manos de Abraham, padre de Isaac, nunca más volvieron a su tamaño normal. Después de tantas décadas de trabajo con productos no regulados, sus brazos y manos perdían la forma humana con cada día que pasaba. Él y su esposa, Sara, veían esto como una bendición, como el precio a pagar por el sustento y la oportunidad de proveerle a su hijo un futuro mejor. Sin embargo, a Isaac siempre le dolía en el alma ver cómo la única fuente de ingreso era ínfima, apenas alcanzaba para costear sus necesidades y el dinero se gastaba principalmente en los estudios y la hipoteca de la casa.

A pesar de las dificultades, Abraham y Sara decidieron, con una daga en el corazón, que lo mejor para todos era que Isaac saliera de su pequeña granja y estudiara. El simple hecho de ir a la universidad, en su mente, les garantizaría un mejor futuro a todos, especialmente a Isaac. Para pagar sus estudios y ayudar con la hipoteca de la casa, Isaac había empezado a dar tutorías de matemática en centros nocturnos cerca de la universidad y del lugar en donde se hospedaba: una lúgubre habitación sin ventanas, clóset, cama ni puerta. Una cortina era todo lo que separaba su habitación de las otras siete de ese piso.

Dadas las condiciones en las que vivía, eran muchas las noches en las que Isaac llegaba a su cuarto y solo podía comer arroz con chayote. Era lo que podía permitirse para no acostarse con hambre y mantener, al mismo tiempo, sus finanzas en orden. En otras

ocasiones, Isaac llegaba de las tutorías tan tarde que debía tomar una decisión: cenar o dormir, ya que al día siguiente debía estar en la UDeGPA a las 5 a. m. para realizar sus tareas y hacer las lecturas de la clase que no había podido hacer en la semana. En esos casos, mientras pensaba en obtener algún día una propiedad como profesor de matemáticas en el NuMAEP (Nuevo Ministerio de Alabanza Educativa Pública), un tradicional nombre que cambió después de ocho años de un gobierno neopentecostal, Isaac se iba a dormir en paz sabiendo que todo el esfuerzo algún día tendría su recompensa. Lo que Isaac no le contaba a sus padres era que a él le pagaban cada cuatro meses. En los institutos en donde trabajaba informalmente, sin seguro de vida ni derechos laborales, le dejaron claro desde el primer día que, como Isaac no tenía un nombramiento fijo, él podría dejar "botado" su puesto en el instituto en cualquier momento y cambiar de trabajo por uno mejor. Por ende, los pagos se hacían efectivos al final del módulo, lo anterior con el fin de asegurarse de que los profesores se quedaran e impartieran en su totalidad el ciclo lectivo al que se habían comprometido.

Después ocho largos años en la universidad, mezclados con ocho eternos años de precariedad laboral, Isaac estaba iniciando su tercer año del programa de estudios, lo cual lo convertía en estudiante/docente elegible para el nuevo concurso de antecedentes académicos y religiosos del NuMAEP. En este nuevo concurso, los aspirantes debían comprobar por métodos objetivos y tangibles sus atestados académicos y espirituales, algo para lo cual Isaac se había preparado por muchos años. Por un lado, en la parte académica, por fin tenía sus atestados: ya cumplía con el requisito de haber concluido el segundo año de la carrera de Enseñanza Cristiana con Énfasis en Matemáticas. Por otro, en la parte espiritual, la más importante del concurso, Isaac sabía que obtendría el puntaje máximo. En su mente, él sería capaz de ganar estos puntos al demostrar el sacrificio que hizo por el bienestar de su familia, al haber trabajado en condiciones precarias por casi una década ayudando a estudiantes en situaciones de riesgo social, al haber vivido sin lujos ni alimentación adecuada por años, siendo

humilde y sin renegarle a la vida todo lo que le había costado a él y a su familia estar donde estaban hoy.

Este era el momento que Isaac había esperado toda su vida: una oportunidad para demostrarle al mundo, a su familia, a sus estudiantes, a sí mismo y, especialmente, al NuMAEP el poder de la resiliencia (Isaac había aprendido este término en una clase de ciencias políticas en donde hablaban del caso Guerrero-Álvarez y su obsesión por con el poder).

Un día antes de la entrega de los documentos oficiales para el Concurso de Antecedentes Académicos y Religiosos Feb-2032, a Isaac le notificaron que estaba incumpliendo con un requisito esencial para ser nombrado: el TCA (Trabajo Comunal de Alabanza). Algo interesante había salido de estos ocho años de gobierno neopentecostal: cualquier entidad pública tenía acceso completo a sus datos, para bien o para mal.

—En el orden está Dios —dijo la secretaria encargada de las revisiones preliminares del concurso— y si usted no me trae un comprobante de culminación del TCA, alabada sea la ministra Santa Merulyn, usted no podrá presentar sus atestados, por más que califique.

—Pero señora, ¿cómo quiere que le entregue eso si nadie me lo dijo? ¿Y cómo voy a cumplir en un día las horas que me hacen falta, horas que ni san don Fulgencio Álvarez, Dios lo tenga en su santa gloria, pudo realizar en toda su vida?

—¡Qué falta de respeto, jovenzuelo! Nunca utilice el nombre de san don Fulgencio Álvarez en vano. Y con respecto al TCA, acá puedo confirmar que usted, efectivamente, leyó el correo el lunes 5 de enero de 2032 a las 6:06 p. m. e invirtió alrededor de seis minutos en la lectura de los adjuntos. Así que nos damos por enterados de que usted sabía de todos los requisitos. Lo esperamos mañana, domingo 29 de febrero, después del culto claro está, con el requisito o mejor ni se presente. Buen día.

### *Clic.*

—El Nuevo Ministerio de Alabanza Educativa Pública le agradece su llamada. ¡Que el fuego pentecostal guíe tu camino! ¡Hasta pronto!

Cuando la llamada terminó, Isaac no sabía qué hacer y entró en pánico. De este concurso dependía su vida y la de su familia. Él no podía seguir pagando la hipoteca, su alquiler, sus estudios y demás gastos de ambos hogares. Por esta oportunidad Isaac había estado esperando ocho interminables años y la verdad era que no podía pasar un día más en la pobreza, en la precariedad, con hambre, con incertidumbre y con todo lo que eso significaba para su familia. Isaac sabía que, si él no cambiaba su condición actual, eventualmente todo iba a estar peor: sus padres iban a perder su casa y él nunca iba a poder avanzar profesionalmente.

Su estrés era tal que sus manos empezaron a hincharse como lo hacían cuando se pinchaba con la caña de azúcar. Sus manos se volvieron irreconocibles al punto que dejó caer el teléfono porque ya no podía sostenerlo en sus manos debido a la monstruosidad del tamaño de sus dedos. Pero, “¿qué podría hacer en este momento?”, pensaba para sí mismo. Para Isaac, realmente no había otra opción: o conseguía ese certificado del cumplimiento de las horas o volvía a la finca de su familia, la cual estaba hipotecada, a trabajar en el campo con su padre y simplemente esperar a que les arrebataran todo hasta quedar en la calle viviendo debajo de un puente. Él no se imaginaba a su padre pidiendo limosnas o vendiendo periódicos en la calle. Tampoco podría visualizar a su madre desempleada y con el corazón roto por haber perdido la finca. Sería un castigo ver la decepción en sus caras día tras día por su falta de compromiso, por no haber logrado lo que tanto dijo que iba a lograr, por no haber cumplido el sueño que él les había prometido que iba a alcanzar. La decepción de sus padres sería infinita porque ellos lo sacrificaron todo para que él pudiera llegar a donde estaba, y no para que su hijo los abandonara y tirara todo por la borda. Isaac se sentía culpable por querer volver, aunque era lo único que quería en este momento.

Pero sabía que, al hacerlo, todo el esfuerzo iba a ser en vano y sus ocho años se irían a la basura.

Era realmente imposible completar todas las horas del TCA en un día, pero el reto lo motivó a tomar decisiones que no habría hecho en otras condiciones. Isaac había escuchado de métodos alternativos para conseguir el certificado. Había historias de estudiantes que, de una u otra forma, sobornaron a sus coordinadores de TCA para que les firmaran el reporte de cumplimiento de horas a cambio de una suma de dinero. Se decía que todas las personas tenían un precio y se rumoreaba que los directores de TCA usualmente se interesaban en el negocio por lo lucrativo que resultaba coordinar los trabajos de alabanza. ¿De qué otra forma podría un pastor mantener su estilo de vida? ¿Con su salario de profesor?

A Isaac le temblaban sus grotescas manos con tan solo pensar en cometer ese tipo de crimen. Él no se podía imaginar vivir con este tipo de delito en su consciencia cuando se había esforzado tanto por alcanzar sus metas de forma honrada. ¿Cuáles serían las consecuencias si él decidía tomar ese camino? ¿Había otra solución para él? A Isaac le dolía en el alma considerar el soborno como una opción seria. Tenía un día para obtener el certificado y sin él moriría de hambre. Debía escoger entre dos escenarios: encontrar a alguien que se dejara sobornar para él presentar los documentos faltantes al día siguiente o abandonarlo todo.

Decidido a cumplir con el objetivo de su vida, Isaac tomó la decisión de obtener ese certificado a como diera lugar. Enajenado por sus pesadillas y sus sueños, Isaac se armó de valor y tocó a la puerta de su coordinador de carrera. Le explicó que tenía 24 horas para presentar los documentos del concurso de antecedentes y que solamente le faltaba una carta comprobatoria que indicara que él ya había realizado el TCA, a lo cual el director de carrera respondió: "¡Pero si usted no va ni por la mitad de las horas, muchacho de Dios!". Por un momento a Isaac se le olvidó que todas las instituciones tenían acceso a sus documentos y el director de carrera

era una de las personas autorizadas a revisar los expedientes. Ahora sentía más vergüenza y culpa que cuando entró y no pudo decir la siguiente frase: “¿Cuál es su precio?”. Sin embargo, el silencio de Isaac habló por él.

—¡Yo sé lo que usted anda buscando acá, jovenzuelo! —dijo el director—. Por cierto, vaya a que le vean las manos. Parece un agricultor con esas *garras*. Un futuro profesor no se puede ver así. Vea, muchos de mis estudiantes vienen con la misma situación y la verdad es que sería genial poder ayudarlos a todos a cumplir sus sueños. Pero exponer mi nombre, así como el nombre de esta prestigiosa sede desconcentrada, es impensable. Además, estaríamos hablando de cometer un delito. ¿Está consciente de lo que me estaría haciendo incurrir? Sí, ya sé que usted no me ha sobornado ni mucho menos, pero por la cara que trae se nota a leguas que eso es lo que quiere. ¿O me equivoco?

—No es lo que usted piensa. Yo llevo...

—Sí, yo sé —lo interrumpió el director—. Lleva ocho años en esta carrera, viene de una familia sencilla, imparte tutorías en los institutos del barrio y por alguna razón vive de plátanos maduros y chayote. Sí, yo sé. Todos los sabemos. Su vida no es fácil, pero créame, usted no es el único. Se lo digo porque paso horas leyendo sus perfiles. Pero así es la vida. Por más injusta que sea, así es. No es por romantizar la pobreza, pero qué lindo es llegar a su propia casa y cenar un buen salmón sabiendo que en algún momento uno no tuvo ni qué comer ni dónde caer muerto. ¡Qué lindo es salir de ahí! Es un sentimiento tan... tan... bueno usted me entiende. Bueno, tal vez no. Algún día lo entenderá... O no. En fin, esto de ser pobre le ayuda a uno a apreciar lo que tiene. Créame.

—Entonces, ¿usted... me puede ayudar?

—¡Salga de mi oficina! Parece que no entendió nada de lo que dije. No me haga llamar a seguridad. Suerte con eso, Rojitas. Por cierto, güevón usted ya está muy viejo para seguir en la U. ¿No ha pensado

en volver a la granjita? Ya la pinta la tiene. Le luce. ¿Aló? —dijo el director al contestar una llamada que le entró en ese momento—. Sí, sí, aquí tengo un alma en pena. Sí, Rojitas. Qué pecado, ¿verdad? Ese mismo. El que lleva toda la vida acá y no avanza. ¿Otra alma en pena? Ok... ok... Pasalo —y con esas palabras el director de carrera despachó a Isaac de su oficina mientras recibía a otro estudiante en una situación similar.

Ya no había nada qué hacer. Isaac lo había intentado. Honestamente, la oferta de volver a casa parecía la mejor opción. Este mundo de la ciudad le había quedado muy grande, tal y como su síndrome del impostor siempre se lo había hecho creer. En su fólder listo para entregar en el concurso de antecedentes solo le hacía falta el documento del TCA para cambiar su futuro. Pero, como se lo dijo el director de carrera, tal vez ya era demasiado para él. Así, al salir de la oficina de tan respetable autoridad, Isaac tomó el fólder en sus manos y lo miró una última vez. Lágrimas rodaron por su rostro y lanzó el fajo de documentos en el basurero de la recepción. Con su corazón hecho un nudo, le dijo gracias a como pudo a la recepcionista y abrió la puerta hacia su nueva realidad.

En el momento en que Isaac miró hacia el cielo tratando de reconciliarse con sus sueños hechos añicos y con su nueva verdad, escuchó un sonido que venía de la recepción.

—¡Psssst! Psssst! Psssst! Rojitas, venga acá.

—Doña Emilce, perdón que no la saludara. ¿Cómo está? Es que ando en otras. ¡Qué pena!

—Ay, Rojitas, ¡vergüenza la mía! Es que no pude evitar escuchar su conversación. Pobrecito mi chiquito —dijo la recepcionista—. ¿En serio es lo único que le hace falta? ¿Esos papeles son los del concurso? Vea, aquí entre nos, yo no creo en eso de Jesús ni qué ocho cuartos. Yo creo en la platica. Ojalá en esos billeticos verdes de cien mil pesitos con la cara de la ecologista Cristina Figueroa. ¡Qué mujerón esa! Eso sí me saca de los apuros, no un puta pastor que me roba

el único cinquito que me gano. ¡Coma mierda, juemilputas viejos esos aprovechados! Así que feliz me voy pa' donde el pisuicas, pero derecho que le ayudo a usted, mi corazón —continuó doña Emilce—. Yo sé en dónde se guardan los informes completos de horas. Y sé cómo falsificarle la firma al señor Mr. Culic cuadrado ese del jefe. Usted quédese aquí sentadito cuchitico. Yo ya vengo. Por cierto, ¿de cuánta platica estamos hablando? Tampoco puedo perder el trabajito que tanto me ha costado conseguir por una cochinadilla. A ver, tito. Saque el *billuyo*. Ver pa' creer, ¿va? Así es la cosa en esta vida. Por cierto, tengo que informarle pa' que no diga después que no le dije nada. A veces, la Contraloría viene a revisar los informes de horas y si ven que alguien mágicamente las hizo todas en un día puede que hasta llamen a la policía y toda la cosa. Sería todo un espectáculo. ¡A la chorpa lo mandan! Eso nunca ha pasado, pero diay, una nunca sabe, ¿va? ¿Le hago la vueltica siempre? ¿Está seguro de que eso es lo que quiere?

En su conmoción, Isaac solo pudo asentir.

—Ahora, ¡sáqueme ese fólder de la basura y séqueseme esas lágrimas de cocodrilo! Todo va a estar bien, mijito —dijo doña Emilce quien, con sus grandiosos 1,45 metros de altura, corrió a velocidad máxima para aprovechar que el director de carrera estaba ocupado.

En un segundo, Isaac se había zambullido en el basurero a buscar su preciado fólder. Para su sorpresa, todos los documentos estaban intactos. Sin embargo, la portada se encontraba completamente manchada por restos de frutas, comida y líquidos desconocidos. Con sumo cuidado, quitó la prensa y colocó todos los papeles en el escritorio de doña Emilce. Ahora lo que le quedaba era ver cuánto y cómo le iba a pagar a la señora. Lo único que tenía era el dinero de la hipoteca del mes, aunque, de todas formas, en sus adentros, Isaac sabía que, de no obtener este trabajo en el NuMAEP, ya no podría seguir pagándola. En ese caso, era solo cuestión de meses para que les arrebataran la casa. Así que, con el dolor que esto significaba, Isaac estaba dispuesto a arriesgarlo todo por su familia.

Un minuto después, doña Emilce llegó con una sonrisa de oreja a oreja y dijo en tono burlón:

—El señor ha escuchado tus plegarias, alma en pena. Pedid y se te concederá —después de una breve pausa, continuó—. Bueno, mi amor, aquí está lo que quería. Pellízquese, mijo. Deje de andar en la luna. ¿Y la platica? Total, nunca me dijo cuánto me iba a dar. ¿No me diga que ya se echó pa' trás? De esto no hay vuelta pa' trás, corazón. Yo ya metí sus datos en el sistema y aquí está su certificado autenticado, firmado y bautizado.

Con pesadez en el corazón, Isaac tomó la certificación en sus manos aún parcialmente hinchadas y dijo:

—¿Cómo hacemos el pago? Esto es todo lo que tengo —confesó Isaac mientras le mostraba la pantalla de su teléfono a su salvadora.

—¡Ay, Rojitas! Diay, está bien. No es mucho, pero diay, por lo menos con eso puedo ir al súper.

Completamente humillado y casi arrepentido, Isaac le hizo la transferencia a un yerno del primo tercero de la tía abuela del suegro de doña Emilce. Nadie se podía enterar de que esta transacción se había realizado, así que había que buscar la manera de no dejar rastros. Con todos los documentos en mano, doña Emilce le dijo a Isaac que no podía ir a presentar todo así sin un fólder nuevo, por lo que le escribió el nombre completo y el número de cédula en la portada de un nuevo fólder blanco. Para doña Emilce, los sobres de manila eran ordinarios y desechables. Era mejor que Isaac llevara un fólder nuevo y duradero para tan importante ocasión, ya que, después de todo, ella era quien lo iba a hacer un profesional de verdad. Con todo el orgullo de una madre, le acomodó los papeles en el orden sugerido y, con una gran ilusión, le devolvió el fólder a Isaac, diciéndole:

—¡Qué rápido crecen mis pollitos! ¡Vaya, vaya! Póngase bien guapo mañana y me consigue ese trabajito. Y busque a ver cómo se desinfla

esas manitas. Parece que viene de allá pa' entro en lugar de la universidad. ¡Chao!

Una vez terminado el culto, Isaac se presentó en la NuMAEP con sus mejores ropas: una camisa de cuadros que le habían regalado hace tres navidades, unos jeans ya desteñidos por tanto uso, sus medias orgullosamente blancas y sus zapatos de vestir, un regalo de su padre. Estos fueron los zapatos que don Abraham había estrenado en su boda. Esforzándose para esconder sus manos hinchadas por la vergüenza, la culpa y la ansiedad, Isaac entregó los documentos para el concurso con su mejor actitud. Ya lo peor había pasado y su futuro estaba a un sello oficial de distancia.

—Siguiente —dijo la nasal asistente secretarial Come Papaya.

Isaac no podía contener la emoción. Era real. Este era su momento. Por un segundo, pudo saborear el salmón que el director de carrera le había vaticinado. ¡Adiós estúpida e incapacitante pobreza! Sin embargo, su cena salmónida se vio interrumpida por una frase que parecía una broma:

—Pero, este fólder es blanco —dijo la innombrable, devolviéndose-lo de mala gana a Isaac en su cara—. Se le pidió un sobre manila. ¿Por qué a los jóvenes les cuesta tanto seguir instrucciones? —preguntó la burócrata con desgana—. ¡Así yo no le puedo aceptar nada, muchacho! Vaya que me atrasa con la fila. Aprenda a seguir instrucciones en la próxima.

—¿Qué tiene que ver el color del fólder con todo lo que está adentro? ¡Esto es injusto! ¡Usted no sabe todo lo que he sufrido para estar acá!

—De todas formas, a simple vista se nota que le faltan documentos. Ni se lo voy a revisar por insolente e incumplido. Por cierto, injusto es tener que hablar con gente tan malcriada como usted. ¡Quién sabe de qué potrero viene este maicero! Venir a ofenderme a mí. ¡A mí! Una licenciada con tesis de honor en las síncopas, elisiones y raíces supletivas de las lenguas de alabanza. Qué falta de temor

de DIOS. Vea, las cosas son como son y no como usted cree que pueden ser. ¡Siguiente!

Con un dolor agonizante, Isaac solamente pudo caer de rodillas y llorar amargamente sobre su fólder blanco. No podía creer lo que estaba sucediendo. Esto tenía que ser una broma. ¿A quién le iban a negar documentos por el color de un fólder? Lo que era peor, ¿por qué en pleno 2032 el reclutamiento seguía siendo presencial con malditos fólderes de papel? Isaac nunca se había sentido tan resentido con la vida como ese día. Miraba a su alrededor y todo el mundo lo ignoraba. Aunque su vida dependiera de ellos, a todos los presentes lo que les importaba era un color, no una historia de vida.

Justo cuando Isaac volteó la vista al cielo pidiendo una explicación divina, le vibró su celular en el bolsillo derecho. Era un mensaje de texto de doña Emilce. Isaac lo leyó y se atragantó con su propia saliva por las posibles consecuencias que tendría que afrontar:

*Hay mi chiquito se dieron cuenta. Me despidieron de la u! y ahora lo andan buscando por todo lado. Me digieron que mandaron a los pacos a buscarlo por falsificacion de documentos. Mi amor escondete ya. Vorre este message.*

El corazón de Isaac nunca había latido tan violentamente como en este momento. Su visión se nubló: se le había olvidado cómo respirar. Isaac pensaba que se iba a desmayar en plena sala de recepción, hasta que escuchó a la Licda. Come Papaya decir:

—¡Es él! ¡Yo sabía que no podía traer todo completo! ¡Alguien que se ve de esa forma jamás podría ser un académico! ¡Arréstenlo! —dijo después de recibir la información del crimen por mensaje de texto.

Cuando los oficiales de seguridad se abalanzaron sobre Isaac, este, con sus grotescas manos, logró evadirlos y salir corriendo del lugar a toda velocidad. Al mirar hacia atrás, pudo ver a los guardias

de seguridad y a la señora Papaya corriendo detrás de él, así que, en su desesperación, se subió en el primer bus que vio. El bus "Hacia ningún lugar".

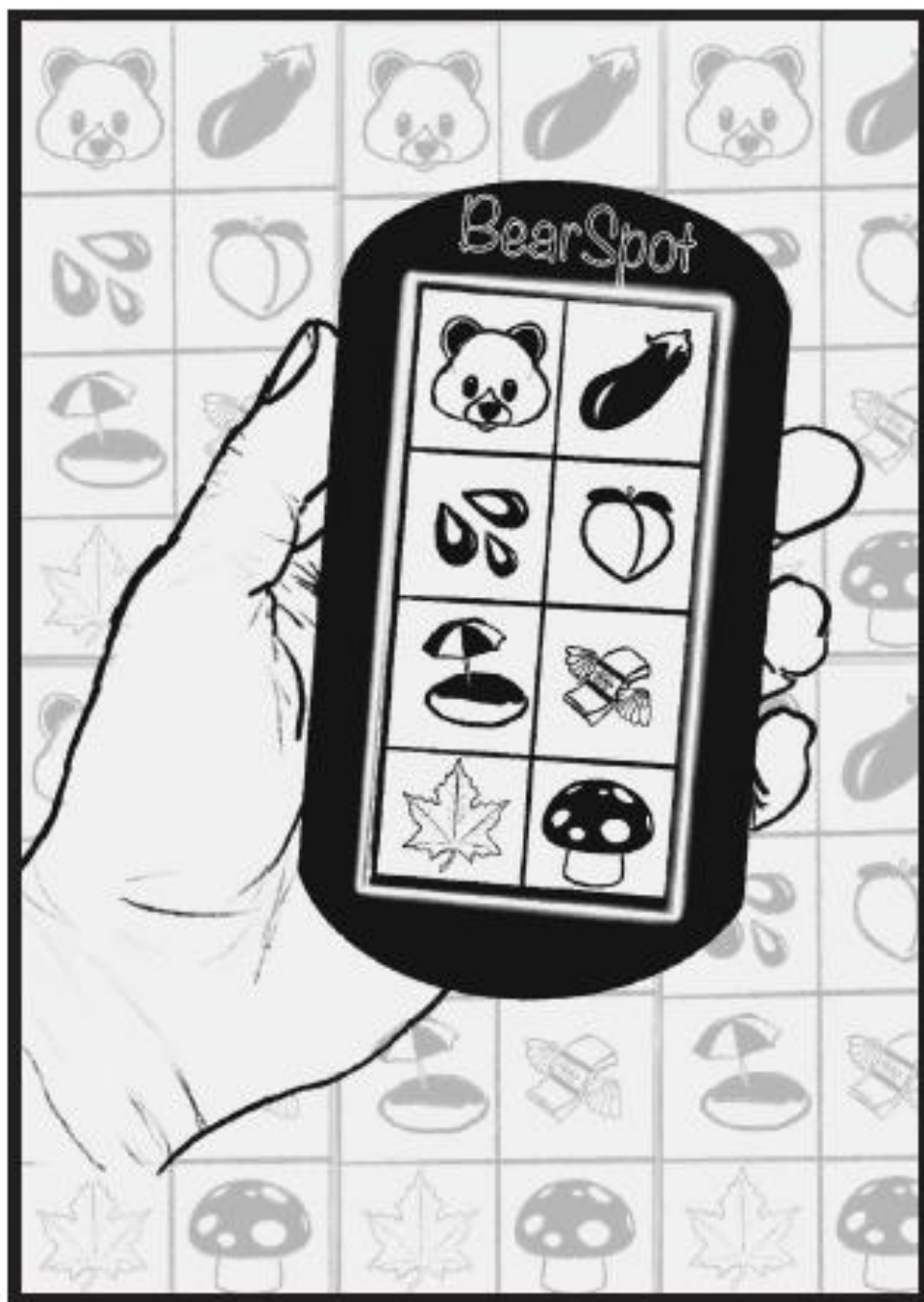


—Identifica... —empezó a decir el agente Leal, pero no pudo terminar su petición. Por la autopista pasaron seis automóviles a una velocidad tan alta que casi estremecieron el bus. Los seis autos parecían haber identificado su blanco, ya que después de pasar al costado del bus, viraron en unos cuantos kilómetros adelante. El agente parecía estar en un trance en el momento en que vio a los vehículos detenerse a una distancia intimidante.

Todavía con lágrimas en sus ojos, Isaac alzó la mirada para encontrarse con un ausente oficial. Isaac extendió su mano para que viera la identificación y así aceptar los cargos que se le imputaban. Sin embargo, el agente Leal hizo lo inesperado. Con desdén, le dijo a Isaac:

—Sí, sí. Gracias —sin revisar su cédula. Luego caminó hasta llegar al fondo del bus, se sentó y se sostuvo el rostro entre sus carnosas manos.

Isaac se quedó perplejo. ¿Qué estaba ocurriendo? ¿No era por él que habían detenido el bus? ¿Había en serio un criminal abordo? Ahora él tenía miedo.



► Martín tenía otro secreto: su perfil de BearSpot. ◄

## CAPÍTULO



# ¿BearSpot?

Hipnotizado por el enorme cuerpo agrario sentado al otro lado del bus, Martín no podía dejar de mirar hacia su izquierda. Desde que se montó al bus con el corazón en la mano, notó que justo detrás de él se había sentado uno de los hombres más atractivos que había visto en su vida. Ese *sexapil* del alajuelense siempre había sido algo místico para Martín. Isaac, por su parte, no se percató de que Martín llevaba horas viéndolo y desvistiéndolo. Isaac solo podía pensar en regresar a casa y tener que decir las siguientes palabras: "Ma, Pa. Estoy de vuelta, pero no por mucho. Vamos a perder la casa y pronto estaré en la cárcel. Nada valió la pena". Con esta idea dándole vueltas en su cabeza, Isaac jamás se hubiera imaginado que su cara de preocupación y ansiedad fueran irresistibles en este momento. Mucho menos que sus brazos y manos, ensanchados por el crimen y la culpa, fueran su característica más excitante a los ojos de Martín.

Sin embargo, Martín no podía distraerse tan fácilmente hoy. La presencia del oficial le aumentaba la ansiedad y no era como que pudiera encender un puro de marihuana en este momento para calmarse. A Martín le costaba demasiado reconciliar su realidad con su sobriedad. Estaba acostumbrado a consumir marihuana al menos unas 4 veces al día: una vez antes del desayuno, otra después del desayuno, una más después de almuerzo y una última a las 4:20 o antes de dormir.

Martín realmente pensaba que la gente, en general, necesitaba fumar más marihuana. Todo el mundo siempre andaba muy estresado y con demasiadas preocupaciones: que las hipotecas, que los préstamos, que las mensualidades de las escuelas y guarderías, que el diario, que los recibos de los servicios del mes, que la fiesta del cumpleaños de la suegra, que las medicinas del bebé enfermo, que los pagos de la letra de cambio de la universidad. Todo esto ahogaba a sus amigos, costarricenses promedio. Todos vivían en deuda. Su vida les estaba siendo alquilada. Su vida pertenecía a alguien más. El tico promedio vivía para pagar cosas y para estresarse por ellas. Pero en su imaginario, Martín creía que todo eso, todo el estrés, se podía esfumar con un puro de marihuana.

En su vida solo había dos cosas que le robaban la paz. La primera era quemarse sus pestañas. Cuando, por descuido, le encendían un puro de marihuana muy cerca de sus ojos, usualmente terminaban quemándole una o varias. Martín odiaba esto. El olor a vellos achicharronados no era algo que disfrutara. Además, siempre tenía que inventarse alguna excusa ante sus conocidos y compañeros de trabajo para que no preguntaran por sus pestañas desvanecientes. Entre sus mil y una excusas siempre estaba la vieja confiable: "No, no tengo nada. Siempre han sido así" o "Diay, que me acerqué mucho a una parrilla y diay usted sabe cómo es la vara". Pero nunca jamás decir que era un adicto, a pesar de que asistía a las reuniones de NA (Narcóticos Anónimos) cuando quería conseguir más marihuana o cuando quería ligar. Martín se negaba a aceptar que quemarse las pestañas tan frecuentemente era un problema. En su mente era por ser descuidado con el fuego y la droga en sí no tenía nada que ver.

La segunda cosa que le robaba el sueño era algo más, completamente desligado del problema con sus pestañas. Tampoco se relacionaba con su novia. A pesar de haber estado con Anita por seis años ya, ellos nunca habían tenido intimidad sexual porque tanto Anita como sus padres desaprobaban las relaciones sexuales fuera del matrimonio. En su mente, cuerpo y papeleta

política los preceptos cristianos imperaban. Lo anterior no aplicaba en lo más mínimo para Martín, pero era increíblemente conveniente para él.

Su físico tampoco era algo que lo mantuviera desvelado. Con sus hábitos de ciclista y nadador, Martín no tenía de qué preocuparse. Cuando no iba al trabajo en bicicleta, iba a nadar después de su largo día y no había semana en que llegara a menos de 100 km recorridos en sus ejercicios combinados. En su página de *Fakestagram Fans Only*, Martín subía diariamente fotos de sus avances compuestos de torsos desnudos y cuádriceps envidiables. Dependiendo del día y del logro, se podían ver fotos de Martín semierecto por encima de la licra o de la ubicación de su lunar en la espalda baja.

Esta necesidad de aprobación se hacía cada vez más grande y ampliaba la cantidad de compañeros deportistas con quienes compartía sus logros en línea. Además, como un valor agregado, estos seguidores de repente comenzaban a escribirle muy frecuentemente para hablar, no solo sobre deportes, sino también del famoso lunar y de lo abultado tanto de los cuádriceps, como de lo que se reprimía debajo de la licra.

Lo que no sabían era que esto no era lo único que se disimulaba debajo de la licra. Martín tenía otro secreto: su perfil de *BearSpot*. En esa aplicación (disfrazada bajo una imagen de un cronómetro tipo Tabata) la gente podía socializar virtual y físicamente al tocar la cara de la persona en la que se interesaba y ver si esta era conductor o pasajero. Si era conductor, la persona elegida podía llevarlo a su destino, tipo taxi. Si era un pasajero, uno podía elegir si compartir su destino con esta persona o no. En todo caso, chofer y pasajero podían hablar de cualquier tema en el *BearSpot*, intercambiar información de contacto en caso de haber sentido química e incluso remover cualquier prenda de vestir, siempre y cuando las dos partes así lo pidieran.

Mínimo una vez a la semana, Martín utilizaba una tarjeta de crédito que nadie sabía que tenía solo para un viaje en *BearSpot*.

El dilema que siempre tenía era decidir de dónde salir y adónde ir para nunca verse con algún conocido y que lo dejaran en lugares que no estuvieran asociados con la iglesia, el trabajo y los deportes. Usualmente, Martín pedía el servicio, cuando le decía a su novia que ese día iría en transporte público al trabajo. Por ende, ese día se tardaría más en llegar a casa, si llegaba del todo. Para tomar el *BearSpot*, Martín caminaba por alrededor de media hora para no encontrarse con caras conocidas en la aplicación, dada su delatadora función de localización geográfica. Por obvias razones, la foto de su perfil no mostraba su rostro. En cambio, este tenía algunas de las muchas fotos de sus famosos cuádriceps o de un lugar cercano a su seductor lunar. En su perfil, se leían leyendas como:

Cero afeminados

No locas

No gordos

No mayores de 35

Discreto

No fotos de cara

Poppers

No pasivas

Dotado

Jock

No trans

Masc x Masc

Sin lugar



Una vez que Martín localizaba y hacía todo un análisis exhaustivo en redes sociales del chofer que iba a escoger para confirmar que fuera de su agrado, lo seleccionaba con un temblor en sus dedos, como si estuviera cometiendo un crimen. Su respiración se cortaba y en muchos casos Martín debió esperar al chofer sentado a la orilla de la calle porque sus piernas colapsaban ante tal expectativa.

Estas experiencias le daban vida a Martín. Por fin, él era libre de charlar con otro hombre, un hombre que él hallara atractivo, de cualquier tema, aunque las conversaciones usualmente giraban alrededor del trabajo, los deportes y los hombres. Sin embargo, conforme pasaba el tiempo, Martín empezó a sentirse más empoderado durante sus viajes en *BearSpot*. Inició por contarle a varios choferes cómo le gustaría estar con otro hombre y cómo las pornos parecían un poco rígidas y falsas. Para su enorme sorpresa, Martín se dio cuenta de que estas conversaciones se sentían liberadoras y podía ver el grado de libertad con el cual otros hombres también expresaban sus deseos homosexuales.

Sin embargo, Martín se aferraba a la idea de que este era su único espacio seguro. Un lugar para hablar, tocar y experimentar sin que nadie se diera cuenta. Para el final del primer año utilizando su aplicación, Martín empezó a llevar las conversaciones a otro nivel. Sin miedo a las consecuencias gracias a las políticas de confidencialidad de *BearSpot*, en más de una ocasión, Martín terminó masturbándose en el asiento del pasajero con ayuda del chofer, quien tampoco se contenía al tener un estímulo en su viaje.

También había viajes no exitosos en *BearSpot* y estos usualmente se daban cuando el chofer utilizaba una de las siguientes frases: "Usted no parece gay", "Se ve muy machito para que le guste esta vara", "A mí siempre me cuadraron los maes que parecen heteros, pero no lo son". Martín entonces terminaba el viaje en donde fuera que estuvieren. Desde el punto de vista de Martín, él no era gay. No entendía la obsesión de la gente de etiquetar a los demás. Pero él claramente no quería ser llamado *gay* en público. Eso no es lo que él era.

En esos momentos incómodos y frustrantes, Martín se bajaba furioso del *BearSpot*, encendía un puro de marihuana y caminaba a casa.

¿Qué ganaba la gente con decirle *gay*? Él claramente no lo era. A él no le interesaban las marchas, ni los arcoíris, ni los unicornios, ni los bares, ni el maquillaje, ni las locas en Rupaul. Por esas razones, él sabía que no era *gay*, o al menos eso se decía. A Martín lo que le interesaba era compartir la intimidad con otro hombre: el poder hablar, acariciar y acabar con otro hombre. ¿Acaso por eso tenía que andar una bandera *gay* en el pecho y pregonar que el clóset es para la ropa? Eso era para las *locas* traumatizadas que vivieron antes de la aprobación del matrimonio *gay*. Ese tipo de *gay* le molestaba. Si ya tenían sus derechos, ¿por qué seguían molestando con sus banderas y cuentos de discriminación? Martín lo encontraba patético, ya que ser *playo* no era nada por lo cual había que sentirse orgulloso y menos decirlo en público.

No había montaña que escalar ni cuerpo de agua que cruzar más complejo que dejarse ser. Martín se aferraba a la idea de que con fumarse un *purito* todas esas dudas sobre ser o no *gay* se esfumarían. Pero las cuatro veces al día estaban probando ser insuficientes. Cada vez con más frecuencia, Martín tenía que recurrir a más distribuidores para poder consumir dosis más altas de marihuana. Las texturas, los recuerdos, los olores y las sensaciones de cada viaje en *BearSpot* volvían a su mente incesantemente. Y esas memorias eran lo único que le quitaba el sueño en la noche. Para Martín la posibilidad de que el mundo entero se diera cuenta de que en ocasiones se sentía atraído por otros hombres era inconcebible.

Sin embargo, sin importar cuántas veces Martín viajara en *BearSpot*, él sentía que algo le hacía falta. Esa conexión tan efímera y restringida en espacio y tiempo hacían que quisiera más. A pesar de tener todo el tiempo y espacio que él deseara con su novia, no experimentaba esa chispa que sentía cada vez que le acariciaba la mano al conductor de *BearSpot* intencionalmente o por accidente. Aunque fueran segundos, para Martín estos valían más que una eternidad con su novia.

Fue así como hoy, 29 de febrero de 2032, al caminar de su trabajo hacia el lugar secreto para pedir el *BearSpot*, Martín notó a un par de hombres entrando a un lugar desconocido para él en medio de la ciudad. Para entrar, los descarados sujetos simplemente corrieron una cortina y se esfumaron. Martín también se quería esfumar, así que apagó su puro, lo guardó estratégicamente y siguió los pasos de sus antecesores. Al entrar, el corazón de Martín volvió a latir como el primer día que pidió su *BearSpot*. Detrás de la mágica cortina, Martín se encontró una escena inesperada: vapor, paños minúsculos, casilleros, cuartos, saunas y muchos, muchos hombres desnudos o semidesnudos. Flácidos, erectos, velludos, rasurados, interesados, asqueados. En el segundo en que Martín dejó sus pertenencias en el casillero y se arropó con el paño provisto, se sintió desnudo social y físicamente.

Martín no podía ocultar su culpa erecta mientras caminaba en los pasillos internos. Dentro de él, aunque quería disfrutar ese momento por todo lo que había ocultado durante su vida, la presión por la posibilidad de encontrarse con alguien conocido fue más de lo que pudo tolerar.

Desesperado por salir, Martín se dio una última oportunidad. En su dirección hacia la salida, notó un cuerpo maduro y prominente con un bulto semierecto de tamaño considerable, casi envidiable. Aunque intentó establecer contacto visual con ese alguien, ver más allá de su bulto ya no tan prominente, Martín no pudo levantar la mirada. El asco que sentía por sí mismo lo hizo salir corriendo hasta la entrada sin levantar su mirada. Lo que Martín no notó fue que ese alguien en medio pasillo era su suegro, quien al ver a Martín lo miró y le dijo:

—Aquí nadie lo puede juzgar, Martín.

Martín estaba tan confundido por sus propios deseos y contradicciones que no se percató de la familiaridad de la voz profética en la sauna. Al tomar sus cosas y salir del lugar corriendo, lo primero que vio, después de su ceguera temporal por la luz del sol, fue una escena que le detuvo el corazón. Un grupo de policías corría hacia él.

Ellos gritaban "criminal", "falsificador", "hipócrita", "culpable". Como medida de protección, Martín solo pudo tomar una decisión en ese momento: escapar. Sentía que de ser arrestado su verdad se expondría y eso era impensable. En lo más profundo de su ser, sentía que haber entrado a un lugar de esos debía ser un crimen. Además, el hecho de que alguien lo llamara por su nombre y que después hubieran aparecido policías solo podía significar una cosa: esos lugares estaban fuertemente vigilados por el gobierno y tenían los datos de todos los visitantes para luego arrestarlos y darles terapia de choque. Era la única explicación para que alguien supiera su nombre en un lugar saturado de anónimos.

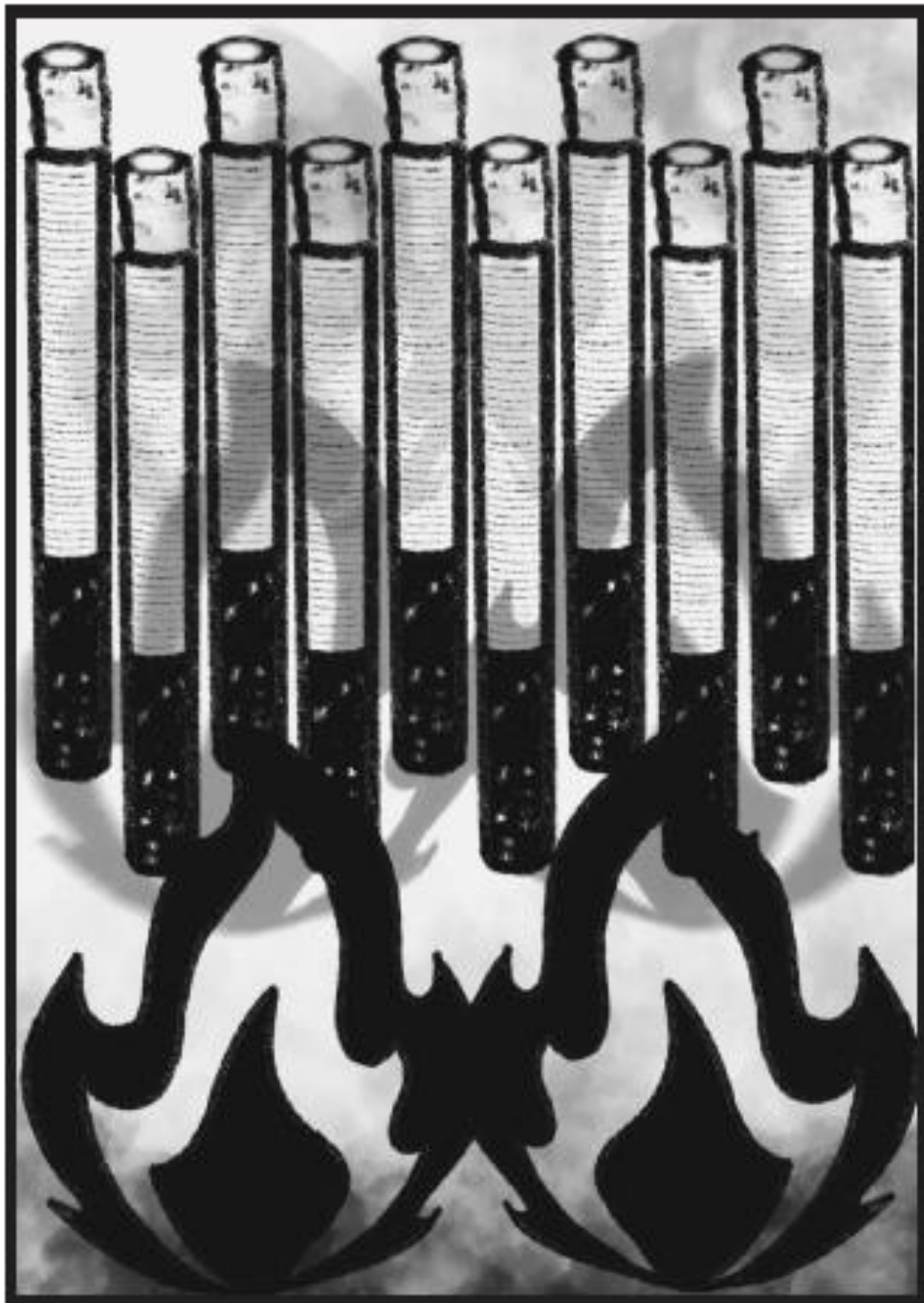
En medio de la confusión y el caos, Gerald Gerardo se detuvo en la parada de bus en el momento exacto cuando Martín quería fumar y esfumarse. Este se subió y le pagó con el triple de lo que valía el pasaje. Sin esperar el cambio, se sentó en el asiento en la mitad del bus y bajó su cabeza para no ser visto por los oficiales. Para su sorpresa, justo después de su escape furtivo vio a Isaac subir al bus y cuando Gerald presionó el acelerador por un momento todo estuvo bien una vez más. Pero esta paz se disipó con la aparición del agente Leal.

¿Podría ser este el hombre que le habló en el sauna? ¿Sería más bien este un agente a cargo de perseguir a todos los impíos no temerosos de Dios que utilizaban *BearSpot*? En la mente de Martín, el gobierno debía de haber creado una nueva división para reprimir la polarizante "ideología de género".

Mientras que el agente Leal confirmaba la identidad de algunos de los pasajeros, Martín borró todas y cada una de las fotos, aplicaciones, cuentas, compras por internet, búsquedas en su teléfono, así como el historial de su computadora, los contactos y los pagos electrónicos que estuvieran relacionados con su mayor secreto. De todas formas, Martín se decía a sí mismo que no era *gay* y eso lo tranquilizaba, pero toda esa evidencia sustancial y circunstancial podría hacer que alguien llegara a una desafortunada conclusión

errónea, especialmente alguien entrenado para detectar casos de heterosexuales farsantes, quienes podrían estar siendo fuertemente vigilados por las autoridades.

Durante la pesquisa, Martín ignoró casi todo lo que sucedía a su alrededor, exceptuando a Isaac y a su inquieta pierna. Cuando el oficial simplemente no tomó en cuenta su presencia, Martín se empezó a convencer de que tal vez no todo agente gubernamental estaba detrás de él y de que su secreto podría no ser necesariamente castigable por la ley, aunque dentro de sí él ya iba cumpliendo una condena.



► *Y sí, ella sabía del fuego.*  
*Ella fue quien lo había iniciado esta mañana.* ◄

## De Marruecos a Loma Linda

—¡Ay, pero don señor oficial! ¿Por qué se sienta? ¿Ya encontró al criminal? ¡Yo sabía! La sangre de Cristo Redentor. Es que hay un Dios que todo lo ve. Yo sabía que era esa *rata* que lleva a la par suya. Mejor quédese ahí y nos protege de un asalto. Por cierto, a mí no me requise. Yo soy una señora de bien, así como toda la gente respetable de este bus, bueno tal vez no contemos al chofer —esto último lo dijo la respetable señora para sus adentros—. Por ejemplo, ¿qué crimen pudo haber cometido esta dulce señora que va delante de mí? Ella se ve como un pan de Dios. Las señoras grandes como nosotras no cometemos crímenes, ¿verdad, mi señora? ¡Qué ni nos pida la cédula y menos que pregunte nuestra edad! Eso sí sería una desfachatez —decía mientras se acomodaba su chal marroquí.

—Identificación —le insistió tediosamente el agente Leal al pasajero en la última fila. Sin embargo, al verle bien la cara y al detallar sus tatuajes en el cuello, se retractó de su solicitud. Leal había podido identificar claramente la cara de esta *rata*, y especialmente el tatuaje endemoniado que se asomaba por su camisa. El oficial recordó el reportaje del autobusero que había sido agredido hace exactamente cuatro años. En la noticia se mencionaron todos los detalles de tan brutal ataque. Había sido un día difícil de olvidar. Además, con la ligereza con la que los reporteros pasan de asesinatos a cuentos de Navidad, en donde se habla de cómo ciertas familias se ayudan materialmente, Leal recordaba como si fuera ayer la cara de un nuevo

empresario tico que había financiado los “cuentos de Navidad” por los últimos ocho años: la *rata*.

Para Leal, el rostro de este benefactor era indeleble: pelo largo sin arreglar, un *piercing* en la nariz, expansiones en las orejas, una barba malograda, un bigote más largo de lo proporcionalmente correcto para su cara y una sonrisa perfecta, algo de lo que Leal se sentía celoso. Al crecer como hijo de inmigrantes indocumentados, Leal nunca pudo acceder a los tipos de privilegios de la gente en una situación parcialmente estable, así que una sonrisa simétrica e impecable siempre tocaba una fibra sensible en él. Lo que Leal recordaba más vividamente era el tatuaje de lo que parecía un demonio, el cual, juzgaba el agente, empezaba en el pecho y culminaba con unas garras que bordeaban todo el cuello de tan (in)distinguido pasajero.

A Leal también le gustaban los tatuajes, pero debido al pigmento hereditariamente indocumentado de su piel, sabía que de tener este mismo tipo de marcas sería juzgado impunemente por la sociedad y pasaría de un oficial íntegro a un delincuente marero. En su mente, Leal podía escuchar a su madre decir, acostada en un catre sin colchón en un hospital periférico: “pero el tico no es xenofóbico”, mientras le negaban la atención médica para tratar su cáncer en etapa inicial hacía ya un par de meses. “Si fuera sido una gringa, sipote, le juro que salgo de aquí curada, pero una pobre y nica no vale un cinco”.

Volviendo al presente, Leal recordó la entrevista que había tenido tan ilustre acompañante con Desesperanza Hope en donde había confesado que él amaba utilizar el transporte público, dado que le ayudaba a no perder la perspectiva de la vida real. Aunque fuera el año 2032 y los carros eléctricos fueran los únicos permitidos en las calles, el costarricense promedio no podía darse el lujo de comprar un automóvil de esos, mucho menos adquirir más de uno por familia. Así que, por medio de la Fundación César Maléndrez, en su décimo quinto aniversario, este innombrable, mal vestido y joven presunto criminal solamente quería el bien para la sociedad

y andaba en búsqueda de inspiración para crear un nuevo fondo de becas para una nueva fundación teatral.

Y sí, él no había sido siempre un ciudadano ejemplar. A pesar de los seis retiros para alcohólicos anónimos, del saqueo que hizo al equipo veterinario de su mejor amigo y hasta de su propia prostitución para obtener drogas en las afueras del *Infiernillo*, con sus treinta y ocho años, este ciudadano (des)virtuoso había podido darle un giro de 180 grados a su vida por medio del teatro. Pero el cambio no se podía ver al juzgarlo solo por su apariencia, como lo estaba haciendo María Eduvigés de los Ángeles Escalante de Rodríguez.

María Eduvigés de los Ángeles Escalante de Rodríguez era la pasajera sentada en la segunda fila del lado derecho en el bus de Gerald. Hoy estaba fúrica porque alguien más, una señora menos necesitada de un espacio para la adulta mayor, le había robado su campo. Así debió resignarse con el segundo asiento disponible del lado derecho. En su mente, las cosas se hacían bien, derechas, y el lado izquierdo siempre era el del mal. Entonces, buscar el primer asiento del lado contrario del bus, del lado del sirviente chofer, no era parte ni de los pensamientos más remotos de María Eduvigés.

Mientras buscaba y rebuscaba como ajustar correctamente su chal traído desde Europa para impresionar a todos los presentes mientras el agente requisaba a tan despreciable mechudo, María Eduvigés lo único que quería era bajarse del bus cuanto antes. Su propósito del día de hoy se estaba viendo arruinado por el agente y ella empezaba a sentirse culpable. De preguntarle por qué una señora de ochenta y ocho años andaba sin compañía un domingo por la tarde, ella tendría que contarle, por deber moral, la razón de su viaje: Dios se había olvidado de ella.

Sí, a sus ochenta y ocho años, aunque ella lo negara y sustituyera un inicial ocho por un siete, Dios se había olvidado de María Eduvigés. Desde que sus nietos, bisnietos y tataranietos tuvieron

uso de razón, escucharon a su abuelita decir en cada cumpleaños, Día de la Madre y Navidad:

—Ay, mis amores. ¿Por qué siguen gastando plata en regalos para mí? ¿Ustedes no saben que este es mi último año aquí con ustedes? No ven qué desperdicio. Ni voy a poder utilizar estas cremas ni perfumes. ¿Por qué se molestan? ¡Chiquillos estos!

Sin embargo, sus nietas siempre se hacían de oídos sordos y le planeaban eventos solo para chicas de la familia, para celebrar la feliz longevidad de las Escalante. Por algunos años, María Eduviges disfrutó estas actividades. Ver a sus hermanas, primas, hijas, nietas, bisnietas y tataranietas le alegraba el corazón. Ella era feliz al verlas a todas ellas vivas, libres y seguras. La ola de feminicidios del 2000-2020 en Costa Rica había finalmente acabado y ahora podía estar segura de que toda su descendencia viviría como toda longeva Escalante.

Sin embargo, con el pasar de los años, María Eduviges empezó a sentir que esto en lugar de una bendición había sido una maldición. Justo cuando ella pensaba que no podría haber más dolor en su corazón al dar sepultura a una hermana más, a una prima más, a una hija más, el corazón de María Eduviges volvía a resquebrajarse sin reparación por una muerte más. En su imaginario, una madre no debía nunca enterrar a sus hijos y ella ahora estaba dando sepultura a toda su prole. Fue con este dolor que María Eduviges comenzó a odiar su vida. Para ella, ya el tiempo que le habían prestado para venir a este mundo había expirado. Empero, ¿cuál ángel irresponsable estaba a cargo de la muerte? ¿En qué lógica cabía que ella a sus ochenta y ocho años tuviera que sobrevivir a sus propios hijos y nietos? María Eduviges estaba enfadada con Dios. De esta forma, en cada cumpleaños, cuando soplaban las velas, su deseo desde hacía aproximadamente diez años había sido su muerte.

¿Por qué Costa Rica no era como otros países y le permitían morir cuando ella quisiera? ¿Cuál era el punto de vivir si ya una estaba agotada de tanta muerte? Se preguntaba María Eduviges.

Para muchas personas estas preguntas eran muy sensibles, así que ella nunca las hacía en público. No quería terminar en la oficina de un psicólogo preguntándole cada semana:

—Contame, María Eduvigésita. ¿Y esta semana cómo te sentís? ¿Todavía tenés esos pensamientos?

María Eduvigés sentía náuseas con solo imaginar sus sesiones de “Buscándole un propósito a la vida en la adultez mayor” y los cursos de “Reconciliándonos con aquellos que nos dejaron”. Ella ya estaba más que reconciliada con todos los que partieron antes que ella. Ella ya había cumplido su propósito de vida. En sus adentros, el siguiente paso lógico era morir, pero era lo único que se le negaba en esta vida. Después de una carrera impecable y de haberse pensionado como decana de la Escuela de Ciencias Aeronáuticas en el prestigioso Instituto de Tecnología de Latinoamérica, María Eduvigés sabía que lo que fuera que se propusiese, ella lo podía conseguir. No obstante, ¿por qué la muerte no llegaba a ella si era lo único que quería? A su edad, ¿qué más podría aprender?

Si algo sabía María Eduvigés era diferenciar el bien del mal. Un ejemplo claro era que la señora que venía delante suyo representaba inequívocamente el bien y el greñudo del fondo, el mal. De una manera más propia e introspectiva, pensar en su muerte no era pecado, pero intentar procurarla por sus propios medios, tal vez sí.

Y ese había sido el plan de María Eduvigés el día de hoy. Después del primer culto del día, ella había escogido su chal favorito y sus prendas y joyas más elegantes para luego montarse en el primer bus que salía por su casa. Dado que los ciudadanos de su edad subían y bajaban de los autobuses sin ningún tipo de registro, María Eduvigés repitió esta práctica toda la mañana. En su mente, si alguno de estos autobuses por casualidad tenía un accidente que pudiera atentar contra la vida, ella no cargaría con la culpa de su propia muerte en el más allá. ¿Cómo podría esto contar como suicidio si ella no era la culpable del accidente?

A María Eduvigés no le gustaba pensar en los detalles de su muerte; prefería que la muerte le llegara de sorpresa. Sin embargo, cuando tomó el autobús de Gerald supo que su objetivo se podría cumplir. Este hombre con apariencia dudosa no dejaba de cometer errores: pasaba revisando el teléfono, limpiándose la cara, arrancando el bus erráticamente y, para la alegría de María Eduvigés, casi estrellándose en media autopista. Por eso, cuando Gerald detuvo el autobús frente al agente Leal, ella se quedó impactada, principalmente por la desilusión. Su objetivo se hubiera cumplido de no haber sido por el montón de aguafiestas que gritaron “¡Policía!”. Sin embargo, la esperanza volvió cuando pasaron los seis automóviles casi volcando el autobús. Si iban a ser asaltados, María Eduvigés había decidido ser quien iba a dar el discurso de *primero sobre mi cadáver/si Dios conmigo, ¿quién contra mí?* para así morir una mártir. ¡No había mejor escenario para una devota! María Eduvigés podía imaginar las misas que le dedicarían y las escuelas y bibliotecas cristianas que bautizarían con su nombre. “¡Ay, qué lindo soñar!”, pensaba María Eduvigés.

La muerte sonaba tan placentera ahora que se llenó de energía. María Eduvigés entonces le preguntó a la señora que llevaba al frente:

—Oiga, joven. ¿Usted cómo ve todo esto? Está raro que anden buscando un criminal aquí, ¿verdad? El único criminal que veo es aquel guapetón que el agente tiene acorralado.

Un rostro sin maquillaje e hinchado de tanto contener emociones, mezclado con una evidente desnutrición se volvió y no dijo una sola palabra. Ella miró a María Eduvigés a los ojos por lo que se sintió como una vida entera, para después fijar sus ojos en las joyas, el chal y sus aretes étnicos. María Eduvigés quería morir, pero definitivamente no quería morir estrangulada por una grotesca y descortés representante de la tribu *yahoo*. Además, en su mente, María Eduvigés pensaba que este era el rostro de un alma en pena que nunca pudo deshacerse del *Diablo de la botella*. ¿Qué deseos habría pedido esta señora que le hicieran merecer el castigo de su inmirable rostro? Peor aún, ¿se habría tomado algún brebaje al estilo

Mr. Hyde? Una señora de bien no podía salir así a la calle. En algún otro lugar, tal vez muy dentro de ella, se encontraba secuestrada la verdadera y dulce señora. María Eduviges sabía que tenía un problema con su adicción a la literatura, pero no podía dejar de pensar en todas estas referencias con tal imagen frente a ella.

De la misma forma en que María Eduviges fue analizada, ella no pudo evitar ver la ropa de la Señora Roba Asientos. Pensándolo bien, María Eduviges dedujo que esta señora podría ser perfectamente una criminal. No llevaba aretes y su blusa era claramente de Pequeño Planeta, la tienda en donde toda prenda valía seis mil colones, sin importar el daño ambiental ni la precariedad laboral de sus empleados en lugares remotos del mundo.

A María Eduviges le habían contado sobre esa tienda. Manifiestamente, ella no sería del tipo de persona que se inmiscuiría con la calaña que frecuenta esos lugarejos. En alguna ocasión, a María Eduviges le pareció que alguna amiga le contó que había unas blusas nuevas muy apropiadas para señoras grandes. Estas mostraban un bordado que María Eduviges recordaba perfectamente; bueno, que le habían descrito a la perfección. La diferencia radicaba en que este bordado se notaba ya destruido y desgatado, por no mencionar las manchas de cloro que se esparcían por doquier. Lo que era peor eran los múltiples huecos carcomidos por... ¿fósforos? Según los prejuicios de María Eduviges, alguien que saliera vestido de esta forma un domingo después del culto jamás podría ser una persona de bien. La señora Jekyll debía estar captiva en algún lugar.

Para confirmar que no estaba a punto de morir en las manos de un espejismo literario, María Eduviges le volvió a preguntar a la desconocida:

—¿Y usted de dónde es? ¿Quién es su mamá y su papá? Tal vez los conozca. Es que Costa Rica es un pañuelo, ¿verdad?

—De Loma Linda de Los Ángeles —contestó por fin la silenciosa pasajera de forma cortante—. ¿Usted qué va a saber de mi familia?

Vieja ricachona que se cree muy buena por andar en bus con nosotros los pobres. ¿Qué va a conocer usted a mi difunta madre que limpió escusados hasta que las varices le estallaron los pulmones? ¡¿Qué va a saber usted de mi padre que lo terminaron matando en la cárcel por... a usted qué le importa?!

En un estado de negación, lo que salió de la boca de María Eduviges fue:

—Loma Linda de Los Ángeles... el caserío que hoy prendió fuego y está consumiendo todo a su paso... ¿Está segura de que ahí es donde usted viv...? —María Eduviges sabía que lo mejor era no terminar esa oración. Prefería una muerte de mártir a una de víctima de sus malos modales.

Una vez más, la desconocida pasajera se volteó y miró hacia delante. Con rabia en su mirada, se tomó a sí misma del cabello y se meció en su asiento. Lo que le quedaba de sanidad, lo había perdido con esas preguntas.

Sí, ella vivía en Loma Linda de Los Ángeles. Y sí, ella sabía del fuego. Ella fue quien lo había iniciado esta mañana.

Todos los vecinos y coterráneos en Loma Linda sabían de los abusos que doña Dulce y su nieto vivían, pero nadie la ayudó a salir de ahí. Nunca le preguntaron si estaba bien, ni siquiera cuando la escuchaban gritar. Ni siquiera cuando la escuchaban suplicar. Loma Linda era solo un eufemismo para el mismísimo infierno.

Ya que estaban en el mismísimo infierno, doña Dulce decidió incluirle su más característico elemento: el fuego. Este elemento no era ajeno a su realidad. De hecho, era su constante compañero. Doña Dulce sentía el fuego en su piel cada vez que su esposo apagaba un cigarrillo en la espalda o en las palmas de las manos de su nieto. Con tan solo cuatro años, su espalda coleccionaba cicatrices de todas las formas y coloraciones. También sentía el fuego en sus ojos y dedos cuando su esposo obligaba a su nieto a desnudarse al frente de una cámara, todo con el fin de obtener dinero para mantener su vicio.

El esposo de doña Dulce, con cada acto inhumano de estos, la llevaba a paroxismos de demencia. Muchas veces, mientras era obligada a ser cómplice de estos actos, doña Dulce le suplicaba a su esposo que dejara de torturar a su nieto, Jesús. Él no tenía por qué cargar con la cruz de los pecados de un adulto. Magda, la madre de Chus, como le decían de cariño, ignoraba todo lo que pasaba. Con sus dos visitas mensuales, ella realmente no se daba cuenta de la condena que le había impuesto a su hijo. Chus, por su parte, intentaba contarle a su madre qué le sucedía en esta prisión con su vocabulario limitado e imaginativo; sin embargo, al irse Magda, el esposo de doña Dulce se encargaba de alimentarlo con jabón azul para la cena como castigo por intentar quejarse de todo lo que sus abuelos hacían por él.

Por más que doña Dulce quisiera salir de ahí, sentía que nadie la iba a escuchar. ¿Qué tipo de instituto del gobierno tenía experiencia con maridos que torturan a sus nietos y esposas? ¿Quién le creería que su esposo era traficante de pornografía infantil? ¿Con qué dinero iría a San José a poner una demanda? Y después de ponerla, ¿en dónde viviría? Si se llevaba a Chus para el PANI, ¿quién le iba a asegurar que su esposo no iba a ir a buscarlo y abusarlo todavía más violentamente? Si llevaba a Chus en esas condiciones, ¿la considerarían cómplice? De ser así, ambos irían a la cárcel. Chus volvería con su madre y eso implicaría un viaje al centro del mundo. En los ojos de doña Dulce, no había solución, más que deshacerse ella misma del problema.

Ese domingo 29 de febrero de 2032, doña Dulce despertó a las 5 a. m., puso el café y le preparó un pan con paté al niño Jesús.

—Tita, ¿qué ta chendo? —preguntó ingenuamente Chus, mientras veía a su abuelita traer ronda, tras ronda de cigarros a la sala.

Ella le contestó:

—Este es un regalo de cumpleaños para Tito. Hoy está de manteles largos. Pero quiero dejarle el regalito listo antes de que se despierte. El pobrecito llegó muy tarde ayer, así que le vamos a dejar su

regalito de cumpleaños en la sala y nosotros nos vamos a ir a pasear a donde su otra tita. ¿Entendido, mi corazón? Su otra abuelita hoy lo va a estar esperando con arepitas y helados. Se va a portar bien, ¿verdad? Yo sé que sí.

Con los ojos llenos de ilusión, Jesús continuó viendo cómo su abuelita vertía el contenido de todas las botellas de licor que su esposo había comprado por toda la casa: en los sillones, en las cortinas, en el piso de madera, en la ropa, en la puerta de su cuarto, en las ruedas de cigarro.

—Tita, ¿eso qué es? ¡Ufa! Huele a Tito.

—Sí, mi vida. Ese es su olor favorito. Se lo vamos a dejar por toda la casa para que cuando se levante, sepa que hemos pensado en él. Por cierto, ¿ya se tomó el cafecito? Ya nos tenemos que ir, así que vamos a dejarle esta candelita prendida aquí en la sala para que cuando se despierte ahorita, vea que le estábamos cantando cumpleaños. No, mi amor. Hoy no nos lavamos los dientes. ¡Vamos, oiga! ¡Ahí viene el bus! ¡Corramos!



En un abrir y cerrar de ojos, mecánicamente doña Dulce había cumplido todas las partes de su plan: tomar el bus, dejar a Chus con su otra abuela y, finalmente, desaparecer. De repente, doña Dulce se encontraba en el bus de Gerald sin saber cómo llegó ahí ni en qué estado dejó a Chus. La única prueba de que todo había sido real era el olor a alcohol en su ropa y sus zapatos, más el olor a cigarro en sus manos. Los remanentes de su mejor blusa mostraban todos los cigarros que ella se apagó en su cuerpo por cada cigarro que había dejado que su esposo extinguiera en el cuerpo de Jesús. Así es como sabía que no había sido un sueño, sino una pesadilla y ahora se había despertado. Estaba despierta apenas para encontrarse con un agente y confesarle su verdad: había incendiado a su esposo y, con él, todo el maldito vecindario que la dejó morir por tantos años.

En la búsqueda de palabras correctas, su confesión interna fue interrumpida por Gerald, quien por fin había vuelto en sí y ahora gritaba con un dejo de terror en su garganta:

—¡Señor oficiaaaaaal...!

Todos los pasajeros vieron cómo seis hombres se bajaron de los vehículos que se habían detenido en media autopista unos kilómetros frente al bus. Venían fuertemente armados, vestidos de negro y con máscaras en sus rostros. Los pasajeros, quienes habían pasado horas en silencio en el bus "Hacia ningún lugar", ahora, ante tal escena, se descontrolaron e hicieron que el agente Leal volviera a la realidad y corriera por el pasillo del bus, esquivando maletines, hombros, piernas y todo lo que se le atravesara en el camino.

Al llegar a la parte delantera del bus, doña Dulce le tomó por la mano derecha y le dijo a Leal una frase, con tal pena y lamento, que hizo que María Eduviges se cubriera el rostro con su chal. A una dama no se le ve llorar en público.

—Vienen por mí, papito. Le acabo de prender fuego a mi espo...

—¿De qué está hablando, señora? No vea tanta tele —le dijo apresurado el agente Leal, mientras buscaba la ruta más rápida para salir del bus.

—Si vienen por alguien, es por mí —dijo mientras se veía a sí mismo en el espejo retrovisor.



— María Eduvigis lo vio alzar su mano derecha  
a la altura de sus ojos como hacía pocos minutos. —

## CAPÍTULO



# Leal(tad)

Cada dos segundos, Ernesto Leal miraba por el retrovisor de su auto tomado del plantel del OIJ esta mañana. “Algún tipo de respeto todavía profesa la gente por la autoridad”, pensaba sarcásticamente para sí mismo, ya que todos los carriles de la autopista se liberaban al verlo, lo cual no era necesariamente bueno. Al menos no en los ojos de un fugitivo.

—¡Me cago en la grandísima puta! —murmuraba Ernesto cada vez que un autobús se apartaba del camino cuando identificaban la placa oficial del OIJ.

Con cada carril que se liberaba para dejarlo pasar, Ernesto comenzaba a sentirse increíblemente expuesto y su ansiedad y nerviosismo aumentaban. En sus adentros, él estaba consciente de que ahora sería más fácil que lo identificaran. Solo en su inocente imaginario tomar posesión de un automóvil del OIJ tenía sentido si lo que quería era pasar desapercibido. Ahora Ernesto estaba sumamente molesto consigo mismo. Él había estado escapando todo el día de sus pensamientos como para que su viaje terminara fútilmente en una autopista hacia ningún lugar. ¿En qué momento había virado hacia la autopista? ¿Acaso, en su inconsciente, quería que lo encontraran? Cada nueva decisión que Ernesto tomaba parecía tan errónea y hacía que la turbia placa en su pecho fuera cada vez más pesada.

Por más oficial, Ernesto o Leal que fuera, cada paso que daba lo hacía sentirse más como un criminal deshonesto y traicionero.

Por lo despejado de la autopista temerosa de la ley, Ernesto pudo ver que sus fieles seguidores lo habían localizado. Seis automóviles negros se vislumbraban a la distancia. Si eso no era suficiente, su teléfono personal no paraba de sonar y en la radio se podía escuchar a Desesperanza Hope haciendo el recuento de los varios eventos del famoso domingo bisiesto del 2032: un asesinato múltiple, un incendio mortal, un robo de joyas milenarias, un bebé abandonado en Moravia y ahora, en curso, una persecución en plena autopista.

Luchando contra la distracción de cada notificación de los mensajes de voz que ya no cabían en su buzón, Ernesto apenas era capaz de conducir y mirar hacia atrás mientras las llamadas de teléfono de la casa de sus padres entraban una tras otra sin cesar, sus hermanos lo llamaban por *WhatsApp* y sus colegas del OIJ le mandaban mensajes al celular del trabajo. Todo era caos, pero Ernesto no podía detenerse a darle explicaciones a nadie. Él solamente quería que todo terminara. Sin juicios, sin testigos, sin consecuencias. Ernesto solo deseaba cerrar sus ojos y escuchar al mundo y su consciencia enmudecer.

Fue en ese momento cuando Ernesto notó al autobús errático que no se inmutaba con su presencia, el bus de Gerald Gerardo. Decidió entonces ponerle fin a todo. De continuar a la velocidad que iba, los seis caballeros negros lo alcanzarían pronto, así que los tomó por sorpresa. Ernesto pisó el acelerador al máximo, se despidió de sus padres en una oración sin palabras y adelantó al bus por unos cuantos kilómetros. Con la esperanza de reconciliar todos sus errores en otra vida, Ernesto pisó el pedal de freno repentinamente, se bajó de su auto y caminó en la dirección del bus. Esta era la mejor forma de detener todos sus pensamientos y, con ellos, todas sus faltas.

Dado que la luz del sol le encandilaba el rostro, Ernesto elevó su mano derecha a la altura de sus ojos. Sintióse parcialmente

inundado por la luminosidad, el agente Leal bajó su cabeza en señal de humildad, aceptando su inevitable destino.

A pesar de estar preparado para el impacto, lo único que recibió fue un chofer que reaccionó de forma inesperada y frenó el vehículo en el peor momento. En su desesperación, Ernesto no sabía qué hacer. Su plan había fallado. Se hizo tantas preguntas a sí mismo mientras caminaba hacia la puerta del autobús:

*“¿Y ahora qué diablos voy a hacer? ¿Con qué excusa les voy a explicar que tuve que detener el bus? ¿Hay, en serio, tiempo para tomar una mejor decisión? ¿Con qué cara demuestro ser autoridad?”.*

Al abrirse las puertas del autobús, Ernesto lo único que pudo decir fue lo más mecánico y policial que pudo improvisar:

—Buenas tardes. Soy el agente especial Ernesto Leal Hurtado.

Esto lo dijo Ernesto mientras mostraba algunas facturas del desayuno de hacía dos días y un pasaporte falso decomisado en una redada, el cual ni él sabía por qué todavía estaba en su pantalón. Esperando que nadie le solicitara ver sus “credenciales”, prosiguió:

—Tenemos información de que alguien en este bus ha cometido un crimen. Necesito ver sus cédulas de identidad. Pasaré uno por uno para verificar sus datos personales. Por favor no hagan movimientos bruscos durante la pesquisa. Les ruego que se queden en sus asientos y no utilicen el teléfono celular ni hablen entre ustedes.

Tal y como un experimentado actor de reparto, Ernesto se aplaudía a sí mismo por semejante actuación. Siempre había admirado a los agentes que improvisaban sus líneas en programas policiacos de tele-realidad, pero nunca pensó que él tuviera el temple para decir “hay un criminal entre ustedes” sin salirse del personaje. El problema ahora era qué hacer con esas cédulas. Ernesto se inventó ese discurso, pero no pensó en las consecuencias. Una vez que le entregaran las cédulas, ¿qué iba a hacer? No tenía ni interés ni medios para confirmar las identidades. Además, ¿en qué mundo esta práctica era útil?

Él nada más necesitaba salir de ahí cuanto antes. Pero la excusa que utilizó al subirse al bus lo estaba atando a una pantomima un tanto contraproducente. Peor aún, no tenía en mente las consecuencias que su presencia y despliegue de actitud policiaca estaba creando en los pasajeros.

Mientras que el confundido Ernesto comenzaba a solicitar las cédulas de identidad, él notaba la preocupación y angustia generalizada en la cara de casi todos los pasajeros; no obstante, no era momento de inquietarse por sus historias de vida. Los seis automóviles debían estar cada vez más cerca y él no se podía dar el lujo de estar dentro del bus cuando llegaran.



Entre el cansancio, la vergüenza, sus anhelos suicidas y la culpa por su crimen, Ernesto pareció vivir una serie de pesadillas sin fin en un abrir y cerrar de ojos. En lo poco que recordaba, le pareció haber visto personas ponerse de pie, sacar rosarios, sentarse, gritar, llamar por teléfono, gritar, llorar, acosar sexualmente a menores, escuchar buses, recibir transmisiones de arresto inmediato y hasta haber identificado a un famosito. Para Ernesto, todo esto pasó en cuestiones de segundos y sin embargo, en su mente, nada de esto podía estar sucediendo. Él no debía estar ahí, ni los pasajeros tampoco. Si todo esto hubiese sido real, Ernesto no habría sabido cómo manejarlo. Era demasiada la crueldad como para que todo esto fuera de verdad. Lo que sí era real se apareció frente a sus ojos mientras le devolvía la cédula a algún pasajero: lo habían alcanzado. Ya no había vuelta atrás. A pesar de haber querido terminar con su vida, al parecer su destino era ser un pasajero del bus "Hacia ningún lugar" para siempre. Ernesto, de pie cerca del asiento al final del autobús, se restregaba los ojos para ver si así despertaba de tan cruda pesadilla.

Cuando escuchó a lo lejos "¡Señor oficiaaaaaal...!", Leal supo lo que debía hacer. En medio de la conmoción y la impotencia, él nada más

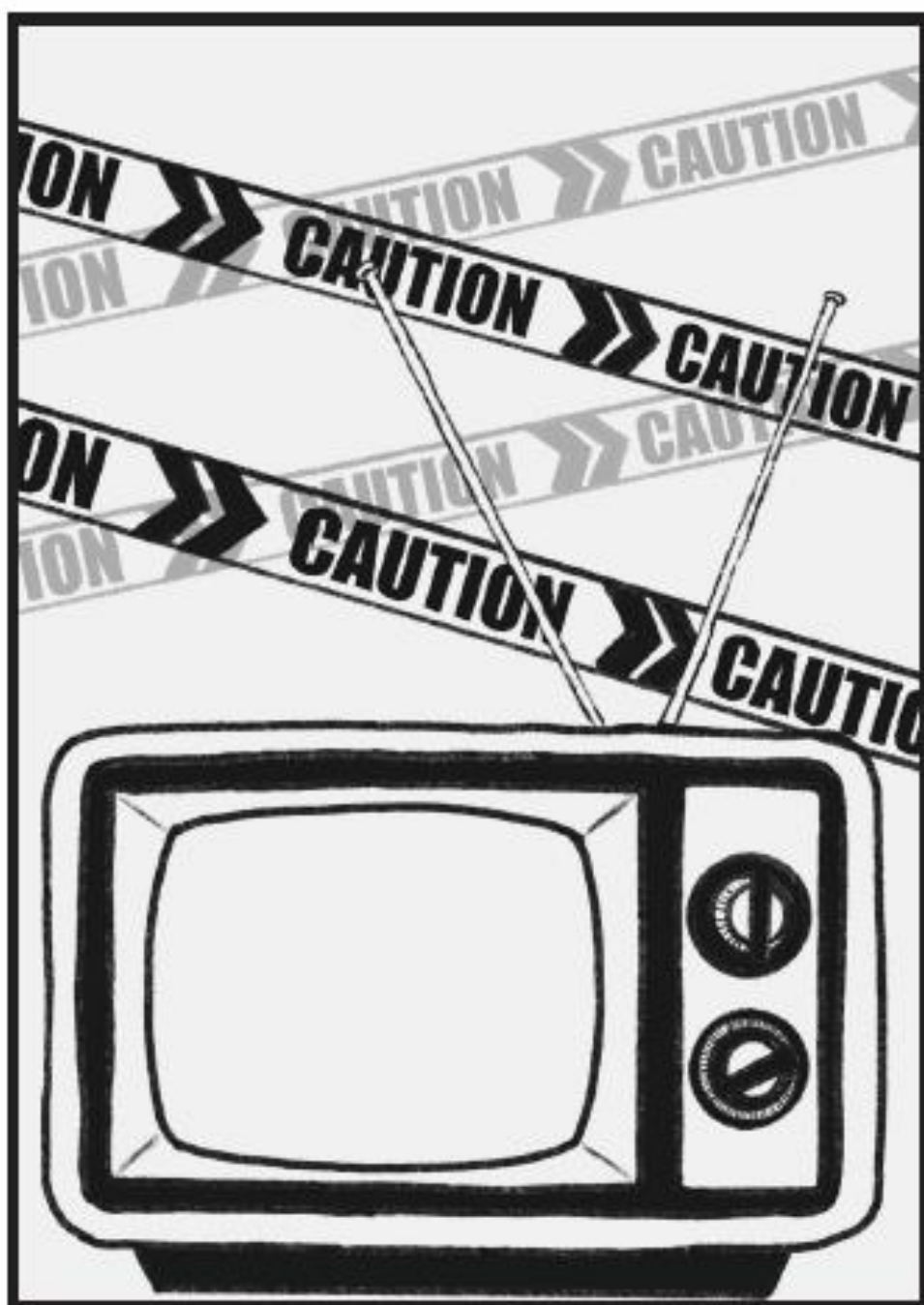
se abalanzó hacia el frente del bus para confirmar sus sospechas. Con sus largas piernas, pudo llegar en segundos al lado de Gerald, quien ahora parecía haber sido víctima de su propio miedo, ya que una gran cantidad de sudor corría por su rostro y un voluminoso líquido excrementicio por las gradas del bus.

Al ver esto y las armas caminantes que se acercaban al autobús con cada segundo que pasaba, Ernesto no pudo más que reaccionar sin libreto y confesarse mientras veía su rostro en el retrovisor. Con lágrimas en sus ojos, dijo honestamente:

—Si vienen por alguien, es por mí.

Estas fueron las últimas palabras del agente Ernesto Leal Hurtado antes de sacudirse la mano de doña Dulce de su antebrazo derecho, para luego bajar las gradas del bus de un temeroso salto. Una vez afuera, miró a los seis hombres que lo buscaban y, sin pensarlo, corrió hacia la autopista una vez más.

María Eduviges lo vio alzar su mano derecha a la altura de sus ojos como hacía pocos minutos, pero para su (in)fortunio, el autobús que pasaba en esos momentos no tuvo la capacidad de reaccionar a tiempo. Ella pudo ver cómo este otro vehículo arrolló el cuerpo del agente Leal y lo lanzó seis metros a la distancia. Al ver el destino del oficial, María Eduviges solamente pudo cubrir su cara con su chal y desear un par de años más en esta vida.



► *Disculpen, estimados televidentes,*  
*nos está llegando información de último minuto.* ◄

## Nosotros primero

*“¿Qué hijueputa día más largo, verdad, chiquillos?”*

*¿Estamos ya al aire?”*

—Buenas tardes, estimados televidentes. Lamentamos interrumpir su programación habitual. Como nos habían reportado varios conductores hace pocos minutos, una aparente persecución estaba tomando lugar en esta misma autopista, la cual ahora es una misteriosa escena de un crimen. Según nuestros colaboradores locales, se reporta que seis automóviles negros se encontraban persiguiendo al autobús que vemos en pantalla. En él, trece pasajeros temieron por sus vidas cuando, aparentemente, de los seis automóviles se bajó media docena de lo que parecían ser sicarios armados enviados por algún tipo de organización criminal. Su temerosa apariencia, aunada al visible despliegue de armamento, no pasó por alto. En nuestro perfil de *Fakestagram* pueden encontrar las fotos que algunos transeúntes lograron capturar antes de su súbita desaparición. Las imágenes las podrán ver, compartir y convertir en sus fondos de pantalla utilizando los siguientes *hashtags*: *#nosotrosprimero*, *#2032*, *#hacianingunlugar*, *#meninblackCR*, *#narcosCR*, *#alertaeropuerto* *#azulturquesapresuntoindicativopositivoparaalcaloidecocaínaCR*. Si ustedes tienen fotos de tal inusual avistamiento, no duden en etiquetarnos también. ¡La comunidad de *Fakestagram* se lo agradecerá!

De vuelta a la escena, les confirmo que estamos en directo en el lugar del suceso. Detrás de mí podrán observar el cuerpo de un masculino incompatible con la vida. Este era uno de los pasajeros que iban en el autobús en rumbo Hacia ningún lugar. Extrañamente, se trataba del agente Ernesto Leal Hurtado, encargado del Departamento Antidrogas del área. Los testigos nos confiesan lo que presenciaron el día de hoy. Acá tenemos a una de las testigos. Buenas tardes, señora, ¿cuál es su nombre?

—María Eduvigis de los Ángeles Escalante de Rodríguez —dijo mientras le temblaba la voz y trataba de cubrir su rostro con su chal marroquí.

—Gracias, María. Estamos en directo para el noticiero *Nosotros Primero*. ¿Usted nos podría comentar qué fue lo que vio desde el autobús?

—Eh, bueno. Sí, el oficial se bajó del bus ligerito. Yo lo vi bastante nervioso. Estaba buscando en el bus a alguien que había cometido un delito. ¡Pero vea estas caras, señorita! ¿Quién de nosotros sería capaz de cometer un crimen? Yo estaba indignada de que dudaran de cualquiera de nosotros. ¡Todos somos ciudadanos de bien! Bueno, excepto por un par de personas ahí medio chusmas, pero ¿quién soy yo para juzgar, verdad? El oficial, entonces, saltó fuera del autobús en un santiamén y... —a María Eduvigis se le quebró la voz ante el recuerdo de lo que pudo haber sido su propio destino—. El agente tomó una decisión. No creo que haya tenido tiempo de mirar hacia atrás. Los enmascarados esos le estaban apuntando con sus máquinas de terror cuando otro autobús embistió al joven oficial. ¡Él no tuvo tiempo de despedirse! ¡Nos dejó acá sin explicaciones ni instrucciones! ¡Fue un ingrato! —dijo la catedrática con un torrente de lágrimas en los ojos.

—Una nota muy conmovedora. Gracias, María. Más adelante estaremos ampliando sobre los detalles de esta sorpresiva muerte —dijo Desesperanza mientras se empezaba a sentir un poco desconcertada por la reacción que acababa de presenciar—.

Acá tenemos a otros de los testigos. Buenas tardes, joven, ¿cuál es su nombre? ¿Sabe usted qué fue lo que sucedió el día de hoy? Cuéntenos, de dónde venía y para dónde iba.

—Bueno, prefiero no decir mi nombre —dijo Isaac mientras intentaba esconder su rostro detrás del fólder que llevaba en sus manos.

—No se preocupe, en nuestro noticiero lo primero es su privacidad, pero su nombre está en el fólder.

Con tal revelación, Isaac bajó el fólder a la altura de su cadera, en postura de derrota y sin ver hacia la cámara, confesó:

—Diay, sí. Me llamo Isaac. Venía de entregar unos documentos y ahora no sé para dónde voy. Esperaba encontrar la respuesta a esa pregunta el día de hoy.

—Okaaay. Sin duda, Isaac, es usted un joven misterioso. No pude evitar ver el fólder. ¿Estaba realizando la entrega de documentos con el NuMAEP?

Isaac solamente pudo contestar a esa pregunta con una mirada de pánico y un corazón que dejó de latir por varios segundos. Al no tener respuesta, Desesperanza insistió:

—Pero el fólder es blanco. Por lo visto no le recibieron la documentación. En fin, ¿usted nos podría contar qué sucedió por acá el día de hoy? ¿Isaac? ¿Isaac Rojas Rojas? ¡Cédula 2-888-IRR! ¡Díganos algo! —pero Isaac no pudo contestar. Solamente se escabulló entre el resto de los pasajeros y las treinta personas del personal del noticiero.

Después de hacer un corte comercial inesperado, Desesperanza estaba de vuelta con su compostura intacta. Así, entonces, ella continuó:

—A pesar del trauma que parecen haber vivido algunos de los pasajeros continuaremos con la transmisión en directo. Como podemos apreciar en las imágenes... ¡Un momento! ¿Era ese el ganador de *Meneándose con las Estrellas*? ¿Qué está haciendo...? Oh, no.

Bueno, televidentes, como vieron, nuestro galán acaba de escaparse en medio de la multitud. Si no lo siguen en sus redes sociales, hace algunos minutos nuestro costarricense favorito expuso una escena de acoso sexual en un autobús. ¡Pero nunca hubiera imaginado que fuera este mismo autobús que tenemos en pantalla! Vamos entonces a proceder con la pesquisa del supuesto acosador sexual. Tal vez todavía se encuentre en las inmediaciones —sin embargo, a pesar de la nueva agenda provista por las fotos en redes sociales, Desesperanza tuvo que abandonarla al escuchar lo que desde cabina le estaban transmitiendo—. Disculpen, estimados televidentes, nos está llegando información de último minuto. Según fuentes del OIJ, el señor Leal habría sido cuestionado por aceptar sobornos horas antes de su muerte. De hecho, el desafortunado incidente reportado el día de hoy en horas previas a esta edición, en donde dos inmigrantes indocumentados fallecieron por un ajuste de cuentas, parecen ser los padres de Leal Hurtado.

“La información preliminar nos indica que Leal había recibido una suma significativa de dinero la noche de ayer, dinero proveniente de narcotraficantes locales. Se especula que Leal habría aceptado esta cuantiosa suma con el fin de poder solventar la deuda del tratamiento de cáncer de su madre, como ya sabemos una inmigrante ilegal sin derechos a servicios de salud. Según se nos ha informado, esta misma mañana Leal habría rechazado la transferencia del dinero y habría expuesto a los supuestos traficantes ante la comisaría del área. Al parecer, Leal se habría arrepentido del soborno y les habría informado a sus superiores su renuncia, efectiva la misma tarde del día de hoy. Esta información está siendo corroborada por nuestras compañeras en las oficinas centrales del OIJ, quienes están entrevistando a todos los involucrados”.

“¿Será todo esto, entonces, un ajuste de cuentas o un mensaje para los policías que aceptan sobornos? Estaremos ampliando en la entrega vespertina. Acá, desde la autopista en la ruta “Hacia ningún lugar”, le informa Desesperanza Hope. Sin más por el momento, volvemos al estudio de *Nosotros Primero*”.



—¿Listo, gente? ¿Ya no estamos al aire? ¿Ya se acabó esta picha? Diay, mae, ¿usted qué cree? Sí. De vuelta al estudio. A chupar información para la avalancha de preguntas que vienen en la entrega vespertina. Toda la preparación para que el jefe don Mr. Cejitas me interrumpa cada dos segundos. ¿Que qué creo yo? Diay, honestamente, ¿a quién se le ocurre aceptar dinero del narco? ¡Qué agente más idiota! Mae y sobre todo iba a usar la plata en el tratamiento de cáncer. ¿Qué quería además? ¿Que le regaláramos el tratamiento a cuanto extranjero venga con problemas de salud? Mae, la *Caja* la pago yo. La *Caja* la uso yo. No la gente que no aporta. ¡Qué cólera me da eso! Inmigrantes que se creen más que un tico. Pero bueno, mejor ni me siga preguntando. No quiere saber qué pienso de la gente que empezó el incendio, del acosador, de la parejilla que abandonó el bebé y mucho menos de la ladrona de Santa Ana. En fin, toda esa gente no vale un cinco. ¿Cómo fue? ¿Que no conozco las circunstancias del porqué hicieron lo que hicieron? Mae, nada puede justificar lo que hicieron. Yo no los conozco, yo sé. ¿Pero cómo se le ocurre decir...? Mae, no los justifique. JAMÁS. Nada puede justificar sus acciones. Ojalá se pudran en la cárcel. Mae, yo forjo mi destino sin importar las cosas que pasen a mi alrededor. ¿Que si estoy a favor de la pena de muerte para esta gente? Ah, mae, mejor no me hubiera preguntado. Vamos a ver. Razón número 1...

***¿Hacia dónde se dirige usted?***



## Acerca del autor

### JOSÉ FABLÁN ELIZONDO

Nace el 17 de setiembre de 1987 en San José, Costa Rica. Aunque vive la mayoría de su infancia y adolescencia en San Pedro de Poás de Alajuela, se muda a San Pedro de Montes de Oca, San José, para finalizar sus estudios en el Bachillerato en Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica. Habiendo encontrado su vocación en el área de la educación superior, José Fabián obtiene una maestría en Administración Educativa y otra en la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera. En sus labores de docente en la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica, él ha encontrado vacíos en la literatura contemporánea costarricense que reflejen las realidades de algunos grupos minoritarios en la actualidad. Por ende, el escribir su primer libro, *El clóset es para la ropa*, representó un primer paso para enriquecer el acervo cultural y literario costarricense al mostrar fragmentos de las realidades que viven algunas personas dentro de la comunidad LGBTQI en Latinoamérica. Por consiguiente, con su segundo libro, el autor pretende continuar con su protesta de manera textual ante tanta desigualdad e indiferencia, irónicamente en el país denominado como el más feliz del mundo.