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**FROM PERCEPTION TO PERFORMANCE: TO ESTABLISH
THE LEVEL OF INFLUENCE OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE ON
THE SCORES OF THE READING SECTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING
SYSTEM (IELTS) OF B1 LEVEL STUDENTS OF A PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY IN ECUADOR**

**DE LA PERCEPCIÓN AL DESEMPEÑO: ESTABLECER EL NIVEL DE
INFLUENCIA DE LOS CONOCIMIENTOS PREVIOS EN LOS PUNTAJES
DE LA SECCIÓN DE LECTURA DEL INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TESTING SYSTEM (IELTS), DE ESTUDIANTES DE NIVEL B1 DE UNA
UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA DEL ECUADOR**

Zulema Peña Alvarez
Universidad Nacional de Educación, Ecuador

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From perception to performance: To establish the level of influence of prior knowledge on the scores of the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of B1 level students of a public university in Ecuador

Zulema Peña Alvarez¹

zulema.pena.alvarez@hotmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1164-2634>

Universidad Nacional de Educación
Ecuador

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this article is to determine whether the perceptions of B1 level students at a public university in Ecuador about their prior knowledge influence their scores in the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The type of research was mixed, since numerical data were collected quantitatively and then generalized, and through a qualitative study important aspects were examined regarding the students' prior knowledge and whether it influences their performance in the aforementioned international test. For the sample, 28 students were selected, which were approached by two key instruments for the study, such as: the simulated test and the survey. The results obtained showed that the students' perceptions of their prior knowledge do not correlate with their performance in the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Also, there was a high incidence of students who felt that reading does not help much in learning about a topic, however, they think it is of great help for vocabulary improvement.

Keywords: performance, students, IELTS, reading, perceptions

¹ Autor principal

Correspondencia: zulema.pena.alvarez@hotmail.com

De la Percepción al Desempeño: Establecer el Nivel de Influencia de los Conocimientos Previos en los Puntajes de la Sección de Lectura del International English Language Testing System (IELTS), de Estudiantes de Nivel B1 de una Universidad Pública del Ecuador

RESUMEN

El objetivo general de este artículo es determinar si las percepciones de los estudiantes de nivel B1 de una universidad pública del Ecuador sobre sus conocimientos previos influyen en los puntajes de la sección de lectura del International English Language Testing System (IELTS). El tipo de investigación fue mixto ya que de forma cuantitativa se recopilaban los datos numéricos para luego generalizarlos, y mediante un estudio cualitativo se examinaron aspectos importantes respecto a los conocimientos previos de los estudiantes y si éstos influyen en el desempeño de la prueba internacional antes mencionada. Para la muestra se seleccionó la cantidad de 28 estudiantes, los cuales fueron abordados por dos instrumentos claves para el estudio, tales como: la prueba simulada y la encuesta. Como resultados obtenidos se evidenció que las percepciones de los estudiantes respecto a sus conocimientos previos, no se correlacionan con su desempeño en la sección de lectura del International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Asimismo, se detectó una gran incidencia de estudiantes que opinaron que la lectura no ayuda mucho a aprender sobre un tema, sin embargo, piensan que es de gran ayuda para el mejoramiento del vocabulario.

Palabras clave: desempeño, estudiantes, IELTS, lectura, percepciones

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is the primary means of knowledge in universities, for this reason reading skills are essential to be able to fulfill the tasks that the student must perform, whether learning or evaluative. Henriquez cited in Campos et. to the. (2024) It refers to the fact that reading is not a passive act, but rather demands from the reader a set of mental structures that are manifested during this process, such as: analysis, reasoning, etc.

Cassany (2006) says that reading is about understanding and designing meanings that do not appear explicitly in the text. However, this process needs an active reader who synthesizes and examines the literary work (Solé, 2011). Furthermore, the reading process is basically an instrument of interactivity between the reader, the linguistic signs and the ideas that the reader has about each text (Acosta, 2024). Likewise, reflective, creative, critical thoughts, imagination and the ability to memorize emerge (Álvarez et al. 2019).

Eigler cited in (Vázquez, 2019) states that the knowledge that the student has about reading impacts the composition of the text, in addition, a study carried out by Mateos and Peñalba (2003), indicate that there were significant differences in favor of students who had more prior knowledge compared to the main ideas included in a summary that they were asked to make.

Likewise, Hebert et al. (2013) report that the student who actively reflects on his previous thinking, there is a greater probability of developing plans, monitoring, evaluating and adapting the strategies he uses to develop and organize ideas, allowing him to build self-regulatory skills that help him control his own learning. .

However, the author McNeil (2011) has a different opinion, since he ensures that this prior knowledge does not act effectively when carrying out the reading, stating that said knowledge acts as an independent variable within the reading. Furthermore, it reiterates that the problem arises when the prior knowledge that the student has is not correct and becomes misleading.

Likewise, Huerta cited in (Brito, 2020) states that students know how to read thanks to the fact that they have the ability to visualize signs and repeat them or the ability to decode a given text. However, this is not reading comprehension, but rather the first phase of reading that still needs to be developed so that it can reach definitive and conscious understanding.



Given the aforementioned, there is currently confusion as to whether the prior knowledge of B1 level students from a public university in Ecuador influences the IELTS score. Therefore, the preparation of this article was of importance since in a quantitative way it was possible to verify whether the perception of these students about their prior knowledge can be aligned with their performance in the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Thus, the general objective of this article is to determine whether the perceptions of B1 level students from a public university in Ecuador about their prior knowledge influence the scores of the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

METHODOLOGY

Kind of investigation

The type of research in this article is mixed, since on the one hand, a quantitative study will be carried out, which according to Labaree (2018) is based on the collection of numerical data to later generalize them between groups of people or explain a particular phenomenon. Therefore, in this article the test scores will be identified by numbers, on the other hand it will be qualitative since the responses obtained through a survey were analyzed in order to find a relationship with the results of the tests, that is, Qualitatively, important aspects regarding students' prior knowledge will be examined and whether these influence the performance of the international test (IELTS).

Studied sample

The sample identified for the development of this study corresponds to the number of 28 participants from the B1 level of the University of Cuenca, who have an average age of 24 years of age and whose goal is to be future teachers in the English language. It should be noted that these students had not previously been evaluated to determine their proficiency in English ; however, according to teacher Adriana Mora, they were found suitable to belong to the advanced B1 Level.

Data collection instruments

Rouse (2016)states that data collection is an organized modality that focuses on the collection of data from various sources in order to find answers to a specific situation. Therefore, a simulated test and a survey were used, so that the application of both instruments allowed us to identify the relationship between the participants' perception and performance in a reading section of the IELTS.



The simulated test that was used for this study corresponds to an original version of the IELTS reading section made up of 3 passages, which can be descriptive, argumentative and some may contain illustrations (IELTS, 2015). In addition, it consists of 40 questions and each passage contains between 13 to 14 questions, which are characterized by being true or false.

For its part, the survey application made it possible to compile the perceptions of the participants about their knowledge on the topic of the reading passages. It was also composed of 14 questions that were divided into two sections, the first had the purpose of asking to students about their familiarity with the topics presented in the passages and, in general, to know how much they know and to what extent that knowledge influences their reading comprehension (Lin, 2002).

The second section was focused on knowing the personal background of the students, that is, their reading habits and preferences, which according to Ameyaw and Anto (2018) are related to their language level and reading comprehension skills.

Data collection procedure

1. A duplication of the original IELTS test format was made.
2. So that the students could complete the test, it was transcribed into a Google Form, without altering its structure.
3. For the test to last 60 minutes, editing with Form Presenter was necessary so that the test had a time limit.
4. The link to the test was provided and it was sent to the participants' email, so that the students could access it by simply clicking on the link and then on the start button.
5. After the students had taken the test, they were given a survey, which was also carried out in Google Form and sent to the email of each participant.

Ethical considerations

The participants were sent an ethical consent digitally, which declared the anonymity that all participants should have regarding the study, and also stipulated that the results of the test would not interfere with their performance or their grades within the course taken. . This consent was signed by the students and sent via email.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below are the results of the mock test and the survey conducted by the students.

Mock test

Table 1. Student scores/performance in the mock test.

Raw/scores	Score obtained	Number of participants	Percentage	English level according to IELTS
39-4	9	0	0%	
37-3	8.5	2	7.14%	Very good user
35-3	8	0	0%	
33-3	7.5	2	7.14%	Good user
30-3	7	6	21.43%	
27-2	6.5	10	35.71%	Competent user
23-2	6	2	7.14%	
19-22	5.5	3	10.71%	modest user
15-18	5	3	10.71%	
13-14	4.5	0	0%	
10-12	4	0	0%	
8-9	3.5	0	0%	
6-7	3	0	0%	
4-5	2.5	0	0%	

In table 1 you can see the results through a band score from 0 to 9 with the purpose of evaluating whether the student is prepared to study English, as stated by Feguson (2014), who indicates that the IELTS test generates results through a band score from 0 to 9 to assess whether the student is ready to study English. Consequently, the participants managed to obtain very good, good, competent and modest levels of English, obtaining that 35.71% of participants are competent users of English, while 21.43% demonstrated to be a good user of this language.

However, it should be taken into account that authors such as Persky et. al (2020) state that students' perceptions of how much they know very rarely show their knowledge, therefore it is not reliable to consider students' perceptions as indicators of adequate or sufficient learning.

The following table shows the percentage of accuracy which allows us to further demonstrate whether the students' perceptions correlate with their scores:



Table 2. Percent accuracy of each reading passage among all participants.

Passage	Total score obtained for each question	Total corresponding points	Total points for each passage	Accuracy percentage
1	Question 1:17	364	282	77.47%
	Question 2:17			
	Question 3:25			
	Question 4:13			
	Question 5:18			
	Question 6:27			
	Question 7:21			
	Question 8:27			
	Question 9:27			
	Question 10:28			
	Question 11:27			
	Question 12:17			
	Question 13:18			
2	Question 14:28	364	238	65.38%
	Question 15:19			
	Question 16:16			
	Question 17:22			
	Question 18:21			
	Question 19:16			
	Question 20:13			
	Question 21:17			
	Question 22:16			
	Question 24:13			
Question 25:18				
Question 26:21				
3	Question 27:19	392	246	62.75%
	Question 28:13			
	Question 29:24			
	Question 30:19			
	Question 31:10			
	Question 32:11			
	Question 33:20			
	Question 34:13			
	Question 35:20			
	Question 36:24			
	Question 37:16			
Question 38:21				
Question 39:15				
Question 40:21				

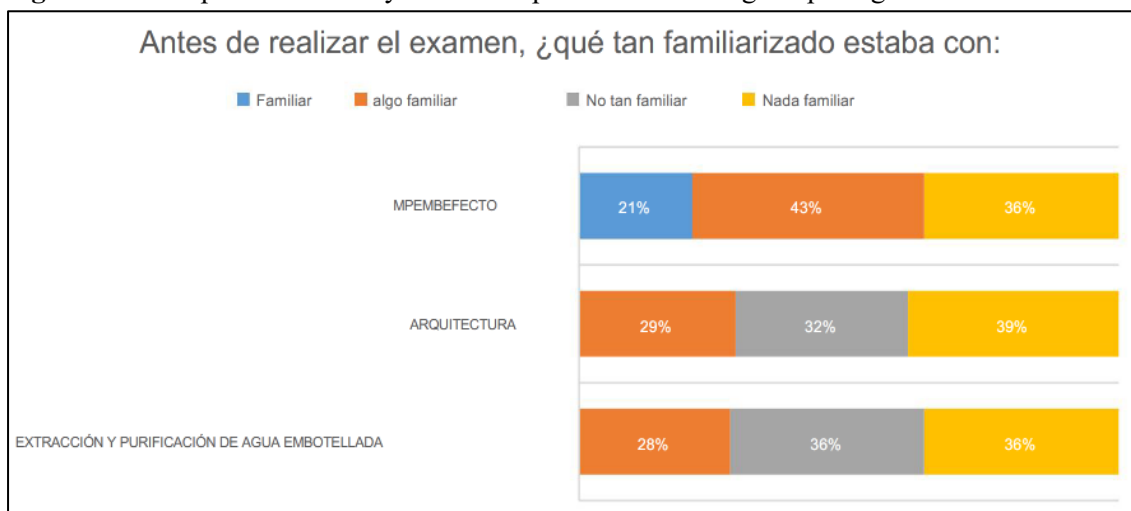


Therefore, the reading of the passage composed of 13 questions had an accuracy percentage of 77.47%, which means that of the 364 points that the participants had to earn, they only obtained 282. Likewise, in passage 2 they obtained a percentage of accuracy of 65.38%, finally in passage 3, they obtained 62.75%.

RESULTS OF THE TEST

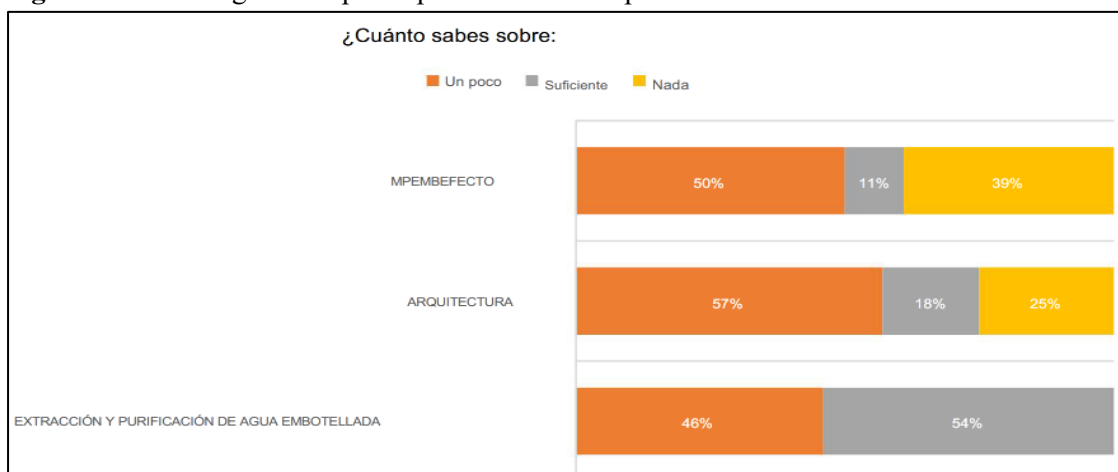
The results of the survey composed of 14 questions were able to demonstrate the prior knowledge and familiarity that the students have with the topics presented, the following figures are shown below:

Figure 1. Participants' familiarity with the topics before reading the passages



Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.

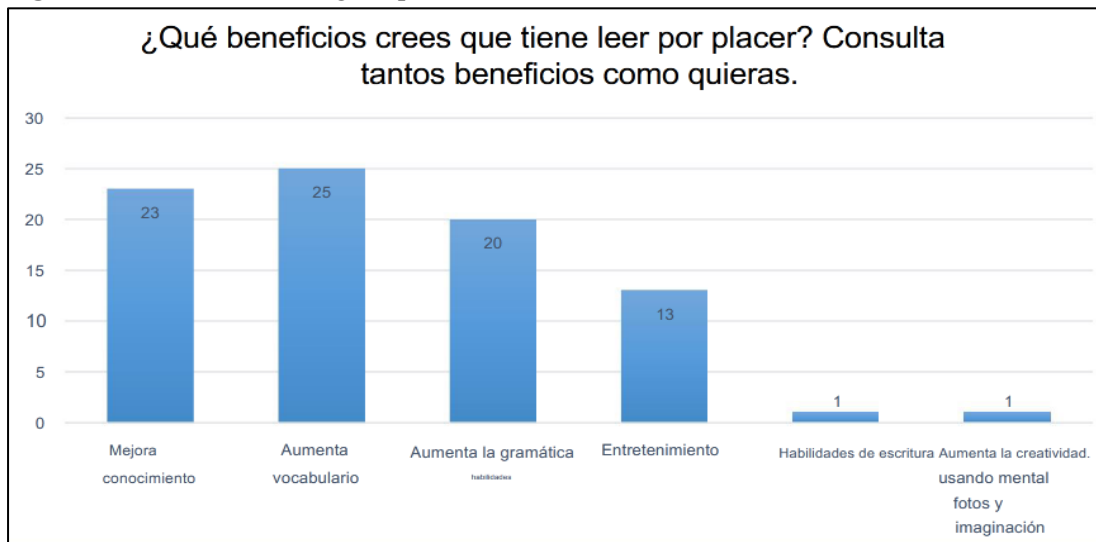
Figure 2. Knowledge of the participants about the topics



Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.

In Figures 1 and 2 it can be seen that the most common responses of the participants focus on “not at all familiar” with the topic of passage 2: architecture; “not at all familiar” with the topic of passage 1: “bottled water.”

Figure 3. Benefits of reading for pleasure



Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.

Figure 3 shows the opinions of the participants regarding the benefits of reading, showing that the majority of students chose “improvement of knowledge” and “increase in vocabulary” and “increase in grammar.”

Table 3. Student responses Difficulty level and personal reading habits

survey question	Results among the 28 participants
According to your perception, what level of difficulty do you think the test was?	Hard: 14 Appropriate:8 Very difficult:6
Did you have time to finish the entire test?	Yes: 28
How many minutes do you think it took to complete the test?	90 minutes:17 30 minutes:6 60 minutes:5
Personal background information	
Do you like to read in your free time?	Yes: 28
How many minutes a day do you spend reading?	20 minutes: 21 40 minutes: 4 60 minutes: 3

Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.



The previous table shows the level of difficulty and reading habits that the students have, which correspond to the free decision of each individual in actions that they carry out consciously, based on the constant repetition of the reading action and the series of skills. and skills inherent in this act, which leads to adequate reading (Pérez & Baute, 2018). Thus, it was evident that 14 of the 28 participants responded that it was “Difficult”, while 8 stated that it was “Appropriate” and finally, 6 stated that it was “Very difficult”.

Also, participants were asked to choose the topics they prefer to read (table 4), since according to IELTSdeal and IELTSdeal, (2017)students are more likely to find the following topics: animal science, psychology, beauty and health, environmental science, biology, engineering, commerce, inventions and discoveries, history, information and communication technology, art and languages.

Table 4. Student preferences regarding reading topics

What topics do you prefer to read about? Check as many as you want, if you don't like any write your preference	
Reading topic	# of students who chose that topic
Health & Beauty	23
Psychology	19
Tourism	19
animal science	fifteen
Inventions and discoveries	6
Engineering	4
Information technology and communication	3
biology	2
History	1
Art	1
Languages	1

Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.

It is observed that the majority of students chose that the option they prefer to read is “health and beauty”, while “History”, “Art” and “Languages” were answers that the participants wrote. And in the short answer question, which only 11 of the 28 participants responded to this question and in a very limited way (see table 6), this is particularly due to what Zaller and Feldman mention (1992), who state that when people are asked to enter an answer they usually present confusion or not be within the level



of specificity of the survey, since there are participants who, when the question is open, tend to reflect internal conflicts on the given topic.

Table 6. Personal/individual responses of students

Please provide more details about your reading habits, preferences or IELTS preparation process in the space below
1. Currently, I take 20 minutes a night to read at least 2 pages of a book. Besides, I am doing my thesis.
2. I like short passages.
3. This test wasn't that difficult, but that's probably because I don't think I have enough vocabulary and reading skills for this type of test.
4. I currently enjoy reading historical fiction. I think working on reading comprehension exercises is a great way to prepare for one of these tests.
5. I usually prefer to read romance/fantasy/sci-fi novels as I find them more entertaining than technical topics.
6. I do not like reading.
7. I like to read only in Spanish.
8. I prefer to read in English.
9. I read the news every day and topics about technology.
10. Reading English is difficult. I prefer to read Spanish.
11. Reading is entertaining but if you know all the words.

Source: Obtained from surveys carried out.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained in the survey showed that the perceptions of level B1 students regarding their prior knowledge do not correlate with their performance in the reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Likewise, a high incidence of students was detected who thought that reading does not help much to learn about a topic, however, they think that it is of great help for improving vocabulary.

Carrying out this study can be useful for English teachers, test designers and foreign students, since it is important when seeking to know what skills or knowledge must be reinforced to perform effectively when taking the IELTS international test. .



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