

Personalized feedback report for the second administration of standardized language proficiency tests at the British Council Colombia locations

Reporte de feedback personalizado para la segunda toma de pruebas de habilidades lingüísticas estandarizadas en las sedes del British Council de Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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International language proficiency assessments have gained increasing importance in Colombia over the years, becoming a fundamental requirement for thousands of citizens who aspire to achieve academic goals, fulfill demanding job requirements, or manage migration processes. However, the lack of detailed reports that provide candidates with effective, constructive and timely feedback creates the need to retake the test again when results are unfavorable, which significantly hinders their overall progress, preparation and confidence with their abilities.

This proposal aims to design a feedback report specifically tailored for individuals taking the IELTS for the second time at the British Council in Colombia. The main objective is to enable them to fully understand their strengths and recognize specific areas that require improvement while also providing practical strategies to reinforce the aspects that pose difficulties. Through a professionalizing approach and based on responses to a carefully designed questionnaire containing dichotomous and Likert-scale questions, some of them justified, this study highlights the essential role that meaningful, personalized feedback plays in optimizing learning outcomes. Additionally, this proposal underscores the relevance of considering the candidates' prior knowledge and how it evolves after receiving constructive and timely feedback. It also acknowledges the influence of emotions and both internal and external factors in the evaluation process, positioning these reports as key tools to transform traditional assessment methods into a more human-centered and effective approach.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Feedback, Aprendizaje significativo
y generativo; Habilidades

Las evaluaciones internacionales de competencia lingüística han cobrado una importancia creciente en Colombia a lo largo de los años, convirtiéndose en un requisito fundamental para miles de ciudadanos que aspiran a alcanzar metas académicas, cumplir exigentes requisitos laborales o gestionar procesos migratorios. Sin embargo, la falta de

lingüísticas; Exámenes de estandarización; IELTS

informes detallados que proporcionen a los candidatos una retroalimentación efectiva, constructiva y oportuna genera la necesidad de repetir la prueba nuevamente cuando los resultados son desfavorables, lo que dificulta significativamente su progreso, preparación y confianza en sus habilidades.

Esta propuesta tiene como objetivo diseñar un informe de retroalimentación específicamente adaptado para las personas que presentan el IELTS por segunda vez en el British Council de Colombia. Su propósito principal es permitirles comprender completamente sus fortalezas y reconocer áreas específicas que requieren mejora, además de proporcionar estrategias prácticas para reforzar los aspectos que representan dificultades. A través de un enfoque profesionalizador y basado en respuestas a un cuestionario cuidadosamente diseñado con preguntas dicotómicas y de escala Likert, algunas de ellas justificadas, este estudio resalta el papel esencial que desempeña una retroalimentación significativa y personalizada en la optimización del aprendizaje. Además, esta propuesta destaca la relevancia de considerar el conocimiento previo del candidato y cómo evoluciona al recibir una retroalimentación constructiva y oportuna. También reconoce la influencia de las emociones y de factores internos y externos en el proceso de evaluación, posicionando estos informes como herramientas clave para transformar los métodos tradicionales de evaluación en un enfoque más humano y efectivo.

Introduction

The Colombian educational system has evolved significantly over the years. While education was based on memorization in the colonial period, and students were measured by the results achieved; today the evaluation process is based on three important stages: diagnostic evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation.

While the first determines the student's initial knowledge, the second focuses on the progress of the process, and the third measures the achievements attained by the learner.

Although the act of evaluating is the same, each approach provides a perspective to better understand the educational process, ultimately, evaluation should be understood as a practice that transcends the simple calculation of results, and that not only values the achievements obtained, but also examines and reflects on the processes that generate them, identifying for this purpose the factors that positively or negatively influence such processes, thus developing tactics to optimize them (Mato and Vizuite, 2019).

To speak of evaluation without *feedback* is meaningless. Through *feedback*, the learner identifies his or her strengths and areas for improvement, allowing him or her to make effective adjustments to enhance his or her learning and academic growth.

Moreno and Ramírez (2022) correctly refer to it when they state that a good feedback process allows students to understand where they are in relation to their learning, and also guides them on the steps to follow, thus favoring their understanding. With clarity about what to do and why to do it, it is common for them to develop greater confidence in their ability to learn independently. Such autonomy is now a key skill valued in education systems around the world.

Despite educational advances in Colombia, foreign entities evaluate the linguistic competence of thousands of Colombians through international standardized tests. The lack of meaningful feedback, however, prevents candidates from understanding the source of their score. This disconnection with the progress of the Colombian education system is a challenge, as it does not reflect the advances achieved in the last five decades.

The question may arise at this point as to what internationally standardized tests are. These are essentially instruments developed by global entities with the purpose of homogeneously and comparatively measuring the performance of students in different countries or educational systems (Ferrer and Arregui, 2003; Olmeda, 2016, cited in Demarchi, 2020). A person's linguistic performance is evaluated through tests that cover *oral* and *written expression*, *listening* and *reading comprehension*, depending on the nature of the language and the test. In Colombia there is a wide offer of these *tests*, some of them are: dELF (French), TestDaf (German), CELI (Italian), IELTS (English), among others.

Standardized tests place candidates (test takers) in language levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), from basic level (A1-A2) to advanced level (C1-C2). However, the results lack customized reports that explain the ranking and provide information on strengths and areas for improvement. This lack of feedback makes it difficult for candidates to identify areas to work on, limiting their progress and affecting their chances of achieving their objectives.

For Zeller (2024), meaningful feedback goes beyond applying rubrics or grading students in an analogous way. It consists of offering personalized feedback that recognizes the strengths, weaknesses and particularities of each person, taking into account not only the cognitive and motivational aspects, but also the impact of the emotional component in the learning process.

On this basis, it is worth mentioning meaningful learning, a concept linked to evaluation and *feedback*, which has played a predominant role for decades. Proposed by psychologist and educator David Paul Ausubel, this approach places the learner at the center of his learning, making him responsible for his knowledge and encouraging reflection on what he has learned and what he has yet to integrate.

Hence, Ausubel has alluded that students' prior knowledge represents a determining element in their learning process (Ausubel, 1983).

When someone recognizes what they have learned, what they are incorporating, and what they need to improve, a learning triad is generated that re-signifies knowledge and allows for a 100% real educational process. However, this is not what is always observed in reality. There remains the feeling that, in some educational spaces, the idea of training students to correctly respond to local and international standardized tests prevails, and that the most successful institutions are those with the highest number of students passing such tests (Moreira, 2017).

When language tests are aligned with standardization systems, they prioritize training on specific question types, promoting mechanized learning. The absence of meaningful feedback makes it difficult for candidates to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, affecting their academic, employment or immigration progress.

Hence, any learning process should focus on what, how and for what is learned, allowing learning to be genuine and transcend the classroom and the digital. Feedback is key to student development, considering that learning involves emotions, mind and body.

Consequently, if any of the parts that make up the human being are altered or modified, the system is totally affected, provoking a response that takes it back to the point where the transformation began (Zeller, 2024).

A person's emotional state during an assessment can influence their results, affecting their mental, emotional and physical well-being. Therefore, the educational and evaluation system must be based on a systemic approach, where each element is interconnected, since a correct articulation generates a positive impact, while its fragmentation may affect its overall functioning.

According to Herrscher (2003), the system character of an institution does not come from its material structure, but from the way it is perceived. For those who see the school as a coherent interaction among its elements oriented to the formation of the student, they understand it as a system. On the other hand, if there is no perceived connection between what is happening, teachers seem to work in isolation and there is no shared goal, what is observed is simply a set of material and human resources without any integration.

Talking about evaluation from a systems thinking perspective implies understanding education from a generative learning perspective. This approach allows the learner to integrate previous knowledge with new knowledge, transforming his or her thinking (*Metanoia*) and interpretation of acquired knowledge.

When the results do not match what was expected, feelings of failure may arise. However, by assuming the obstacles as learning opportunities, thinking and learning are re-signified and transformed, transcending the conventional and expanding the consciousness of the student/candidate.

Zeller (2024) posits that the authentic educational process occurs when the learner is challenged to go beyond his or her own limiting beliefs and perceptions. In this process, he is recognized as an active agent of change, capable of integrating his previous knowledge, what he did not know and the learning recently acquired as a result of a new reality promoted from the educational environment.

Assessment, meaningful and generative learning, along with systems thinking, only make sense if it is recognized that each person learns in a unique way. Your individuality determines your skills and opportunities for improvement, completely differentiating you from others.

As each person is unique and unrepeatable, learning styles are key in assessment, especially when it comes to international language testing. Not everyone learns in the same way, which makes it impossible to equate their skills or difficulties in language skills, for example.

As each person learns differently, some excel in kinesthetic learning, physically interacting with the environment; others prefer visual learning, based on images and texts; some favor auditory learning, processing information better through sounds. There are also those who learn in a theoretical way, while others require experimentation for a more experiential learning.

This demonstrates the uniqueness of each human being in learning. Equalizing performance ignores diversity, limiting individual potential and reducing the infinite possibilities that exist.

The theoretical constructs elucidated demonstrate that feedback is not equivalent to categorizing or standardizing a learner, ignoring his individuality and his way of approaching knowledge.

In the Colombian education system, learning English has been a priority. The international English tests most chosen by Colombians are the TOEFL (*Test of English as a Foreign Language*) and the IELTS (*English Language Testing System*), the latter being the focus of this article.

If you are going to talk about IELTS, it is essential to start by knowing what it is. This is a standardized test that aims to measure the level of English proficiency of non-native English speakers. It is an internationally recognized test, used in multiple areas such as admission to educational institutions abroad, immigration or labor processes, and validation of language skills in front of different entities (IELTS Official Test Centre, n.d.).

IELTS has two modes: **General** and **Academic**. Those who opt for the former are those who wish to reside in a foreign country, while the latter allows the candidate to access higher education abroad (IELTS Official Test Centre, n.d.).

Both types of tests evaluate the 4 linguistic components of English: *oral* and *written expression*, *oral comprehension* and *reading comprehension*.

A comparison of the two types of tests shows that the *listening comprehension* and *speaking* components have similarities.

In the *listening comprehension* test, main ideas and specific information are identified in both types of IELTS. This component consists of 40 questions to be solved in 30 minutes, plus an extra 10 minutes for the answers to be transferred to the designated answer sheet. The number of correct answers obtained gives your grade.

The *speaking* test lasts approximately 14 minutes. It evaluates the ability to maintain a conversation in which the candidate provides opinions and arguments that justify his ideas. Grammar, pronunciation and consistency are key when rating this component.

Additionally, both types of tests share some similarities in *reading comprehension* skills such as: identifying specific information, both consist of 40 questions, both are designed to be answered in 60 minutes, and their score is based on the number of correct answers achieved. On the other hand, there are marked differences between the two. While the IELTS Academic has longer paragraphs, academic topics and not much variety

in the style of questions, the IELTS General is less long, its topics are about everyday life, and there is more variety in the type of questions asked.

Finally, in the *written expression* skill, both types of IELTS share some similarities: they both consist of two tasks. The first one corresponds to a 150-word paper to be completed in 20 minutes, and the second one is based on a 250-word paper to be written in 40 minutes. The total time for the two tests is 1 hour.

Aspects that differentiate the two tests in this skill are: while in IELTS General, the candidate must write a semi-formal letter for Task 1, in Task 2, the candidate must write an essay on a requested topic and whose writing style is personal. For IELTS Academic, the candidate must describe or explain a graph or table for the completion of Task 1. For assignment 2, you must write an essay that states your point of view on a topic that requires formality in writing style.

As noted earlier in this article, the CEFR standardizes candidates for international language tests at specific levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. Although the IELTS lacks pass/fail labels, its score is decisive for a candidate to crystallize his or her goal.

Candidates are evaluated on a scale of 0 to 9, where 0 indicates no response and 9 reflects a high command of the language. To classify your proficiency level, scores are assigned in full bands or half-stripe scores (4.0, 5.0, 7.0 / 4.5). 5.5, 7.5: follows in successive order according to the type of band) (British Council Colombia, n.d.). Table 1 shows the word equivalent of each of the IELTS scores from 0 to 9.

The website of the British Council of Colombia explains how these bands are interpreted according to the number of correct answers in the *listening* and *reading comprehension* tests. This information is available at the link: <https://www.britishcouncil.co/examen-ingles/ielts/puntaje>

For *oral* and *written expression* skills, the candidate is evaluated by means of criteria that standardize him/her on a level from 0 to 9 (full ranges).

In the oral component, the IDP IELTS Colombia website (<https://ielts.idp.com/colombia/results/scores/speaking/es-419>) presents the evaluation criteria according to the classification bands (from 0 to 9). Fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation are assessed. These criteria can be consulted in the oral production band scores section in the link above.

Table 1

What does the IELTS test score mean?

IELTS score	Description
9	Expert user: He has a complete operational command of the language. His use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and he demonstrates a thorough understanding.
8	Very good user: He has a fully operational command of the language with occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. You may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. You handle complex and detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user: He has a working command of the language, albeit with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

- 6 Competent user:** Generally has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, misuse and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, especially in familiar situations.
- 5 Modest user:** He has a partial command of the language and handles the general meaning in most situations, although he is likely to make many mistakes. You should be able to handle basic communication in your own field.
- 4 Limited user:** Its basic competence is limited to family situations. Frequently shows comprehension and expression problems. Cannot use complex language.
- 3 Very limited user:** You convey and understand only the general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent interruptions in communication.
- 2 Intermittent user:** He has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
- 1 No user:** He has no ability to use the language, except for a few isolated words.
- 0 He did not attempt to perform the test: He did not answer questions.**

Note: British Council Colombia, (n.d.). ¿Qué significa mi puntaje IELTS? <https://www.britishcouncil.co/examen-ingles/ielts/puntaje>

The IDP IELTS website (<https://ielts.idp.com/results/scores/writing>) specifies the assessment criteria for written tasks 1 and 2. In both cases, the achievement of the task, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and finally, grammatical range and accuracy are evaluated, considering the bands indicated. This information can be verified in the referred hyperlink.

Having outlined the general aspects of scoring in the IELTS, it is necessary to compare the CEFR levels with their equivalents in the IELTS. Table 2 shows this.

Table 2
Equivalences between CEFR and IELTS scores

Common European Framework	Score
A1 - Basic User Ability to communicate in a simple manner and understand everyday phrases.	IELTS: N/A
A2 - Basic User Ability to make simple and direct exchanges on familiar topics.	IELTS: N/A
B1- Independent User Proficiency in handling most travel situations and expressing opinions	IELTS: 4.0-5.0
B2- Independent User Ability to interact fluently and discuss a variety of topics.	IELTS: 5.5 - 6.5
C1- Competent User Ability to use the language effectively and flexibly in social and professional life.	IELTS: 7.0 - 8.0

C2- Competent User

Language proficiency that allows spontaneous and precise **IELTS: 8.5-9.0** communication in any context.

Note: British Council Colombia, (n.d.). ¿Qué significa mi puntaje IELTS? Guía de interpretación. <https://www.britishcouncil.co/examen-ingles/ielts/blog/como-califica-ielts>

Note: The original table on the referenced web page shows the equivalences between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the international TOEFL and IELTS tests (both tests that assess English language skills). The table has been adapted to focus on the IELTS, which is what this article is really about.

Based on the above, it is relevant to review the report that candidates receive after taking the IELTS. This does not define whether or not they passed the *test*, but shows their level of language proficiency, aligned with the candidate's objectives. The test can be submitted without limit, although the certificate expires every 2 years. It is essential to consider that resubmission carries a significant cost.

It should be noted that, from 2023, Australia offers the option of repeating a section of the IELTS again to improve the score in a specific component. This alternative is known as *IELTS One Skill Retake*. The option has been extended to other regions and is only available to those who have taken the computer-based exam within 60 days. It does not apply to paper tests, and its cost in Colombian pesos is also considerable. (*This aspect was not included in the final work on which this article is based*).

Figure 1 exemplifies the report of a candidate who took the *Academic IELTS in 2012*. At the top you will find your personal data, the date of the exam and the codes of the venue and the candidate. The range of results in each linguistic component is also illustrated, the sum of which defines the final score and the level of proficiency.

At the bottom are the examiners' comments on oral and written expression, their codes, the administrator's signature and the date the report was issued. Figure 2, on the other hand, shows the back of the report with the description of the band scale from 0 to 9, which classifies the candidate according to the CEFR.

Compared to the CEFR, the IELTS report is much more specific in the Band 2 descriptor if the translation of this is reviewed:

BAND 2: INTERMITTENT USER

Real communication is not possible, except for the most basic information, using isolated words or short formulas in familiar situations and to satisfy immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written language. (IELTS Test Report Form, 2012)

It is relevant to note that this report lacks personalized feedback for each candidate. The space devoted to comments is minimal, which limits the possibility for the candidate to receive *feedback* on his or her strengths, areas for improvement and strategies for perfecting the required skills.

Figure 3 illustrates the report of a candidate who took the *Academic IELTS in 2014*. When contrasting this report with the one shown in Figure 1, it can be seen that both maintain the same structure and information, with no improvement in the form of feedback. The only difference lies in the candidate data and the scores obtained in each skill.

The final paper on which this article is based presents a third report, which evidences that, by 2022, the report communicated *feedback* in the same way. (*See Figure 4 of the final work*).

When observing the scores that each of the candidates obtained in the examples of the two illustrated reports (Figures 1 and 3), it can be seen that, despite the fact that both candidates were standardized at level **B2**, their scores in the linguistic components were different. This raises the question of whether both made the same hits and misses in each skill. While the test standardized them according to their scores and the CEFR bands, each person has unique skills and opportunities for improvement, highlighting the importance of considering each person beyond a simple code or number (See *Table 3*).

Table 3

Results of 2 different candidates in each of the language skills in the IELTS Academic test, years 2012 and 2014

Month/Year test	Listen to	Reading	Writing	Oral	Score	CEFR
November 2012	6.0	7.0	6.5	6.5	<u>6.5</u>	<u>B2</u>
March 2014	5.0	5.5	6.0	7.0	<u>6.0</u>	<u>B2</u>

Note: British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, (2012). *International English Language Testing System, Test Report Form* vs. British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and Cambridge English Language Assessment, (2014). *International English Language Testing System, Test Report Form*.

Figure 1

Sample score report for a candidate who took the IELTS Academic in November 2012

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM

Test Report Form

ACADEMIC

NOTE Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules. GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes. It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number Date Candidate Number

Candidate Details

Family Name
 First Name
 Candidate ID

Date of Birth Sex (M/F) Scheme Code


Country or Region of Origin First Language



Repeating IELTS (Y/N) Previous Test Date Previous Test Centre




Test Results

Listening Reading Writing Speaking Overall Band Score

Administrator Comments

Writing Examiner Number Administrator's Signature 
 Speaking Examiner Number Date Test Report Form Number

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.ucles.org.uk>

Note. Both the candidate's face and personal data were concealed in order to safeguard the candidate's identity and integrity.

Note. British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, (2012). *International English Language Testing System, Test Report Form.*

Figure 2

Example of the back sheet of the results report of the candidate who took the Academic IELTS in November 2012

BAND 9	EXPERT USER
Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.	
BAND 8	VERY GOOD USER
Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.	
BAND 7	GOOD USER
Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.	
BAND 6	COMPETENT USER
Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.	
BAND 5	MODEST USER
Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.	
BAND 4	LIMITED USER
Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.	
BAND 3	EXTREMELY LIMITED USER
Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.	
BAND 2	INTERMITTENT USER
No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.	
BAND 1	NON USER
Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.	
BAND 0	DID NOT ATTEMPT THE TEST
No assessable information provided.	

Note. British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, (2012). *International English Language Testing System, Test Report Form.*

Figure 3

Sample score report for a candidate who took the Academic IELTS in March 2014

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM

Test Report Form ACADEMIC

NOTE Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACADEMIC Reading and Writing Modules.
 GENERAL TRAINING Reading and Writing Modules are not designed to test the full range of language skills required for academic purposes.
 It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated in this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number Date Candidate Number

Candidate Details

Family Name

First Name

Candidate ID

Date of Birth Sex (M/F) Scheme Code

Country or Region of Origin


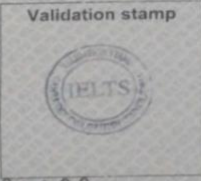
Country of Nationality

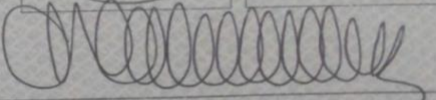
First Language

Test Results




Listening Reading Writing Speaking Overall Band Score

Administrator Comments

Centre stamp:  Validation stamp: 

Writing Examiner Number Administrator's Signature 

Speaking Examiner Number Date Test Report Form Number

   **CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH**
 Language Assessment
 Part of the University of Cambridge

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at <http://ielts.ucles.org.uk>

Note. Both the candidate's face and personal data were concealed in order to safeguard the candidate's identity and integrity.

Note. Given that the sheet on the back of the results report of the candidate who submitted the Academic IELTS in November 2014 is exactly the same as the one in Figure 2, it was decided not to include the image.

Note. British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and Cambridge English Language Assessment, (2014). *International English Language Testing System, Test Report Form.*

Method

This article arose from a project of a professionalizing nature, focused on filling the lack of a personalized *feedback* report to accompany the current IELTS English test

certificates. The methodology focused on designing rubrics to complement the candidates' results, providing them with meaningful feedback on their skills and areas for improvement, thus fostering linguistic development from an individual perspective. (Tables 20-24, included in annexes 11-15 of the final paper, contain these rubrics. They were not included in this article due to their length).

The research was based on a questionnaire with dichotomous and Likert-type questions, some of which required justification (see Annex 4 of the final work). This was applied to 18 Colombians (inside and outside the country) who had taken the IELTS for academic, employment or immigration purposes.

Google Forms was used as a tool to record the data, due to its speed and efficiency in obtaining results. A timetable was also established outlining the steps to be followed to meet the objectives within the planned timeframe. Among the activities planned were the review of the bibliography for the theoretical framework, the selection of the population, the elaboration and application of the questionnaire, the description and analysis of the reports issued by the British Council, idp IELTS Australia, and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations/Cambridge English Language Assessment, as well as the analysis of the data, obtaining the results and final conclusions.

Results

Google Forms was used to analyze the data. Tables designed for this purpose were used to code and classify the open-ended responses that justified some closed responses.

The results obtained led to the following findings:

All 18 participants took the IELTS test. See figure 4.

33.3% of the candidates took the IELTS to migrate to another country, a second 33.3% to access higher education, and the remaining 33.3% for employment purposes. See figure 5.

According to the number of times candidates had taken the test by that time, 55.6% took it once, 33.3% twice, and 11.1% three times. See figure 6.

Figure 4

Number of participants who have taken the IELTS test

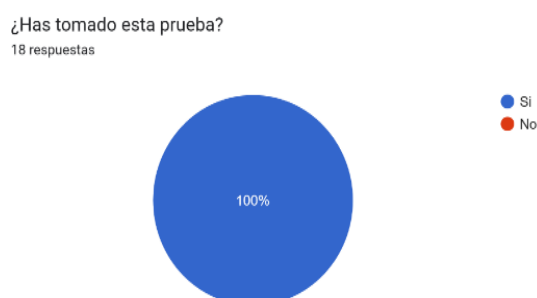


Figure 5

Reasons to take the IELTS

¿Cuál es la razón por la cual tomaste esta prueba?
18 respuestas

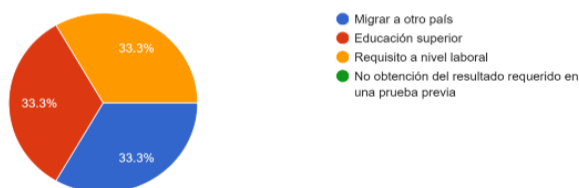
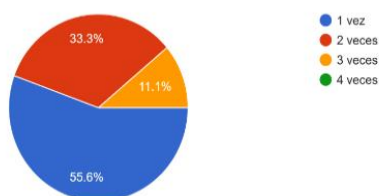


Figure 6
Number of times the test has been taken

¿Cuántas veces has tomado esta prueba?
18 respuestas



When participants were asked about the skills assessed in each component of the IELTS (*speaking, writing, reading and listening*), 77.8% claimed to know them, while 22.2% had no information about them. *See figure 7.*

When asked if they were aware of the way in which the results would be reported, 66.7% answered yes, while 33.3% said no. *See figure 8.*

When evaluating the effectiveness of the report on the standardization of the candidate's language level, 77.8% of the participants considered it insufficient, while 22.2% were of the opposite opinion. *See figure 9. (The analysis of the answers in this section of the final paper contains errors and should be omitted when referring to it).*

Figure 7
Advance knowledge of specific skills to be assessed in each of the components

Conforme a los niveles de clasificación establecidos por el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia (A1 - C2), ¿Sabías con precisión qué habilidades e...! cuando tomaste la prueba por primera/única vez?
18 respuestas

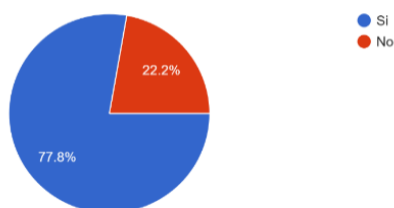


Figure 8
Prior knowledge about certificate of results

Cuando tomaste el "test" por primera/única vez, ¿Tenías conocimiento de la forma exacta en la que te serían comunicados tus resultados por medio del reporte que se expide con dicho fin?

18 respuestas

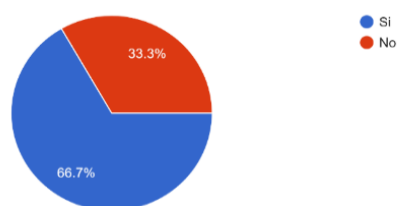
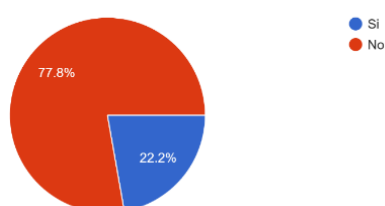


Figure 9

Relevance of the report given to know level of standardization

¿Consideras que dicho reporte fue suficiente para saber con exactitud la razón por la cual quedaste clasificado en un nivel específico cuando tomaste la prueba por primera/única vez?

18 respuestas



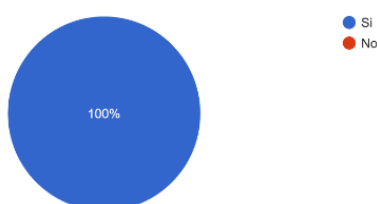
All participants agreed that not knowing the skills and areas for improvement can negatively affect the outcome of the exam if taken a second time. *See figure 10.*

Figure 10

Impact on results due to lack of knowledge of strengths and areas for improvement

Si tú o alguien tuviese que presentar esta prueba por segunda vez, ¿Crees que la ausencia de conocimiento sobre tus/sus fortalezas y áreas de me... expresión oral), podría afectar tu/su resultado?

18 respuestas



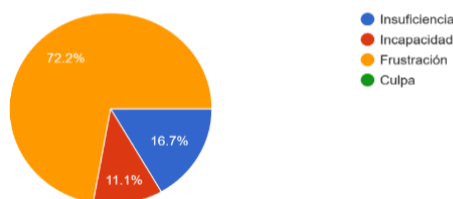
When participants were asked to justify their responses, 17% (3 of 18) indicated that their performance depended on the format and method of the exam. Another participant mentioned that he focused on his areas of improvement based on his scores. The rest agreed that the evaluation classifies the language level, but does not identify the errors to be corrected. Although Figure 10 shows that 100% responded affirmatively, the justifications of three participants contradict their initial response. The responses recorded can be consulted in Table 14 (Annex 5) of the final work.

Figure 11 reveals that 72.2% of the participants feel frustration at not achieving the expected results due to a lack of knowledge of their areas for improvement. 16.7% experience insufficiency, and 11.1.% incapacity.

Figure 11

Feelings produced by not obtaining expected results due to lack of knowledge of what should be improved

¿Qué sentimientos te produce la obtención de resultados no esperados cuando no sabes exactamente qué es aquello en lo que debes mejorar?
18 respuestas

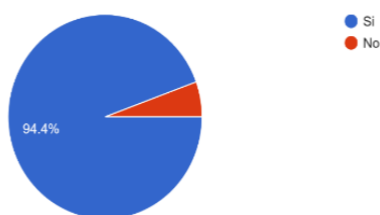


The majority of participants (94.4%) considered it useful to have an additional report detailing their performance in the skills. Only one person expressed the opposite opinion, but when asked about the impact of the lack of information on strengths and areas for improvement, he agreed that this lack of knowledge could affect *test* results. See *figure 12*.

Figure 12

Utility of receiving a report in addition to the one issued to date

Aparte del reporte de resultados que actualmente se entrega, ¿Crees que sería útil recibir uno adicional que explicará en más detalle el desempeño...dato en cada una de las habilidades lingüísticas?
18 respuestas



In justifying their responses, 94.4% of the participants (17 out of 18) considered it useful to receive a detailed report on their performance in each skill. Most agreed that more accurate feedback would facilitate the development of a study plan focused on areas for improvement, strengthening skills and increasing confidence for future test presentations, which would positively impact their results.

A total of 5.6% of the participants highlighted the need for such a report, noting its absence at present. One expressed frustration at not being able to identify his errors in the oral test due to the lack of a detailed report, while another suggested that *feedback* be provided in the lower standardization band. Only one participant (5.6%) stated that the current report was sufficient and, according to his response in Figure 12, did not consider additional reporting necessary. The answers obtained are available in Table 15 (Annex 6) of the final work.

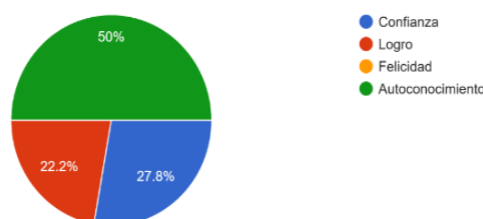
22.2% of the participants stated that receiving a report highlighting their strengths would generate a sense of accomplishment. For 27.8% this report would increase their confidence, while for 50%, it would foster self-knowledge. These results underscore the importance of personalized feedback rather than a generalized certificate. See *figure 13*.

Figure 13

Experienced feelings about obtaining an additional report of results highlighting linguistic strengths

Si tuvieses que presentar esta prueba por segunda vez, ¿Qué respuesta te generaría la obtención de un resultado acompañado de un reporte de feedback ... fortalezas a nivel de habilidades lingüísticas?

18 respuestas



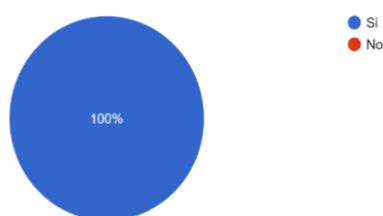
100% of the participants stated that receiving a detailed *feedback* report would help enhance their language skills. See figure 14.

Figure 14

Utility of receiving a well-feedback report to enhance language skills

Recibir un reporte de "feedback" bien retroalimentado, ¿Podría ayudarte o, ayudar a otras personas a potenciar tus/sus habilidades lingüísticas?

18 respuestas



In justifying their responses, it was found that a *feedback* report would help identify areas for improvement that need to be strengthened. One of them (5.6%) indicated that having this report would allow them to teach more effectively to those who take the test for the second time, taking advantage of the feedback to strengthen their learning. Another (5.6%) considered it more relevant to know their areas of improvement than to understand the exam itself, prioritizing skill development over results. Another (5.6%) highlighted that receiving additional feedback would help them improve their study plan and increase their confidence to take the test. Another mentioned that, although the British Council website offers material to train for the test, the question arises as to whether these strategies only mechanize the process, leaving aside what is essential: the development of language skills and learning. The answers can be found in Table 16 (Annex 7) of the final work.

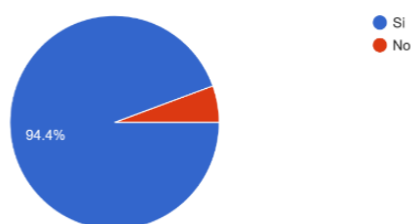
94.4% of the sample agreed that not obtaining the desired language level can limit people. Only one person disagreed with the rest. See figure 15.

Figure 15

Confirmation of whether obtaining unfavorable results affects the candidate in the future

¿Crees que el resultado de esta prueba puede llegar a limitar a las personas en caso de no obtener el nivel requerido o deseado?

18 respuestas



When participants were asked to justify their answers, 88.9% stated that the *test* results may limit their goals, mentioning factors such as demotivation after several unsuccessful attempts, negative emotions that affect performance, and possible repercussions on job, academic or immigration applications. In addition, the high cost of the exam was pointed out as an obstacle for those who need to repeat it in the short term.

33.3% indicated that frustration and denial can limit performance, and that lack of clarity about what to improve can lead to focusing on the wrong skills. It was also pointed out that the result does not always reflect a limitation, since universities require minimum language levels. Another felt that additional reporting would help optimize their results in future presentations. The responses recorded can be consulted in Table 17 (Annex 8) of the final work.

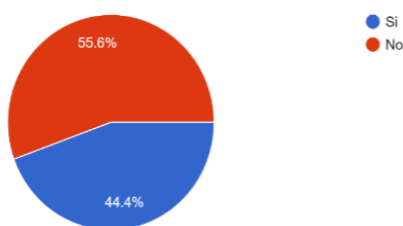
To conclude, 55.6% of the participants felt that the test does not accurately reflect their skills and abilities, while 44.4% felt the opposite. *See figure 16. (The analysis of the answers in this section of the final paper contains errors and should be omitted when referring to it).*

Figure 16

Perception of whether IELTS demonstrates a candidate's skills and abilities

¿Crees que el resultado de esta prueba puede reflejar verdaderamente tus habilidades y tus capacidades?

18 respuestas



In justifying their answers, 44.4% of the participants argued that the test can assess the candidate's language level, competence and skills if it is well designed. However, although three of them answered in the affirmative, their explanations suggest otherwise, as they mentioned that factors such as nervousness and mood can affect performance.

The remaining 55.6% (8 out of 10, *corrected for final work*) responded negatively, indicating that emotional factors such as anxiety, shyness and nervousness can influence

the results. 11.1% indicated that the evaluation of the oral component can be subjective, depending on the evaluator and the context of the exam. On the other hand, 27.8% stressed that the test does not always measure actual abilities, but rather preparation for its format, and that stress and pressure can affect performance, in addition to the fact that a standardized test does not fully adjust to individual needs. The answers can be found in Table 18 (Annex 9) of the final work.

Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires confirmed the need for a personalized *feedback* report that promotes meaningful and generative learning in second-time IELTS test takers at British Council sites in Colombia. For its design, the linguistic descriptors for each skill were taken into account (Oral production: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation; Written production: task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy; and reading comprehension and listening comprehension), which can be consulted in the IELTS web portal in the links already indicated in this article, in order to let the candidate know what he/she is being evaluated on.

Each rubric has a space for the evaluator to record the candidate's strengths, with the objective of enhancing them.

A section was designated to indicate areas that require further work, facilitating the planning of studies aimed at their improvement. In addition, the evaluator could suggest strategies and advice in the space provided for this purpose, offering tools to optimize the candidate's preparation for a second presentation of the exam.

In relation to the conceptual constructs, it was ratified that meaningful learning plays an essential role in the evaluation processes. The articulation between the what (linguistic descriptors of the rubric created), the how (strategies suggested by the evaluator) and the for what (identified strengths and opportunities for improvement) contributes to a genuine and effective learning experience. This approach allows a systemic interconnection in which individual aspects impact positively or negatively the collective development (Systemic Thinking). In this sense, redefining prior knowledge as strengths and addressing areas of challenge facilitates the construction of new learning. This promotes meaningful and generative learning, principles that are reflected in the rubrics designed based on each person's individuality and learning styles. A rubric was also designed with indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the reports prepared, based on the concepts covered throughout the final work and this article. *See table 19, annex 10 in the final work.*

Ignoring the fact that history is reconfigured on the basis of past events and actions is a mistake if it does not make room for the new. Therefore, it is essential to give a voice to those who suffer the consequences of a system where a simple number can limit their growth and make them feel that they do not deserve to advance. Maintaining these methods means continuing to condemn thousands of Colombians and people around the world who take the IELTS for the second time to a constant uncertainty that deprives them of the knowledge they need to progress.

Regarding the limitations in the implementation of the proposal, when trying to contact the person in charge of managing the evaluation area of the international exams at the British Council - Colombia offices, the response from the Customer Service team was that the qualification processes are managed by global evaluators and, due to the high level of confidentiality with which they operate, these professionals do not establish

communication or provide direct feedback to those evaluated, which prevented any connection with the person responsible for managing the evaluation system.

Upon completion of the work and identification of the need to design a complementary report to the one currently provided to communicate IELTS results to candidates, contact was made with the head of Testing Operations of the Andes Group to present the proposal. This project, conceived as a pioneering breakthrough worldwide in standardization test feedback and with the potential to encourage other entities to adopt its model, was discussed with the corresponding team. However, the response given was that its implementation was not feasible, as the British Council was already developing initiatives aligned with the proposal: *IELTS Test Ready*, the *IELTS Counseling Service*, and the *One Skill Retake*.

As a last attempt, the Customer Service team in England was contacted, but a refusal to have a conversation about the proposal was obtained. Instead, a request was made to send the findings of the work to be evaluated internally, which was decided not to be carried out.

This reflection leads us to question an obvious reality: there is not always the willingness to face new challenges with an open mind. Growth and transformation require an outlook that transcends mental barriers. Providing meaningful feedback is not just a technical act, but a deep commitment that demands genuine reflection and a total commitment to education. Its impact becomes meaningful when it is exercised with conviction, for only then does it become a powerful tool that challenges those who seek to move forward.

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