# La perspectiva de profesores de idiomas en formación sobre los rasgos de un buen profesional. Estudio de caso

*The perspective of undergraduate language teachers about the traits of a good professional. Case study*

*A perspectiva de professores de línguas em formação sobre as características de um bom profissional. Estudo de caso*

**Laura Emilia Fierro López**
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Facultad de Idiomas, México
laurafierro@uabc.edu.mx
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8418-4905

**Rey David Román Gálvez**
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, México
divad@uabc.edu.mx
http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9703-7915

**Lilia Martínez Lobatos**
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Facultad de Idiomas, México
liliam@uabc.edu.mx
http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9423-1384

## Resumen

El siguiente es un estudio transeccional descriptivo diseñado con el objetivo de identificar los rasgos de un buen profesional desde la perspectiva de estudiantes en proceso formativo para la docencia de idiomas de una universidad pública en México. La muestra se conformó por 322 estudiantes de cuatro unidades académicas, lo que representa 50.95 % de la población. Los participantes, mediante una escala ipsativa de 16 rasgos, categorizaron los más importantes. Se identificó que los estudiantes valoran, primordialmente, el conocimiento, la formación, la preparación y la competencia profesional, así como la ética

profesional. El rasgo que identificaron como menos importante fue la capacidad emocional. Se concluye el valor que los estudiantes atribuyen a las competencias cognitivas y técnicas, aunque no alcanzan a valorar rasgos relacionados con las competencias sociales y afectivo-emocionales. Los resultados permiten señalar la relevancia de fortalecer rasgos de las competencias sociales y afectivo-emocionales, además de otros de las competencias éticas, en el trayecto formativo de los estudiantes. Ello de una forma reflexiva para que los estudiantes puedan analizar y consolidar aspectos que les permitan una formación humanística y de responsabilidad social para impactar de forma favorable en su desempeño profesional.

**Palabras clave:** enseñanza de idiomas, ética profesional, formación de profesores, formación profesional, identidad profesional.

## Abstract

This paper presents a descriptive transectional study with the purpose of identifying the most significant traits of being a good professional, from the opinion of the bachelor in language teaching students of a public university in Mexico. A sample of 322 students from four academic campus represented a 50.95 percentage of the population where, by means of an ipsative scale of 16 traits, they categorized the most important. It was identified that the most valued traits are knowledge, education, academic preparation, and professional competence, as well as professional ethics. The least valued trait is emotional abilities. Findings show the high value students give to cognitive and technical competences, although, they fail to appraise traits related to social and affective-emotional competences. The results allow us to point out the relevance of strengthen traits of social and affective-emotional competences, in addition to other ethical competences, in the educational path of students. This in a reflective way, so that students can analyze and consolidate aspects that allow them a humanistic and social responsibility training that have a favorable impact on their professional performance.

**Keywords:** teaching languages, professional ethics, teacher education, professional education, professional identity.

**Resumo**

A seguir, um estudo transversal descritivo elaborado com o objetivo de identificar as características de um bom profissional a partir da perspectiva de alunos em processo de formação para o ensino de línguas em uma universidade pública mexicana. A amostra foi composta por 322 alunos de quatro unidades acadêmicas, o que representa 50,95% da população. Os participantes, usando uma escala ipsativa de 16 características, categorizaram as mais importantes. Identificou-se que os alunos valorizam, prioritariamente, o conhecimento, a formação, a preparação e a competência profissional, bem como a ética profissional. A característica que identificaram como menos importante foi a capacidade emocional. Conclui-se o valor que os alunos atribuem às competências cognitivas e técnicas, embora não consigam avaliar traços relacionados às competências sociais e afetivo-emocionais. Os resultados permitem apontar a relevância do fortalecimento de traços de competências sociais e afetivo-emocionais, bem como de outras competências éticas, no percurso educacional dos alunos. Isso é feito de forma reflexiva para que os alunos possam analisar e consolidar aspectos que lhes permitam uma formação humanística e de responsabilidade social ter um impacto favorável em seu desempenho profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** ensino de línguas, ética profissional, formação de professores, formação profissional, identidade profissional.

## Introduction

The training of professionals in language teaching in Mexico, at the undergraduate level, has a recent genesis compared to other university careers that already have social recognition. The educational offer began in 1980, and with a greater boom in the 1990s, with the subsequent creation of postgraduate courses in the area of languages. The novelty of this field, the weak social recognition of a professional profile for teaching languages, as well as the high demand in this area lead to determine the reasons for the insertion of teachers who lack professional training for teaching in the various spaces Mexican educational. For this reason, enormous challenges, limitations and gaps persist in the discipline of language teaching.

The role of the teacher in language learning is highlighted, therefore, linguistic and pedagogical training have an impact to consolidate it. This forms the basis for supporting the teaching. Likewise, the relevance of ethics and values training in language teachers is emphasized. In the curricular designs of educational programs of higher education institutions, based on competencies, elements are grouped that contribute to the integral formation of the future professional, through the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The purpose is to forge citizens with capacities beyond the acquisition of knowledge and to promote ways of relating that allow a more just and inclusive society.

The purpose of comprehensive training can sometimes be barely perceptible to students, since obtaining "good" grades seems to be their main concern, which is still valued as mastering the theoretical content of the various subjects of the program. This is at odds with competency-based training, where skills and attitudes must also be incorporated. Although the attitudinal dimension is incorporated in the curricular design of these educational training programs, in a vertical and transversal way, it is an unclear or outstanding issue for students. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how students perceive it.

Ethics and values have been studied by educational sciences and philosophy; However, there are no research results in this area of training that allow us to analyze progress and carry out relevant initiatives to make contributions to this type of curricular programs.

Based on the previous approaches, a research report is presented which addresses the opinion of language teachers in training on the traits of a good professional. In these traits characteristics are grouped according to the dimensions proposed by Hirsch (2005): cognitive and technical, social, ethical and affective-emotional competencies.

## Professional training of language teachers

In Mexico, there is a growing demand for foreign language teachers originated, primarily, by the prevailing situation in higher education institutions with respect to the "perspective of the internationalization of the curriculum, supported by Unesco and the OECD" (National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education [Anuies], 2019, p. 5). This is reflected in the rising numbers of language students in Latin America and the Caribbean (Anuies, 2019).

Recently, the need for foreign language teachers is also perceptible at other educational levels, for example, with the changes in the basic education curriculum in 2009,

when incorporating an English subject at the public preschool and primary levels ( Ministry of Public Education [SEP], 2011) and the National English Strategy derived from the New Educational Model (SEP, 2017).

Furthermore, language teaching is part of the linguistic strengthening of native languages, most of which are at risk. Therefore, within the linguistic planning strategies for its revitalization, conservation and promotion, the profile and training of teachers to meet these needs is a relevant part.

These and other transformations put into discussion three fundamental aspects for the conformation of the professional profile of the language teacher: 1) theoretical and methodological knowledge for teaching, 2) skills to generate learning environments, and 3) communicative competence in the language of instruction , essential elements to face the teaching of languages. The fact of requiring teachers who have the professional skills for this purpose is evident.

> Paquay et al. (2005) state as "professional skills" the entire set of knowledge, action schemes and attitudes that are demanded in the exercise of the teaching profession. Empowering teachers in this set of professional skills is a complex process, since it should be expected that teachers have as a base knowledge about theories, teaching methods and contents of the discipline for the management of these professional skills (Fierro, Martínez y Cordero, 2014, p. 4).

However, the processes and changes that are experienced in today's society place an emphasis, in addition to professional training in the area of languages, on the incorporation into the educational system of teachers with a "training in values in a responsible and committed way. society in general and with the new generations of students in particular "(Beltrán, Torres, Beltrán and García, 2005, p. 399).

Professional knowledge is what makes up the analysis scheme of situations and, therefore, determines their actions. They are the ones that mediate in the planning and evaluation of the teacher for the decision-making of the actions to be carried out. Likewise, it is delimited by attitudes - as established by Paquay, Altet, Charlier and Perrenoud (2005) - in the conviction they have for the education of their students, respect for others, awareness of their own representations, openness to collaboration and professional commitment, highlighting the pedagogical-social aspect in student learning.

In the area of language teaching, it has been of great significance to inquire about how the theoretical knowledge and beliefs of teachers guide the actions carried out in the classroom (Breen, 1991; Freeman, 1989; Richards, 1998, 2011; Woods, 1996 ). For this reason, Freeman (1989) points out the need to investigate about this process. This author affirms that training in this area was fragmented and lacked a solid conceptual basis to govern the efforts made to develop teacher training programs, and it was argued that they were largely influenced by different disciplines.

Freeman's statement makes sense when considering that the language teacher must have knowledge and teaching skills, in the same way as a teacher from another field of instruction. As Richards (1998) mentions, the teacher must master the generic competences of pedagogy and notions of other disciplines, such as linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, articulated in a coherent way in his training.

Later, Richards (2011) broadens the domain of content by exposing the knowledge, beliefs and skills for the professional in language teaching. In it, he identifies essential dimensions that allow establishing a framework for conceptualizing the nature of competence, expertise, and professionalism. Among them are circumscribed, in addition to what was previously proposed by this author (Richards, 1998), knowledge of the context that addresses the sociocultural perspective where teaching is located. In it are aspects such as the particular purposes of the school, the curriculum that is implemented, the school culture and the characteristics of its teachers and students.

This contextual knowledge, included within sociolinguistics, allows the teacher to recognize the way to act in certain situations, after understanding the school's norms of practice, values and participation patterns. The teacher forms her acting in a socialization process that is achieved in the school context as a member of a community of practice.

The case of the European Union is taken, which values language as a system of signs in a social environment, where it emphasizes the knowledge of the characteristics of the context. Due to the proximity of the countries, there is greater access to mobility and employability across borders. For this reason, they bet on quality in the training of language teachers to facilitate these processes.

In the document European profile of language teacher education - a frame of reference (Kelly, Grenfell, Allan, Kriza and McEvoy, 2004), a reference framework is established that contains information about content, examples of good practices and innovations that can be considered in training programs. It constitutes a base, by way of recapitulation of principles or guidelines, focused on the structure of educational courses, content (knowledge, strategies and skills) and values for this type of training programs.

Although the European manuscript clarifies that it is aimed at examining the training of foreign language teachers - not for teachers who teach their mother tongue - it is a guide for the development of programs in this field. In this, it is a core part, as in other curricular developments, that teachers identify and understand the nature of language teaching and learning to put into practice in real situations, what is acquired in their initial training, in addition to development continuous professional as part of updating and improving your profession.

Reflection in action acquires important contributions in this search for continuous teacher improvement. According to Schön (1983), to build professional knowledge, it is based on experience and reflection of the actions carried out in practice. Reflection favors professional development for teaching, which has a positive impact on the educational process in particular and, consequently, on society as a whole (Fierro, 2019).

Without a doubt, reflection is an important element for professional development. In this introspection is where it is demanded that elements related to the representations about their profession be incorporated, which include ethics and professional values.

Language teachers are not exempt in this configuration; In addition, it is necessary to incorporate in their training the sociocultural background of teamwork, collaboration and networks that promote a true "professional collective participation" (Imbernón, 2001, p. 3).

The teacher training that takes place in higher education institutions establishes the beginning, while later learning takes place in school. Shared goals, standards of conduct, values, and beliefs become the hidden curriculum, sometimes more powerful than the institution-determined curriculum.

It is within this sociocultural perspective of the context where the identity dimension of the language teacher is developed, which is manifested in the roles that the teacher plays, whether social or cultural in their educational environment.

## Professional identity, ethics and values

Professional identity is a construction that is materialized from personal experiences, but is also sustained by social events experienced in the community and the way it is perceived in society, hence it is called a construction process. individual and collective (Bolívar, 2007; Lopes, 2007; Richards, 2011).

What has been lived in the community determines, to a large extent, this identity; it affects the way the teacher performs in his field and the type of discourse he adopts, since through it the group to which he belongs is manifested, as well as the representation he has of the meaning of being a teacher. Likewise, in the role that he exercises within the classroom, the school and the community; even in what the teacher does to influence the decisions that concern his teaching.

From these collective precepts, professional ethics is built and established in the culture, being manifested in the standards or codes of conduct observable in the profession. The social function that teaching plays in society is recognized, as well as its impact. It is logical to determine within its main responsibilities the achievement of learning in the students of future teachers, for this purpose, within its duties, it is to possess the knowledge of the discipline that it teaches and to be updated in the contents it teaches (Hortal, 2000 ).

The question that arises is whether a professional identity can be developed from higher education institutions. From initial training, as a professional career, benchmarks are acquired to form individual representations of how performance is so that the teacher is justified, analyzed and evaluated.

However, this identity faces the reality of the current context, and although they converge, they are in a continuous adaptation due to the contrasts that exist in what they acquired during their initial training. Sometimes, a concept of identity is idealized, and based on what they experience in their work environments, it makes them give up on continuing with that identity and create a new one. (Lopes, 2007).

It is argued that this identity crisis is due to the fact that initial training is academic rather than professional, lacking solid foundations to resist the destruction of professional identity. That is, the teaching aspects are developed more: theories, methodologies, skills development, the "slang" of the environment, and less the construction of a deep and solid professional identity. Lopes (2007) attributes it to the educational policy of training that fails from its base in the development of an identity.

In the field of language teaching in Mexico, the identity of the teacher is fragmented due to various factors. It can be adduced, primarily, to the novelty of professionalization programs in the area of languages at the undergraduate level (Ramírez, 2007, 2010). It can also be attributed to the gaps in the insertion of teachers with training in the area of language teaching in educational spaces. A high value is given to communicative competence in the language of instruction as the only factor to consider in order to face the needs in the various educational spaces. However, these circumstances violate the construction of professional identity, which - according to Bolívar (2007), Lopes (2007) and Richards (2011) - affects the representations that subjects have about the meaning of being a teacher.

Another part to highlight, within the dimensions proposed by Richards, is that concerning the teacher's participation in a community of practice. It is feeling like a member of a group of people who share a common goal, who conceive education from a philosophical perspective, with a set of knowledge to guide knowledge and enrich the actions of the human being, solve common problems and issues.

The community of practice is part of the identity of the teacher where he learns from collaborative actions with other colleagues, whether to solve problems, present proposals, change practices, plan courses, evaluations, among other activities. In this way, the teacher can inquire about what they live in their classrooms to find solutions or explanations.

The aforementioned dimensions - according to the approach of Richards (2011) - help to configure the professional profile of the language teacher. A theoretical and practical training, and not just speaking the language of instruction is required to consider yourself a professional in language teaching. Congresses, specialized magazines, professional organizations and, primarily, the work carried out by universities to develop training programs at the undergraduate and postgraduate level in the area of languages contribute to this purpose.

In university educational projects, knowledge, skills and attitudes are established; in other words, the comprehensive training of future graduates stands out. However, although progress is being made with greater precision in curricular designs that contribute to achieving these achievements, there are still difficulties in presenting models or approaches to train professionals with a sense of ethics related to the exercise of their profession. That

is, with personal qualities or characteristics that guide them to act in accordance with standards in an ethical-moral dimension.

A weak commitment to social responsibility is increasingly visible in the professions - as López Zavala (2013) asserts - which reduces "professional identity to its economic dimension" (López Zavala, 2013, p. 15) due to what unstable and ethereal of long-lasting commitments and interest in social convictions, characteristics that Bauman (2011) calls a liquid society. López Zavala explains it as a response to face the maelstrom of demands for employability, which simplifies training to its technical dimension.

Professional ethics, from a broad sense, "focuses on virtues and professional roles" (Luna-Serrano, Valle-Espinoza and Osuna-Lever, 2010, p. 4). Deontological aspects are inherent to professions, where language teachers are not exempt. Ethics and professional values acquire relevance, primarily, derived from socially recognized duties and principles within what is called being a good teacher.

In this sense, it can be said that studies that contribute to knowledge about professional ethics in Mexico —and worldwide— have increased considerably. These works document the ethical problems and dilemmas that professionals identify in their practice. However, unethical behavior in professionals, professors, researchers and students is increasingly frequent and of greater intensity (Hirsch and Pérez-Castro, 2007), which serves to question the role of university education in "the dissemination of values to create a more just social order "and" self-awareness of human rights " (Luna-Serrano *et al.*, 2010, p. 3).

This is a significant area of study that is in an incipient stage with proposals for training in the value dimension in higher education institutions, as well as contextualized in the ethics of the teaching profession, particularly relevant from the changes generated in the system Mexican educational institution in recent times (Hirsch and Pérez-Castro, 2007). In studies carried out, where the participating subjects are university students, values such as responsibility, honesty and knowledge stand out, while teamwork and communication are identified as less important (Luna-Serrano et al., 2010). Teachers, on the other hand, value integrity, respect and professionalism, establishing a lower rank than social competences (Serna and Luna, 2011).

In this sense, "the importance of adequate ethical training of teachers for their correct professional performance" is highlighted (Sanz and Hirsch, 2016, p. 141). Emphasis is placed on the development not only of the theoretical-pedagogical competences for the teaching of languages or "the mastery of competences for good performance in the technical dimension"

(López Zavala, 2013, p. 16), but also in training of professionals with a high social and ethical commitment to give back to society the good received in their university education.

This study, therefore, is part of a degree program aimed at training language teachers. In their graduation profile, it is contemplated that students must possess theoretical and methodological knowledge for the teaching of languages, abilities to generate learning environments, as well as strengthen communicative competence in English and develop a third target language. In this sense, linguistic and pedagogical training impacts performance in the exercise of the profession, but the relevance of ethical and value training in language teachers is also highlighted.

Within its training path is the insertion of the subject Ethics, Social Responsibility and Transparency, with the purpose of contributing to the reflection on the importance of values and ethics in the exercise of future professionals. The subject is incorporated into the common core as compulsory for students of the two undergraduate educational programs offered at the faculty. In the later stages —disciplinary and terminal— it is contemplated that ethics and values are incorporated in a transversal way in each of the subjects of the study plan.

In accordance with the educational model of the institution, the implementation of the previous initiatives favors comprehensive training, which includes not only the competencies and skills to enter the work field, but also the values and attitudes necessary to train the future professional committed to their environment (Autonomous University of Baja California [UABC], 2014). It is intended that through this model university students reflect on the ethics and values in professional work, "an ethic that tries to guide professional behavior" to "establish an interdisciplinary dialogue with the specialized knowledge on which the exercise of each profession is based "(Hortal, 2002, p. 15).

Based on the aforementioned approaches, the objective of identifying the most important features of being a good professional is established from the perspective of students of the degree in Language Teaching. In this way, the opinion of the students will be known to analyze the tensions and inconsistencies that may be evident in the initial training of the subjects regarding the competences proposed by Hirsch (2005), where the ethical-value dimension is included.

The formative function of educational institutions is to avoid or modify negative attitudes such as "individualism, competitiveness, lack of links with the outside world, superficial reasoning, mediocrity and the lack of preparation of teachers in moral education"

( Grass, 2001, cited by Beltrán et al., 2005, p. 399). The relevance of identifying professional and ethical values in the training process for language teachers is that no studies have been found on ethics and contextualized values in this disciplinary area.

Therefore, it is necessary to document the problem by studying it systematically, with an integrative perspective, where, based on the analysis, it contributes to generating actions that make it possible to improve the conditions to achieve the proposed objectives and, with this, promote training that contributes to development. of professionals in the area of language teaching with the values of their profession, as well as to assume their commitment to society. In this way, it is intended to enrich the literature on the subject in the Mexican context and in the discipline of training language teachers to offer an overview of the values present in current students.

# Method

A descriptive transectional study was carried out with the participation of students of the degree in Language Teaching from the School of Languages of the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), in four municipalities of the state of Baja California.

## Data collection instrument

An instrument with an ipsative scale made up of 16 traits of being a good professional was used (Table 1), which were ranked by the participants according to the most important. In addition, a section was incorporated to collect demographic data: gender, age, academic unit, semester and shift to which they belong.

**Tabla 1.** Rasgos de ser buen profesional

| Competencias | Rasgos |
|---|---|
| **Competencias cognitivas y técnicas** | 1. Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional.<br>2. Formación continua<br>3. Innovación y superación<br>4. Competencia profesional (técnica) |
| **Competencias sociales** | 5. Compañerismo y relaciones<br>6. Comunicación<br>7. Trabajar en equipo<br>8. Ser trabajador |
| **Competencias éticas** | 9. Responsabilidad<br>10. Honestidad<br>11. Ética profesional y personal<br>12. Prestar mejor servicio a la sociedad<br>13. Respeto<br>14. Principios morales y valores profesionales |
| **Competencias afectivo-emocionales** | 15. Identificarse con la profesión<br>16. Capacidad emocional |

**Fuente**: Hirsch (2005)

## Characteristics of the sample

The School of Languages has academic units in four municipalities in the state of Baja California: Mexicali, Tecate, Tijuana and Ensenada. The undergraduate study programs contemplate the first two semesters as a common core, so the participants in this research were students who attended the third to eighth semesters. The latter make up the disciplinary (third to sixth) and terminal stages (seventh and eighth).

The total number of undergraduate students enrolled in the disciplinary and terminal stages amounted to 632 at the time of the study, as shown in table 2.

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**Tabla 2.** Población estudiantil de la licenciatura en Docencia de Idiomas

| | Unidad académica (UA) | | | | | | | | |
| | Ensenada | | Mexicali | | Tecate | | Tijuana | | |
| Semestre | Mat | Ves | Mat | Ves | Mat | Ves | Mat | Ves | Totales |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tercero | 23 | - | 22 | 29 | 35 | - | 40 | 25 | 174 |
| Cuarto | 7 | - | - | 15 | - | - | - | 30 | 52 |
| Quinto | - | 23 | 24 | 15 | 25 | - | 40 | 20 | 147 |
| Sexto | 16 | - | - | 15 | - | - | - | 30 | 61 |
| Séptimo | - | 17 | 26 | 22 | - | - | 30 | 40 | 135 |
| Octavo | - | 11 | - | 15 | - | - | - | 37 | 63 |
| **Totales** | 46 | 51 | 72 | 111 | 60 | 0 | 110 | 182 | 632 |
| **Total UA** | | 97 | | 183 | | 60 | | 292 | **632** |

**Fuente:** Elaboración propia a partir de los datos proporcionados por las coordinaciones
**Nota:** Mat=matutino. Ves=vespertino.

The sample of students from the disciplinary and terminal stages was determined in a stratified random way. The intention was to have student representation in the four academic units, as well as in each semester and shifts of the degree.

Questionnaires were applied to 322 students, which represented 50.95% of the population of the degree in Language Teaching. A 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 4% were determined. The sample was made up of 47.2% of the morning shift and 52.8% of the evening shift; 62.8% of the female gender and 37.2% of the male participated (table 3). The female sex is a predominant population in the area of training for language teaching; This coincides with the documented findings in the field of knowledge of the research for the teaching and learning of languages referred by Ramírez (2013).

**Tabla 3.** Participantes por unidad académica, turno y sexo

| Unidad académica | Turno | | | | Sexo | | | | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mat | % | Ves | % | H* | % | M* | % | Total |
| **Mexicali** | 39 | 34.2 | 75 | 65.8 | 45 | 39.5 | 69 | 60.5 | 114 |
| **Ensenada** | 40 | 88.9 | 5 | 11.1 | 11 | 24.4 | 34 | 75.6 | 45 |
| **Tecate** | 48 | 100 | - | - | 13 | 27.1 | 35 | 72.9 | 48 |
| **Tijuana** | 25 | 21.7 | 90 | 78.3 | 51 | 44.3 | 64 | 55.7 | 115 |
| **TOTAL** | 152 | 47.2 | 170 | 52.8 | 120 | 37.2 | 202 | 62.8 | 322 |

**Fuente:** Elaboración propia
**\*Nota:** H = Hombres. M = Mujeres.

Table 4 shows the number of participating students according to the academic unit to which they belong and the semester.

**Tabla 4.** Participantes por unidad académica y semestre

| Unidad académica | Semestre | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3.º | % | 4.º | % | 5.º | % | 6.º | % | 7.º | % | 8.º | % | |
| Mexicali | 33 | 28.9 | 11 | 9.6 | 22 | 19.3 | 10 | 8.8 | 24 | 21.1 | 14 | 12.3 | 114 |
| Ensenada | 13 | 28.9 | 22 | 48.9 | - | - | - | - | 5 | 11.1 | 5 | 11.1 | 45 |
| Tecate | 29 | 60.4 | - | - | 19 | 39.6 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 48 |
| Tijuana | - | - | 18 | 15.7 | 39 | 33.9 | 19 | 16.5 | 14 | 12.2 | 25 | 21.7 | 115 |
| TOTAL | 75 | 23.29 | 51 | 15.83 | 80 | 24.85 | 29 | 9.0 | 43 | 13.35 | 44 | 13.66 | 322 |

**Fuente:** Elaboración propia

## Data analysis process

To identify the three most important traits by academic unit, semester, gender, shift, as well as to contrast by academic unit, the data were processed in the statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, the frequencies of the traits were obtained. Subsequently, contingency tables were developed to jointly visualize the data and perform the analysis according to the variables already established.

To determine the significant differences in the different categories of the data, it was necessary, initially, to identify the normality of the data. Subsequently, different analyzes were carried out; For the case of variables where several groups are compared, the analysis of variance (Anova) was used, which is the case for comparisons between academic units and semesters; for those variables where only two groups are compared, the analysis was the T test for independent samples. The above assuming the normality of the data; otherwise, nonparametric tests are used.

## Analysis of results

The results of the students' perception of the traits of being a good professional are presented, according to the categories of analysis previously exposed. The three most important traits by academic unit are shown in table 5; then the findings of the variables semester, sex and shift that are different are shown. Similarities were found in the categorization in all the variables, so only those that contribute differences to what was found in the academic unit will be highlighted.

From the normality test of the data distribution, statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) is found in all categories, except for the trait classified as third in importance, in the Ensenada category (normality of the distribution), which which leads to the assumption of non-

normality in the distribution of the academic unit variable in the analyzed sample. Nonparametric analyzes were carried out to identify significant differences.

As these were non-normal distributions in the analyzed sample, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used, except for the third most important trait in Ensenada; for this case the Anova test was used.

The asymptotic (bilateral) significance is interpreted, which in all cases is greater than .05, which allows us to conclude that there is no statistically significant association between the academic unit and the choice of a professional trait in any of the categories explored.

Now, analyzing the case of the third most important trait, the Anova analysis was carried out, with which the following was found. From the test of homogeneity of variances, with the Levene statistic, we identify that its level of significance is less than .05, which indicates that there is no homogeneity of variance in the data analyzed. When performing the F statistic test, its significance is higher than .05, which indicates that there are no significant differences between academic units when choosing the professional trait.

**Tabla 5.** Rasgos más importantes por unidad académica

| Posición | Unidad académica | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ensenada | % | Mexicali | % | Tecate | % | Tijuana | % |
| Primero en importancia | Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional | 60 | Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional | 67.5 | Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional | 60.4 | Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional | 69.6 |
| Segundo en importancia | Ética profesional y personal | 20 | Ética profesional y personal | 18.4 | Conocimiento, formación, preparación y competencia profesional | 27.1 | Responsabilidad | 20.2 |
| Tercero en importancia | Formación continua | 15.6 | Ética profesional y personal | 15.8 | Ética profesional y personal | 29.2 | Innovación y superación | 17.5 |

**Fuente:** Elaboración propia

In general (table 5), it is identified that the most valued trait is located in cognitive and technical competencies, since knowledge, training, preparation and professional competence are the most important; in second and third place, with the same number of frequencies, professional and personal ethics, a feature that corresponds to ethical competencies. In Ensenada and Tijuana, there are two categorized traits that belong to cognitive and technical competences (continuous training and innovation and improvement), while in this last academic unit they place in second place a trait of ethical competencies

(responsibility). Among the traits categorized with the least number of mentions is emotional capacity, affective-emotional competencies. In the academic unit of Ensenada, mention is made of the trait of providing better service to society, of social competences, last.

Similar results were found in the semester variable. As these were non-normal distributions in the analyzed sample, the Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out. The asymptotic significance in all cases is greater than .05, which allows us to conclude that there is no statistically significant association between semester and the choice of a professional trait in any of the explored categories.

The results of the three most valued traits per semester coincide with those found in the academic unit variable, where according to the classification by competences, the knowledge, training, preparation and professional competence trait is valued in the first places. It was found that in the fifth and sixth semester values such as innovation and improvement (15%), as well as continuous training (13.8%), respectively, emerge, which correspond to cognitive and technical skills; also moral principles and professional values, of ethical competences, in third (17.3%) and eighth semester (20.8%). However, the traits of emotional capacity and better service to society prevail among the least important.

In the variables sex and shift, non-parametric tests were performed, in this case, the Mann-Whitney U, appropriate for variables with two categories, whose distribution is non-normal, as a statistical significance of p <0.05 was found. It was concluded that there is no statistically significant association between these variables and in the choice of a professional trait in any of the explored categories.

The results do not vary from what has already been stated, with the exception of the category of female gender, where the value of responsibility emerges as second in importance with 17.4%, which corresponds to ethical competencies. In third place, both sexes place professional and personal ethics (women with 15.3% and men with 16.8%).

In the shift variable, the most valued traits that have been mentioned in advance prevail. It was found in both shifts that the values of knowledge, training, preparation and professional competence (morning in first place [63.2%] and second place [16.4%]; afternoon in first place [68.8%]), as well as professional and personal ethics (morning in third place [16.4%] and evening in second [16.6%]) are the highest frequency. In the evening shift, the value of moral and professional principles is third in importance with 16.6%.

In the least valued of the variables sex and shift, no differences were found with what was previously stated in the variable academic unit.

# Discussion

In the analyzed traits, similar results are found between the categories presented (by academic unit, semester, sex and shift). Language teachers in training highlight among the most important professional traits knowledge, training, preparation and professional competence and professional ethics. As stated, professional training consists of acquiring the knowledge of the discipline; to be part of the profession is accessed "after a long process of theoretical and practical training, on which the accreditation or license to practice said profession depends" (Hortal, 2002, p. 51), and of this they seem to be aware language teachers.

It is important to highlight that the features mentioned among the three most important, with different frequencies, belong to cognitive and technical competences: 1) knowledge, training, preparation and professional competence, 2) innovation and improvement and 3) continuous training. These features of professional values allow asserting that students identify the acquisition of knowledge as determinants to perform in their profession, which is consistent with having the intention of accessing university studies, since the purposes of these institutions are to train their students with the capacities to insert itself in a globalized world, although - it is worth noting - without forgetting social responsibility.

Higher education institutions have among their substantive functions three guiding points that guide their actions: "The socially responsible management of training, the socially responsible management of knowledge and culture, and the socially responsible management of the institution as a whole", also known as "responsible campus" (Anuies, 2012, in UABC, 2017, p. 8). It can be affirmed that language teachers in training, be it because of the collective discourse in which they are immersed — at home, at school, in the community — conceive the values related to cognitive and technical competence as essential. This is what will allow them to identify themselves as competent experts in their profession, having specialization in the area in which they will work and obtaining academic accreditation.

On the other hand, it is not observed that they identify other traits such as those categorized in social and affective-emotional competencies. This despite the fact that the study plan emphasizes the development of skills to work in a team, to communicate, to establish companionship relationships, as well as to optimally fulfill the assigned tasks. The low valuation of these traits coincides with the findings of Luna-Serrano et al. (2010). In

addition, it could be investigated whether the meager value they attribute to social competencies is related to the low appreciation of teachers regarding this dimension --as was identified in the work of Serna and Luna (2011) -, for which reason it is not developed in the professional training of the subjects studied. It would also be necessary to analyze why they place emotional capacity among the least important, when in teaching performance this capacity helps to establish a climate conducive to learning. In this sense, it is worth noting that by identifying your own feelings and those of others, you can establish cordial relationships and handle conflictive situations that may arise in the classroom or in your work environment.

The trait of identifying with the profession, part of the professional identity, is an essential element that must be developed in the curriculum of the educational program, since until now it is an aspect that has not been identified as preponderant among students. It is the development of the professional ethos, which in the words of López Zavala (2013) "takes full meaning not in imagined settings but in socially existing environments, which contributes to the development of moral professionalism (p. 18)", where - as It has already been stated - if theoretical and practical knowledge is preponderant for their performance in the disciplinary field, although the vocation and appropriation of the standards of conduct of their profession are fundamental, since then their actions will have "as their motto the pretense of justice in the relationship with their community" (López Zavala, 2013, p. 18).

In Mexico, in the field of language teaching, the identity of the teacher is fragmented due to various factors. Primarily, to the gaps in the insertion of professors - with university training in the area of language teaching - in educational spaces. This situation is generated by the assessment they give to communicative competence in the language of instruction as the only factor to consider for hiring. These circumstances affect the construction of professional identity and the representations that subjects have about the meaning of being a teacher.

The forms of behavior that are built from the practice and discourse of a professional union are contributing towards the accepted interpretation of the behaviors that are appropriate and categorized as correct from a professional ethic. They are the ones that generate values and legitimized behavior patterns that are transmitted as a tradition in professional practice (López Calva, 2009). For this reason, "the principles are imperatives of a general nature, which provide guidance on what is good to do and what should be avoided.

They point out major themes and reference values, which must be taken into account when deciding and facing problematic cases "(Hirsch, 2013, p. 105).

This impact on the results can be interpreted as the fact that students are unable to discriminate between the traits, so they choose those that are most familiar to them, even though this results in disagreements. Here it would be necessary to question how they are approached in the development of the curriculum by all the actors involved in the training they receive at the institution, inside and outside the classroom. This is an element that should be considered in subsequent research to inquire about the perceptions, mainly, of the teacher educators in the educational program and other subjects, also with interference in it.

To achieve a real approach to the meaning of the traits of a good professional, it is necessary to inquire into the meanings of the practice attributed by language teachers in training. Therefore, deepening in a qualitative way is an alternative to explain the differences and identify the training they receive regarding the dimensions explored.

In other words, meanings must be approached from a humanistic perspective in order to understand and interpret them, that is, a qualitative approach (Taylor and Bogdan, 2006) will clarify the contradiction. In this way, through interpretive methods it will be possible to explain what happens in a certain group or person, and identify the perspective of the actors in their context to know what happens in a particular place and the meanings they give them.

The issues that are identified to explore —that is, examining the opinions of other subjects related to the training that future language teachers receive, as well as using qualitative strategies to deepen the perception of students— represent areas of opportunity for future studies of the topic addressed in this work.

## Conclusions

This study aimed to identify the most important traits from the opinion of undergraduate students for language teaching. This allowed an approach to recognize tensions and inconsistencies in the initial training of the subjects regarding the traits of a good professional and determine if they constitute a gap in the educational program curriculum. In the analysis of the variables, no significant differences were observed in the analyzed categories of academic unit, semester, shift or gender.

Therefore, the first general conclusion derived from the results is the high value that language teachers in training attribute to cognitive and technical competences, although

absences are observed in social and affective-emotional competences by not identifying other traits as well. relevant to their professional training.

This allows us to elucidate how the representations of their profession, their professional ethos, are shaping. Students give a high value to the traits associated with training and updating, which is not intended to be underestimated, since they are the basis of teaching, the frame of reference for planning and decision-making. However, although professional and personal ethics is a trait with a high frequency, which is part of ethical competences, there is an absence in terms of commitment to society, respect and honesty, elements necessary to shape a social environment fairer.

The fact that the students' perception lacks the aforementioned features can have an impact on the actions they take in the community, in their social environment and, therefore, in their professional practice. In this sense, training implies acquiring skills and values, and not only theoretical and technical knowledge to self-regulate and guide oneself in the forms of relationship, and to behave with other subjects and different environments.

The findings provide data on the relevance of forming a common language where features of social and affective-emotional competencies are incorporated, as well as strengthening the ethical dimension in the training path of the educational program. This explicitly so that, through reflection, students can analyze and consolidate aspects that allow them a humanistic training and social responsibility to have a favorable impact on their professional performance.

The analysis of these dimensions guides the guidelines for making adjustments in the training of language teachers. Likewise, the opinions of the teacher educators of these students and the way in which they implement the curriculum should be examined to determine if they carry it out in accordance with what comprehensive training requires, in a transversal way and with lifelong learning.

Finally, it reflects on the fact that language teachers are in a stage of construction of professional identity, derived from the circumstances that prevail in their educational environment and the way in which they are perceived. This is a question that must continue to be built so that it is solid and the representations of being a teacher are formed. In addition to this, the changes and transformations that are taking place in higher education institutions require that the training of language teachers also be oriented towards research. This in the face of a greater number of postgraduate degrees in the area of applied linguistics, so it gives

a new look to the profession, adding new professional spaces, in addition to teaching. A situation that has an impact on the professional ethos and its actions.

## Contributions to future lines of research

As future lines of research, it is considered relevant to delve into the opinions of the students regarding the traits that they categorize with the lowest assessment, which correspond to social and affective-emotional competencies. Using a qualitative methodology, it will be possible to identify your perspective. In the same way, it is necessary to investigate the opinions of other agents involved in the training of language teachers and analyze how they perceive (and live in the classroom) the traits of a good professional. The teachers who participate in this training process are the mediators in the implementation of the curricular model, therefore, they have great influence on the student's development as part of their professional training.

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| Rol de Contribución | Autor (es) |
|---|---|
| **Conceptualización** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Metodología** | Laura Emilia Fierro López (principal), Rey David Román Gálvez (que apoya) |
| **Software** | Rey David Román Gálvez |
| **Validación** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Análisis Formal** | Laura Emilia Fierro López (que apoya), Rey David Román Gálvez (principal) |
| **Investigación** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Recursos** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Curación de datos** | Laura Emilia Fierro López (principal), Rey David Román Gálvez (que apoya), Lilia Martínez Lobatos (que apoya). |
| **Escritura - Preparación del borrador original** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Escritura - Revisión y edición** | Laura Emilia Fierro López (principal), Rey David Román Gálvez (que apoya), Lilia Martínez Lobatos (que apoya). |
| **Visualización** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Supervisión** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Administración de Proyectos** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |
| **Adquisición de fondos** | Laura Emilia Fierro López |