



Standardised tests and their relationship to time, motivation, academic achievement in English language teaching.

Pruebas estandarizadas y relación con el tiempo, motivación, rendimiento académico en la enseñanza del inglés

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ABSTRACT

The research objective is to determine the correlation between standardised tests in terms of time, motivation and academic performance in English language teaching among 11th grade students enrolled in public educational institutions in Bogotá, Colombia. The scientific article was conducted using a quantitative approach with a descriptive methodology on a sample population of 103 students. Spearman's analysis showed that the time spent studying English is not significantly associated with performance on the Saber 11 test ($Rho = 0.167$; $p = 0.092$; Table 5), which prevents the null hypothesis for this variable from being rejected. It was found that, although increasing study hours does not guarantee better results on the Saber 11, a high level of motivation is linked to more favourable performance and a more positive perception of one's own abilities.

Descriptors: student evaluation; examination standards; second language instruction (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Se plantea como objetivo de investigación determinar la correlación de las pruebas estandarizadas en razón del tiempo, motivación y rendimiento académico en la enseñanza del inglés en estudiantes de grado 11 adscritos a instituciones educativas públicas de Bogotá – Colombia. El artículo científico fue realizado bajo el enfoque cuantitativo con una metodología de tipo descriptiva en una muestra poblacional de 103 estudiantes. El análisis de Spearman mostró que el tiempo dedicado al estudio del inglés no se asocia de manera significativa con el rendimiento en la prueba Saber 11 ($Rho = 0,167$; $p = 0,092$; tabla 5), lo cual impide rechazar la hipótesis nula para esta variable. Se obtuvo que, aunque aumentar las horas de estudio no garantiza un mejor resultado en la Saber 11, un alto nivel de motivación sí se vincula con un desempeño más favorable y con una percepción más positiva de las propias habilidades.

Descriptores: evaluación del estudiante; norma de examen; enseñanza de una segunda lengua. (Fuente: Tesoro UNESCO).

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Research articles



INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of Colombian education policy, bilingualism has been promoted as a national priority, so that standardised tests, especially *Saber 11*, are conceived as official indicators of English proficiency (Mejía-Mejía, 2016). These assessments guide accountability and the definition of curricular standards (Kelly, Andreasen, Kousholt, McNess, & Ydesen, 2017; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019), although their validity in reflecting authentic learning is tempered by external factors such as socioeconomic inequity, infrastructure quality, and opportunities for practice (Cabeza, Lombana, & Castrillón, 2020; Iguarán-Jiménez, Cabas-Manjarrés, Paba-Barbosa, & Diazgranados-Rincones, 2023; Vez-López, Molina-Muñoz, & Sánchez-Hernández, 2022).

It is also known that performance in English exams is conditioned by various cognitive and socioeconomic factors (Jiménez, Rodríguez, & Rey-Paba, 2017; Hernández-Otálora, 2024), a palpable situation in this regard being the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as an intervening factor, where academic performance gaps widened between public and private institutions, as the interruption of face-to-face teaching weakened language proficiency practices (García-Arias, Quevedo-Arnaiz, Cañizares-Cárdenas, & Loor-Coveña, 2021; Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020).

On the other hand, the time devoted to English language study has received little attention, although recent studies point to its positive relationship with cognitive achievement and the effectiveness of teacher planning (Eltahir et al., 2021; Kraft & Novicoff, 2024); however, when teaching hours are articulated with pedagogical support, the impact on learning is intensified (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Alejandro Cortés, 2024).

Similarly, academic motivation functions as a catalyst for self-regulated learning: high levels of intrinsic engagement improve self-efficacy and performance in complex tasks, such as reading comprehension and oral production (Bai & Wang,



2020; Rose, Curle, Aizawa, & Thompson, 2019). In addition, studies in the Colombian context agree that intrinsic motivation favours persistence and the implementation of effective study strategies (Caviedes, Vásquez-Benítez, & Gallego-Vásquez, 2024; Soledispa-Rivera, San-Andrés Soledispa, & Soledispa Pin, 2020).

In addition to the above, it can be highlighted that despite the existing theoretical wealth, there is still a lack of studies that simultaneously articulate the constructs of standardised tests, study time and motivation in 11th grade students from public institutions in Bogotá, a strategic population that is on the threshold of higher education, where the results of the *Saber 11* directly affect their academic and employment opportunities (Mejía-Mejía, 2016; Cabeza et al, 2020; Iguarán-Jiménez et al., 2023; Lee, Hwang, & Chen, 2022; Pazmiño-Rodríguez & Cordero-de-Jiménez, 2024).

Therefore, the objective of the research is to determine the correlation of standardised tests in terms of time, motivation and academic performance in the teaching of English in 11th grade students in public educational institutions in Bogotá - Colombia.

Theoretical frame of reference

Learning English depends not only on the content taught, but also on various factors that influence how learners appropriate this knowledge. Among these factors, learning time and motivation are essential elements that shape the student's learning experience. In order to understand how these influence academic performance, it is necessary to review theories that address study time, motivation and performance in foreign language learning, especially in educational contexts such as the Colombian context, in this sense, it is presented:

Time spent learning English

Study time is a factor traditionally associated with academic performance, in this sense, it is evident that the amount of time students spend on an activity directly



influences the results achieved. However, Kraft & Novicoff (2024) suggest that this impact is not linear, but also depends on the quality of the time spent, in this order, the use of effective learning strategies, interaction with additional resources such as multimedia materials, and interactive teaching can turn limited time into a more effective learning experience. Thus, the amount of study time should be understood as a qualitative rather than a quantitative factor, yes, the time spent on educational tasks should be related to active learning, which motivates the student to reflect and apply what he/she has learned.

Motivation for learning English

Motivation has been identified as one of the most influential factors in students' academic performance, especially in learning a foreign language, in this order, Bai & Wang (2020) highlight that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, has a direct relationship with academic success, therefore, intrinsic motivation, i.e. the interest and satisfaction students find in learning the language by themselves, is a determining factor in students' perseverance and willingness to actively participate in the learning process.

On the other hand, studies such as Caviedes, Vásquez-Benítez & Gallego-Vásquez (2024), state that motivation not only impacts on effort, but also on beliefs about one's own ability, which has an impact on performance, taking into account that in the case of learning English, motivated students feel more confident in their ability to achieve language proficiency and, therefore, are willing to invest more time and effort in learning activities. For this reason, educational programmes should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation, using pedagogical strategies that connect with learners' interests and enable them to see the relevance of English to their lives.

Academic performance in standardised tests

Standardised tests are tools for measuring academic performance and are widely used to assess students' language skills. In the case of Colombia, tests such as



Saber 11 provide information on students' level of proficiency in English and, in turn, serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of the educational programmes implemented. However, interpreting the results of these tests is not a simple process. Jiménez, Rodríguez & Rey Paba (2017) argue that test results not only reflect the knowledge acquired, but also a series of external factors, such as institutional support, family context and socio-economic conditions, hence motivation, time invested in learning and other psychoeducational factors influence the way students perform in these exams.

Test performance is also influenced by students' self-efficacy, that is, by their beliefs about their ability to succeed in academic tasks, in this context, García-Arias et al. (2021), note that students who perceive themselves as competent in English are more likely to do well on standardised tests, reflecting the close relationship between motivation and performance.

Relationship between time, motivation and performance

The relationship between time, motivation and academic performance should not be analysed in isolation. In this context, Kraft & Novicoff (2024) argue that motivation plays a mediating role between time spent studying and academic performance. In other words, time spent learning is only effective if students are motivated to make meaningful use of it. This position is complemented by the contributions of Caviedes et al. (2024), who mention that a motivated student can maximise the benefits of study time by actively engaging in learning activities and setting clear goals for improvement.

In this order, it is essential that educational environments foster a harmonious relationship between these three factors: time, motivation and performance; therefore, English language teaching programmes should be designed with the aim of not only increasing study time, but also generating an environment that encourages students' intrinsic motivation, to which end, Bai & Wang (2020) propose that teachers should be trained in techniques that foster student



autonomy, promoting autonomous learning that is supported by a strong sense of motivation.

METHOD

The scientific article was carried out under the quantitative approach with a descriptive methodology with a non-experimental field design, relying on correlational statistics to meet the research objective.

It should be noted that this paper is derived as part of the results of a doctoral thesis developed within the framework of the doctorate in educational sciences attached to the Metropolitan University of Education, Science and Technology (UMECIT), located in Panama. However, it should be noted that the geographical context in which the results were developed was in public institutions located in Bogotá - Colombia, where the researcher develops her ontological relationship with the object of study.

Thus, we proceeded to apply the hypothetical-deductive method in accordance with the methodological principles of the quantitative approach, promoting data collection in a population sample of 103 students in grade 11 of public institutions who had presented the standardised test Saber 11 in the year 2024. In this sense, the table of operationalisation of the variables was prepared in order to systematise the selection of data concerning the fulfilment of the research objective, see table 1.



Table 1. Operationalisation of the variables.

Variable			Dimensions	Indicators	Items
Time Spent Learning English as a Second Language	Inside the classroom	the	Hours per week	Less than 1 hour	From 1 hour
				1 to 3 hours	4 to 6 hours
	Outside the classroom	the	Hours per week	More than 6 hours	How much time do you spend learning English in the classroom?
				Less than 1 hour	From 1 hour
				1 to 3 hours	4 to 6 hours
				More than 6 hours	How much time do you spend learning English within the institution?
Motivation to learn	Value components	Interest	Assessment of learning	How much time do you spend participating in extracurricular activities offered by the school to learn English?	How interested are you in learning English?
				How interested are you in meeting the objectives of the English class?	How interested are you in setting personal goals for your English learning?
	Expectation components	Perception of control	Expectations of success	How interested are you in doing the homework in English class?	How interested are you in making decisions about your English language learning?
				How do you perceive the control you have over your own learning?	How interested are you in understanding how your past experiences affect your motivation to learn English?
	Affective components	Affective factors	Social support	How interested are you in feeling good about having control over your achievements in English?	How interested are you in receiving support from your family to learn English?
				How interested are you in involving your family in your English learning process?	How interested are you in feeling accompanied in your English learning process?
				How interested are you in how the school culture influences your motivation to learn English?	How interested are you in receiving support from the
				How interested are you in receiving support from the	



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Academic Performance in English	Language comprehension	Listening comprehension	community in your English learning process? Assess your ability to understand conversations in English. Assess your ability to understand and follow verbal instructions in English.
		Reading comprehension	How comfortable are you reading English texts? Assess your ability to understand written texts in English.
	Language production	Oral expression	How would you rate your ability to hold a conversation in English? How confident do you feel in expressing your ideas orally in English? How well do you make yourself understood when communicating in English?
		Writing in English	Assess your ability to write essays or texts in English. Assess your ability to write accurately in English.
SABER 11 Standardised Test Results in English as a second language	English test score in Saber 11 in 2023	Performance level	A - (0 - 47) A1 (48 - 57) A2 (58 - 67) B1 (68 - 78) B+ (79 - 100) What was your performance level in the Saber test?

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on Table 1, the survey technique was used to collect the data, using various measuring instruments to obtain quantifiable responses.

An ordinal frequency scale was used to measure the amount of time students spent learning English, both in and out of the classroom. Students' motivation and academic performance in English were assessed using Likert-type surveys. Finally, the results in the state tests (SABER 11) were analysed using a categorisation scale based on numerical ranges from the score obtained in the SABER English 2024 test, the results of which were published by ICFES and disseminated for each district educational institution.

As for the validity of the instruments, these were subjected to the evaluation of 3 content experts, while the reliability values were pilot tested on 10 students with similar characteristics to the sample without belonging to the same sample, in question; for the variable "time dedicated to learning the English language"



showed a coefficient α of 0.710, for "motivation to learn" showed a coefficient α of 0.925 and for "academic performance in the area of English" showed a coefficient α of 0..

Therefore, the instruments used were rated as highly reliable for their application. In this sense, descriptive and correlational statistical techniques were used for data analysis, using SPSS software version 27, in order to process the information and apply significance tests to identify the relationships between the study variables.

With regard to ethical considerations, it is stated that there was no experimentation with humans or animals in the research, highlighting that informed consent was given by the parents and representatives of the students, as well as by the teachers - directors of the institutions under study, with the intention of promoting due compliance with the law because minors were involved, as well as maintaining anonymity and the data obtained were used exclusively for research purposes.

RESULTS

In consideration of the data collection described in the method section, it is presented:

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the students.

Educational Institution	#	%
La Chucua	51	49,51 %
New Horizon Torca	5	4,85 %
El Salitre Suba	3	2,91 %
Leon de Greiff	2	1,94 %
Technician Cedit Guillermo Cano Isaza	6	5,83 %
The Liberator	1	0,97 %
National Pedagogical Institute	3	2,91 %
Saint Peter Claver	1	0,97 %
Gustavo Rojas Pinilla School	1	0,97 %



	La Estrellita	1	0,97 %
	Alqueria de la Fragua	2	1,94 %
	Alfred Marshall	1	0,97 %
	Venice Headquarters A	2	1,94 %
	The Jasmine	10	9,71 %
	Jhon F. Kennedy	13	12,62 %
	Friendship	1	0,97 %
Study day	Tomorrow	44	42,7 %
	Afternoon	52	50,5 %
	Nocturna	2	1,9 %
	Only	5	4,9 %
Student's age	15 years	5	4,9 %
	16 years	24	23,3 %
	17 years	43	41,7 %
	18 years	25	24,3 %
	Another	6	5,8 %
Gender of student	Female	54	52,4 %
	Male	49	47,6 %
	Another	-	-
Nationality of the student	Colombian	103	100 %

Note. 103 students surveyed. Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

Table 2 shows that the study sample consisted of 103 Grade 11 students from various public schools in Bogotá. The majority of participants belong to La Chucua (49.51%), followed by Jhon F. Kennedy (12.62%) and El Jazmín (9.71%). Other institutions with lower representation include Técnico Cedit Guillermo Cano Isaza (5.83%), Nuevo Horizonte Torca (4.85%), El Salitre Suba and Instituto Pedagógico Nacional (2.91% each), among others, whose proportions vary between 0.97% and 1.94%.

In terms of the academic day, 50.5% of students attend in the afternoon, 42.7% in the morning, and a smaller percentage attend in the single day (4.9%) or in the evening (1.9%).



In terms of age, the majority of students are between 16 and 18 years old, with 17 year olds (41.7%) standing out, followed by 18 year olds (24.3%) and 16 year olds (23.3%). Some 4.9% are 15 years old and 5.8% belong to another age range.

In terms of gender, 52.4% of the students identify themselves as female and 47.6% as male; consequently, all participants are of Colombian nationality.

Table 3. Scales of perceived academic performance.

	N	%
Under	51	49,5%
Moderate	41	39,8%
High	11	10,7%

Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

Criteria were defined to classify the perception of academic performance into three categories: low, moderate and high. Table 3 shows the distribution of participants according to their level of perception, revealing that almost half of the respondents evaluate their academic performance as low. Therefore, from the data presented in table 3, 49.5% of the participants (n = 51) perceive their academic performance as low, while 39.8% (n = 41) rate it as moderate. Only 10.7% (n = 11) consider their performance as high.

Table 4. Standardised test results in English.

	N	%
1: A-(0 - 47)	16	15,5%
2: A1 (48 - 57)	34	33,0%
3: A2 (58 - 67)	26	25%
4: B1 (68 - 78)	16	15,5%
5 B+ (79-100)	11	11%

Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

Table 4 shows the distribution of the levels of English proficiency obtained by the students in the standardised test. It can be seen that the most common level is A1, reached by 33% of the participants (n=34), while a quarter of the students obtained a level A2 (25.2%; n=26). It is relevant to note that almost half of the respondents (48.5%; n=50) are at levels below A2, suggesting that their



proficiency in English is still limited. In contrast, only 10.7% (n=11) achieved a level above B1.

Table 5. Correlation between time spent learning English and performance (standardised test results).

			Time spent learning English	Performance (Standardised Test Results)
Spearman's Rho	Time spent learning English	Correlation coefficient	1,000	,167
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	,092
		N	103	103
	Performance (Standardised Test Results)	Correlation coefficient	,167	1,000
		Sig. (bilateral)	,092	.
		N	103	103

Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

The hypotheses put forward are:

H0 = There is no relationship between time spent learning and performance.

H1= there is a relationship between time spent learning and performance.

Table 5 found no statistically significant relationship between time spent learning English and performance on standardised tests (Spearman's Rho = 0.167, $p = 0.092$). Although the correlation coefficient suggests a weak positive relationship, the significance value indicates that this association is not sufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

Therefore, it cannot be claimed that time spent learning English directly influences test performance, suggesting that other factors may be playing a more relevant role in the results obtained.



Table 6. Correlation between motivation for learning English and performance (standardised test scores).

			Motivation for learning English	Performance (Standardised Test Results)
Spearman's Rho	Motivation for learning English	Correlation coefficient	1,000	,418**
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	,000
		N	103	103
	Performance (standardised results)	Correlation test coefficient	,418**	1,000
		Sig. (bilateral)	,000	.
		N	103	103

Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

Since both variables meet the assumptions of normality, in principle a parametric correlation such as Pearson's could be used. However, given that the variable Performance (standardised test score) is ordinal, it was decided to use Spearman's correlation (Spearman's Rho), which is more appropriate for this type of data.

The hypotheses for the correlation analysis are as follows:

H0 = There is no correlation between motivation for learning English and performance (standardised test scores).

H1 = There is a correlation between motivation for learning English and performance (standardised test scores).

Table 6 shows a significance level of .00 (p. value <.05), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, thus, it is expressed that there is a correlation between Motivation for learning English and Performance (standardised test result), with direct direction (positive) and of moderate intensity (correlation coefficient of .418).



Table 7. Correlation between motivation for learning English and perceived academic achievement.

		Motivation for learning English	Perception of Academic Performance
Motivation for learning English	Pearson correlation	1	,462**
	Sig. (bilateral)		,000
	N	103	103
Perception of Academic Performance	Pearson correlation	,462**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	,000	
	N	103	103

Source: Own elaboration based on the data obtained in the data collection instrument.

The hypotheses put forward are:

H0 = There is no correlation between motivation for learning English and perceived academic achievement.

H1 = There is a correlation between motivation for learning English and perceived academic achievement.

From the results presented in Table 7 with a significance level of .00 (p value $< .05$), the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is a correlation between motivation for learning English and perceived academic achievement. This correlation is direct (positive) and of moderate intensity, with a correlation coefficient of .462.

DISCUSSION

As for the relationship between time spent learning English and performance on standardised tests, the results of Spearman's correlation ($Rho = 0.167$, $p = 0.092$) indicate a weak and non-significant correlation. This suggests that, although in principle one might expect a greater time commitment to have a positive impact on performance, other factors seem to play a more decisive role. This finding is consistent with previous research, such as that of Bai & Wang (2020), who found that motivation and beliefs about personal ability have a more substantial



influence than simply increasing study time; in addition, the study by Kraft & Novicoff (2024) highlights that the quality of time spent, rather than quantity, may be a determining factor in improving academic performance.

On the other hand, the analysis of motivation for learning English in relation to performance on standardised tests shows a moderate and significant correlation ($Rho = 0.418$, $p < 0.05$). This result confirms that motivation is a determining factor in students' academic success. Thus, the positive relationship observed is consistent with previous studies, such as that of Cabeza, Lombana & Castrillón (2020), who found that intrinsic motivation has a direct and considerable effect on performance in standardised tests. Likewise, research by Vez-López, Molina-Muñoz & Sánchez-Hernández (2022) points to the importance of motivation in performance in foreign language learning contexts, in that a high level of motivation fosters perseverance and concentration in academic tasks.

In terms of perceived academic performance, it was observed that students with higher motivation for learning English tended to perceive their performance more positively, which reinforces the idea that motivation not only impacts objective test results, but also students' self-assessment of their own performance. This phenomenon is supported by studies such as Caviedes, Vásquez-Benítez & Gallego-Vásquez (2024), who found that motivation also influences self-efficacy and students' perceptions of their abilities, which can lead to greater confidence in their academic performance.

Therefore, it is important to highlight that the distribution of the sample reflects a considerable diversity in terms of the educational institutions represented, which brings a contextual richness to the study. It is important to highlight that the majority of the students come from La Chucua (49.51%), and most of them are in the 16 and 17 years age range, which coincides with the adolescent population that is at a decisive moment in their academic formation. These socio-demographic aspects could influence the way students deal with learning English



and test performance, as factors such as family environment, available resources and institutional support also play an important role in the educational process.

CONCLUSION

Spearman's analysis showed that time spent studying English is not significantly associated with performance on the Saber 11 test ($Rho = 0.167$; $p = 0.092$; table 5), which prevents us from rejecting the null hypothesis for this variable. However, a positive correlation of moderate intensity was identified between intrinsic motivation towards learning English and the scores obtained in the standardised test ($Rho = 0.418$; $p < 0.001$; table 6), as well as between the same motivation and the students' perception of their own academic performance ($Rho = 0.462$; $p < 0.001$; table 7).

Therefore, it was found that, although increasing the number of hours of study does not guarantee a better result in the Saber 11, a high level of motivation is linked to a more favourable performance and a more positive perception of one's own abilities. Considering the socio-demographic profile of the sample, predominantly 16-17 year olds from La Chucua, it is clear that psychoeducational factors, beyond the hours count, play a determining role in explaining the differences in English skills among Grade 11 students in Bogotá public schools.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest with persons or institutions involved in research.

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