El rol de la certificación EXAVER para los alumnos de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa

The role of the EXAVER certificate for English B.A. students

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Resumen

La presente investigación se enfoca en indagar las razones de los estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa para presentar el examen de certificación EXAVER, asimismo, descubrir la usabilidad de dicha certificación; y, a su vez, las opiniones que tienen sobre el examen. Los participantes de esta investigación son estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad Veracruzana. Se utiliza un método mixto; la información se recabó a través de una encuesta y una entrevista, para contrastarla con los antecedentes a través de la triangulación de datos. La información más destacada es que el uso principal de la certificación EXAVER se encuentra dentro de la UV, de la misma manera se convierte en la razón principal de los participantes para presentarla. Finalmente, se considera que la certificación EXAVER evalúa adecuadamente las habilidades del idioma inglés por lo que los participantes lo presentarían más de una vez.

Palabras clave: Certificación, Evaluación, EXAVER, Inglés

Abstract

This research focuses on finding out the reason(s) why students from the B.A. in English language take the EXAVER proficiency test, more precisely to discover why EXAVER is useful for them, as well as their opinions regarding the EXAVER. The participants of this study are students from the B.A. in English language at the Universidad Veracruzana. The nature of this research is a mixed method approach, also the data were collected through the survey and interview methods and contrasted to the literature review to finally analyze them through triangulation. The highlighted findings are how the EXAVER test is used within the UV, and so the participants' reasons to use the EXAVER certificate. The analysis also showed that the EXAVER is considered a test that evaluates English language skills accurately since the participants would take it again and some of them have taken it more than once.

Keywords: English, Evaluation, EXAVER, Proficiency

Introduction

Being certified by a proficiency test seems to be an important part as a future professional graduated from a degree in English language; specifically, to the students from the B.A. in English language at the Universidad Veracruzana whose main goal is being qualified to state their English language skills. The EXAVER test is a proficiency test created by the Universidad Veracruzana with the objective to attend some needs of the community.

Proficiency tests are popular among the community of language learners due to the fact they evaluate someone's language skills; to do so, the test must bear specific characteristic of proficiency tests. This study paper is focused on a proficiency test created by a local public university; particularly, the EXAVER test may be named as an important test for students at the UV due to the variety of uses it has been given to. That is why, this research willing to find out the main role of the EXAVER among the students; precisely, the reasons why students take the EXAVER test, the use it is given and the students' opinions.

General background

This study is focused on the role of the EXAVER proficiency test, which is a proficiency test created by the Universidad Veracruzana some years ago. It was proposed by Dr. Víctor Arredondo Álvarez to face the community's necessity according to the new curriculum called Modelo Educativo Integral y Flexible (MEIF). This proficiency test is addressed to the whole community in the Universidad Veracruzana, as any student can take it, as well as any person from the general public who is interested in taking the EXAVER proficiency test.

The EXAVER is a set of three different tests: EXAVER 1 evaluates level A2, EXAVER 2 evaluates level B1 and EXAVER 3 evaluates level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Also the test is graded with letters from A to E; being A the highest and E the lowest; meaning that E and C are not approving scores.

This study is specifically focus on the B.A. in English Language offered by the Language School at the Universidad Veracruzana. It is intended to discover the importance around the community and some of the opinions that applicants bear in mind.

Literature review

The present chapter focuses on previous research that may help to understand accurately the items presented, also there are sources from official websites which will help to define the focus of this research: the EXAVER proficiency test. Most of the items are features considered regarding proficiency tests.

1.1 The proficiency test: EXAVER

EXAVER is a proficiency test created by the Universidad Veracruzana (UV). It consists of a set of three different tests that evaluate the levels elementary (A2), intermediate (B1), and upper-intermediate (B2) with permanent validity for any paperwork in the UV; however, the validity in any other institution will depend on the institution criteria. This proficiency test was developed in collaboration with the British Council, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Roehampton. The tests had been designed based on the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to accurately evaluate the linguistic skills of the English language (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

In particular, the EXAVER was proposed by the Rector of the UV Dr. Víctor Arredondo Álvarez to provide an affordable option to students and whoever were interested in taking a proficiency test as well as to face the need of students to prove their English level. To start with this project, Dr. Víctor Arredondo approached the British Council with the help of Pat Grounds, its special projects coordinator, the Council approached the ESOL Division of Cambridge Assessment, all this created the team which developed the set of proficiency tests around 2000-2001 (Dunne, 2007).

The set of tests is EXAVER 1, EXAVER 2, and EXAVER 3. EXAVER 1 evaluates elementary (A2) linguistic skills which is equal to 200 hours of formal instruction of the English language; it is based on the standards of the paper Waystage of the Council of Europe. EXAVER 2 evaluates intermediate (B1) linguistic skills which is equal to 400 hours of formal instruction; it is based on the standards of the paper Threshold of the Council of Europe. Finally, the highest proficiency test EXAVER 3 evaluates upper-intermediate (B2) linguistic skills which is equal to 600 hours of formal instruction; it is based on the standards of the paper Vantage of the Council of Europe (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023). Each test consists of three sections called papers: paper 1 reading comprehension and writing, paper 2 listening comprehension, and paper 3 speaking comprehension and production (see table 1).

Table 1. The EXAVER tests' structure.			
	EXAVER 1	EXAVER 2	EXAVER 3
PAPER 1: reading comprehension and writing.	5 parts. 38 questions. 60 minutes.	5 parts. 40 questions. 60 minutes.	5 parts. 57 questions. 1 hour and 25 minutes.
PAPER 2: listening comprehension	4 parts 20 questions 30 minutes	4 parts 21 questions 35 minutes approximately	4 parts 25 questions 40 minutes approximately
PAPER 3: speaking comprehension and production	3 parts Paired candidates will be asked on several topics. No defined timing.	3 parts Paired candidates will be asked on several topics. 13 minutes approximately per pair.	3 parts Paired candidates will be asked on several topics. 15 minutes approximately per pair.

Note: The present information is valid in the present year, 2023. Taken/Adapted from: (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

In addition, it is important to consider that EXAVER's scores are A, B, C, D, E; being A the highest and E the lowest. Meaning that E and C are not approving scores. Moreover, one characteristic of the test they may be consider important is the cost as mentioned before the EXAVER is considered as an affordable option to the UV community and the general public (See table 2 and table 3). Also, there are three applications of the three levels within a year; it is important to contemplate that applicants can only take the exam once a year (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

Table 2. The EXAVER tests' costs to the UV community.	
EXAVER 1	$675.00
EXAVER 2	$725.00
EXAVER 3	$779.00

Note: The present information is valid in the present year, 2023. Taken/Adapted from: (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

Table 3. The EXAVER tests' costs to the UV general public.	
EXAVER 1	$779.00
EXAVER 2	$830.00
EXAVER 3	$882.00

Note: The present information is valid in the present year, 2023. Taken/Adapted from: (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

As mentioned before, the EXAVER is based on the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which means that EXAVER is equivalent to specific scores of proficiency tests such as IELTS by the University of Cambridge, the British Council and IDP; TOEFL IBT by ETS, and the proficiency tests KET, PET, and FCE by Cambridge assessment.

Nowadays, EXAVER has the trademark register given by the Instituto Mexicano de la Propiedad Industrial (IMPI) for the English Language Proficiency Test Program (EXAVER) until the year 2026; being the first proficiency test of its kind. The trademark register is the result of the growth that the EXAVER acquired after different official applications in collaboration with various educational institutions in cities like San Andrés Tuxtla, Villahermosa, Campeche, Mérida, and Mexico City (Sandoval, 2018).

EXAVER is acknowledged for its quality as it continues in constant development and improvement since their first official application in 2002. Proof of this is the participation of their members in conferences such as the 1st British Council New Directions in English Language Assessment: Latin America in March 2019 presenting research carried out on EXAVER applications (Consejo Británico elogió a EXAVER-UV, 2019); as well as their training course to prepare oral examiners which started in 2018 (Sandoval, 2018).

However, in 2020 the applications in the three levels were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, EXAVER applications were online in 2021, which caused the number of applicants to decrease by fifty percent. During online applications there were improvements in different processes and created the opportunity of academic updates (Peralta, 2022).

Recently, in 2023 it was celebrated the 1er Simposio Internacional de Literacidad en Evaluación de Idiomas (SILEI) carried out by the EXAVER English Proficiency Test Programme. The symposium is seen as the starter of the 25th anniversary´s commemoration of EXAVER in 2025; it has the objective to promote the literacy of language evaluation through four presentations from Dra. Patricia Grounds Reynolds, Dr. Víctor Arredondo Álvarez, Dra. Salomé Villa Larenas, and Mtra. Janeth Tello Carrillo (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

1.2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability applicable to all languages, it

organizes language in six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 that can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic user, Independent user and Proficient user which at the same time can be subdivided according to the local context (The CEFR levels, n.d).

The CEFR started as a project by the member States of the Council of Europe to facilitate communication among citizens through the promotion of languages in 1960; its purpose was to ensure that citizens would have the opportunity to learn other languages considering their communicative needs and using methodologies based on real communication tasks and promoting plurilingualism, interculturality and education (The Historical overview of the development of the CEFR, n.d).

Around 1970 'Threshold Level', a document with English language specific objectives for language learning was developed; it was followed by the French language and later by nearly 30 languages. Other three documents were developed for English: Vantage contains objectives for communication at a higher level; and Breakthrough, and Waystage at lower levels. Around 1991 it was necessary to develop a comprehensive framework for language learning, teaching, and assessment; that is why the Council of Europe in cooperation with a research group in Switzerland developed and scale descriptors of language proficiency and four members of the group were chosen to be the authors of the CEFR. The CEFR was officially launched in 2001; however, it already had influence on curriculum design in member states and it has become the most influential publication in language education (Historical overview of the development of the CEFR, n.d). To sum up, since its creation the CEFR has been a guideline for language learning, teaching, and assessment many languages.

1.3 Proficiency tests

Proficiency tests are defined as a test to get a general picture of a student's knowledge and ability of a language, specifically to find out if their level of English is adequate to study in a foreign university, get a job or obtain a certificate (Chiedu & Omenogor, 2014). Proficiency tests measure a learner's English level, and they are seen as the end aim and

motivation for the learners (Proficiency test, n.d). There are different types of proficiency tests and even when they might look the same, they have different purposes, characteristics and they are addressed to a specific group of people. Probably the most common proficiency tests are IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, CELPIP and the Cambridge Assessment KET, PET, FCE, CAE, and CPE; all of them created by different institutions and with different purposes.

To start with, IELTS, which stands for International English Language Testing System, was created for people who want to study or work where English is the language of communication as it seems to be recognized by different organizations around the world. This test is divided into four sections (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) which award the final score; the results are shown as band scores on a scale from 1 to 9, being 9 the highest. This proficiency test is only valid for a period of two years (Comprehensive guide to English proficiency tests, 2022).

The next test is TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language. This proficiency test is specifically for academic purposes as it reflects the English usage in academic settings; just as IELTS, TOEFL evaluates the four language skills of the English language. In this case, each section of the test is evaluated on a scale from 0 to 30 having as a result a maximum score of 120, valid for two years (Comprehensive guide to English proficiency tests, 2022). TOEFL is created by ETS (Educational Testing Service) as well as the test TOEIC which stands for Test of English for International Communication (British Council México, 2020). TOEIC is a specialized proficiency test that certifies language skills in work settings; it is most used for companies to train their employees and measure their level of English and it is also valid for two years.

The Canadian proficiency test is CELPIP that stands for the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program. It assesses English ability in a variety of everyday situations, but it is mostly used for immigration and professional purposes; this test is focused on North American English is computer delivered; the speaking test is done on a computer with answers recorded (Comprehensive guide to English proficiency tests, 2022).

In the case of Cambridge English assessment, the tests (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, and CPE) seem to be recognized around the world by different institutions and universities and there is not an expiry date. KET (Key English Test) certifies a basic-elementary level (A1-A2) proving the ability to communicate simple situations, PET (Preliminary English Test) certifies the next level intermediate (B1) perfect to prove the ability of an everyday usage, FCE (First Certificate of English) is equivalent to an upper-intermediate level (B2) and certifies the ability to communicate in an English-speaking country professionally or personally, CAE (Certificate in Advanced English) certifies a pre-advanced level (C1) this may be the most common that employers and universities look for, and CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English) proves an advanced level (C2) which means a fluent, sophisticated communication (Comprehensive guide to English proficiency tests, 2022).

1.4 Validity and reliability of proficiency tests

To start with, language testing refers to evaluating the proficiency in using a language effectively. Language tests should be designed and developed to measure specific language skills such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading comprehension. To ensure that the language skills are being measured accurately, validity and reliability are important aspects to take into consideration for any kind of test.

The concept of validity is not new in terms of testing. It may be defined as the ability of a test to measure specific language skills and provide similar results; in other words, what it measures. As cited in Weir (2005):

> Kelly (1927:14) noted, 'The problem of validity is that of whether a test really measures what it purports to measure´. Lado (1961: 321) similarly asked, 'Does a test measure what it is supposed to measure? If it does, it is valid'. Cronbach (1971: 463) took a similar position: 'Every time an educator asks "but what does the instrument really measure?' he is calling for information on construct validity. (p. 12)

In the same way, Weir (2005) established validity is multifaceted because of the different versions of a test may have and it continues providing similar results; in addition, validity is a function of the interaction of cognitive and linguistic abilities involved in activities in the language use domain including the context in which these activities are performed.

Meanwhile, the reliability of a test is about the consistency of results within a period of time. According to Chiedu & Omenogor (2014):

> validity can be described as the extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure consistently and accurately– In the same vein, Maduekwe (2007) stated that test reliability refers to the idea that a good language test should give consistent results. A reliable English test, in her opinion, is one which should measure whatever it is supposed to measure consistently under all conditions (p. 5).

Jacob (1991, as cited in Chiedu & Omenogor, 2014) mentioned that "reliability is an essential characteristic of a good test." (p.5).

As a whole validity and reliability are seen as features of proficiency tests, apparently these features are not considered as new in terms of testing but fundamental. A proficiency test is believed to be valid and reliable when it measures the language skills consistently through time.

1.5 Reasons to take a proficiency test.

Proficiency tests certify learners' level of English. Approving a proficiency test means the person manages the linguistic skills of the English language and may communicate accurately according to the proficiency test's level. However, proficiency tests seem to be uncommon within learners unless they are thinking about performing professionally within an English-speaking environment.

On the other hand, proficiency tests may be needed for a variety of reasons such as personal or professional. Comprehensive guide to English proficiency tests (2022) establishes some reasons to take a proficiency test are to study at a University in an English-speaking country, to work and study at the same time in an English-speaking country, only to work for a multinational company, to build a career on business, even just to measure the own level of English.

1.6 The EXAVER as a must

As mentioned before the creation of EXAVER was to face the need of students from the UV to prove their level of English. Specifically, because of the new changes that the UV faced at that time; the major curriculum, currently known as Modelo Educativo Integral y Flexible (MEIF), changed with the objective of promoting the English language and it demands students to learn it as a foreign language (Dunne, 2007).

Dirección General de Administración Escolar (2023) defines MEIF as the institutional framework in which each degree's curriculum is built to develop students' specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become an ethical professional capable of contributing and solving society's needs; these characteristics are related with different areas that will be part of the student's curriculum. To achieve this MEIF is characterized by being integral, flexible, and transversal. The curriculum is divided into four areas: Área de Formación Básica General (AFBG) is oriented to develop communicative and self-study competences, Área de Formación disciplinar focused on the competences of each B.A.'s programme, Área de Formación de Elección Libre (AFEL) is oriented to different competences that may be related or not with the B.A's programme, and Area de Formación terminal refers to the last stage of each B.A.'s programme.

Even when some degrees require higher levels of English, enrolling into level 1 and 2 (A1-A2) are obligatory as part of the AFBG. Students seem to have many options to certify the English level, they may enroll in an English class offered directly from AFBG, at the Language Center, Self-Access Center, DELEX, or even take the EXAVER proficiency test level

1 (Dunne, 2007). Another option is certifying with an international proficiency test, and the most recent option is taking the Exámen de Demostración de Competencias (EDCI) which evaluates the four linguistic skills of English language. Each option has different characteristics and may be suitable for a variety of students since each of them have their own syllabus and evaluation system. In the case of the courses the evaluation is usually an achievement test in which some need to be paid, and ones are more affordable than others.

In the case of the English B.A. programme apart from the English language levels in the curriculum (beginners, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced) level 1 and 2 from AFBG are obligatory as well. The most common way to certify all the levels is through enrolling the classes and approving an achievement test which has some features of proficiency tests; however, a shortcut to these classes are proficiency tests. The proficiency tests accepted by the B.A. in English Language are the EXAVER which depending on the scores obtained and the level presented it may cover to upper-intermediate level, meanwhile Cambridge ESOL, IELTS and TOEFL may cover to advanced level.

On the other hand, Patricia Grounds, EXAVER program external advisor, emphasized the importance of EXAVER as it has proved the English knowledge of students and general public who have been able to enroll in undergraduate, postgraduate, and mobility educational programs; however, the impact is not only among the community as there is still a partnership with the University of Cambridge, and Roehampton, and the British Council (Peralta, 2023).

In addition, EXAVER may be a shortcut to obtain the Certificación Nacional de Nivel de Idioma (CENNI). CENNI is a Mexican certificate which measures levels from basic to advanced, provided by the Dirección General de Acreditación, Incorporación y Revalidación de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (DGAIR-SEP); it is valid for 5 years and mostly used in public schools (British Council México, 2020). The paperwork may be done through the program coordination of EXAVER once the applicant has approved on any of the three tests.

1.7 Designing and developing proficiency tests

Proficiency tests are not tests taken from books nor activities, on the contrary these types of tests need a specific process to be developed. As mentioned before, proficiency tests must be validated, also they must be reliable to be considered as proficiency tests and evaluate English language skills accurately.

The process of designing and developing proficiency tests consists of five steps according to Orozco & Shin (2019). To start with, the first step is the design statement where the description of test takers, intended beneficial consequences, descriptions of the decisions to be made and the construct to be assessed are considered; then, the test specifications show how the test items are written, the test layout is structured and how the responses are scored. Having defined the design statement and test specifications it is possible to construct the items and prompts, the test writing part. After that it is time for the pilot testing before the test becomes operational; finally, the problematic items can be identified, revised, or removed from the test. All these steps may be repeated in case they are needed.

Some similarities were found between the EXAVER test designing and developing process and the process explained before. Dunne (2007) describes the first step was the initial writing of items and prompts according to the specifications document for each level, then the papers of each level were assembled and sent to the local editor in Xalapa city having the opportunity to make corrections and repeat the process. Once the items had been approved locally it was time for the British Council representative to send them on to Cambridge ESOL where the tests are rigorously examined to provide comments and suggestions for the local editor to make the adjustments. EXAVER examinations were piloted with 631 volunteers taken from the Language Centers and the Language School, 276 at EXAVER 1, 184 at EXAVER 2, and 171 at EXAVER 3. After the analysis of the results the first formal application was in June 2002.

1.8 Literature review conclusion

Finally, the EXAVER test seems to be a well-structured proficiency test that continues in constant development as the EXAVER coordination is in constant training as well as it is

still working in collaboration with the British Council, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Roehampton and it is also based on the standards of the CEFR.

Among the uses the EXAVER certificate may have the majority seem to be within the UV such as to skip courses from the B.A. in English Language, avoid taking courses from AFBG, DELEX, or Language Centers, even to enroll in undergraduate, postgraduate, and mobility educational programs; as consequence the EXAVER certificate may be useful for many students enrolled in the B.A. in English Language within the Language School considering it does not have an expiration date unless it is used in a different school or institution.

Research objectives and questions

In this section the purpose of this research is presented. The general objective is to find out the reason(s) why students from the B.A. in English language take the EXAVER test, more precisely to discover why EXAVER is useful for students from the B.A. in English, and to find out students' opinions about EXAVER.

The research questions are the following:

Why do the students from the B.A. in English Language take the EXAVER test?

Why is EXAVER useful for students of the B.A. in English language?

What are the B.A. in English language students' opinions about EXAVER?

Research approach

The research approach generally depends on the purpose of each research and research questions; it can be a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method approach. Due to the nature of this research a mixed method approach was considered to use.

To understand the nature of a mixed method approach qualitative and quantitative research will be defined first. Qualitative research may be seen as research that collects and analyzes non-numerical data to explain concepts, situations, or experiences. Denzin & Lincoln (2005 as cited in Creswell, 2007) define qualitative research as a set of interpretive,

material practices that make the world visible. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpreting; qualitative research may not be found as reliable as it might be influenced by the researchers' opinion. It usually uses open ended questions (Creswell, 2014).

Secondly, quantitative research can be defined as an approach that collects numerical data, Creswell (2014) said that qualitative research tests objective theories by analyzing the relationship among variables which can be measured on instruments and the numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. This type of research usually uses close-ended questions.

The mixed method is an approach that involves features of both quantitative and qualitative data. This combination provides a better understanding of a research problem (Creswell, 2014).

Context and participants

This research was done in the Universidad Veracruzana (UV) founded in 1944 and located in Veracruz, Mexico. The University has various campuses situated around 5 regions in Veracruz: Xalapa, Veracruz, Orizaba-Cordoba, Poza Rica-Tuxpan, and Coatzacoalcos-Minatitlán. In total the UV offers 357 degrees and has 87,034 enrolled students to the present school year 2022-2023; that is why, it is considered one of the five biggest public universities in Mexico.

Part of the UV is the Language School located in Xalapa which offers various degrees, one of them is the B.A. in English Language. This B.A. has the objective of training professionals in the teaching and learning processes of the English language. Each student reaches an advanced level in the English language, acquires knowledge in the teaching and learning processes of it, likewise awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity. The future professionals may perform in teaching English, translation and interpretation, cultural linguistic mediator, research in the field of foreign languages, or English-Spanish editorial work.

The data presented on this research was obtained through the application of an online survey and an interview in which participants were students from the B.A. in English language at the Universidad Veracruzana enrolled during the period of five years 2019–2023 who have taken the EXAVER test at any of its three levels.

The sample of this study were 31 students who decided to participate voluntarily in this work; the 30 students answered the survey and only 8 accepted to be interviewed who will be named with the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H with the purpose to protect their identity and identify them easily. It is seen as a valid sample considering that from 2019 to 2023 there were no EXAVER's applications in 2020 and the next year the number of applicants reduced in half and the applications were online, coming back to normality in 2022 (Peralta, 2022).

These participants may be described as students around 18 and probably less than 28 years old who are interested in learning English language, translation and interpretation, or teaching. Some of the participants are already graduated, some others are performing in the last terms of the B.A. and the rest are in the middle or even in the beginner terms of the B.A. Regarding the EXAVER proficiency test only a few took the test online the rest was face to face. The participants have taken different levels of the EXAVER even some have taken it more than once; also, some participants have experience taking renewed proficiency tests such as TOEFL, Cambridge FCE, and Cambridge PET.

Data collection methods

The collecting data methods used to triangulate data were a survey and an interview. In quantitative research surveys provide numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of it (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the survey consisted of an online questionnaire with 26 questions having a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions to obtain a better point of view from the participants (see appendix 1). This research also used a semi-structured interview. This is a verbally administered questionnaire with key questions that help to define the areas to be explored but it provides

the opportunity for follow-up questions (Gill et al., 2008). The interview consisted of 6 open-ended questions based on the survey to allow the interviewed to expand on their thoughts (see appendix 2). The interview can be seen as a follow-up method to explore some of the participants' responses to the survey and obtain a clearer idea of their opinion.

Data analysis

To carry out the analysis of the data collected accurately and mitigate the researcher's opinion the triangulation approach will be used. Triangulating data means to use multiple sources of data, it adds depth to the data that is collected and ensures reliability and validity to the data and results (Fusch et al., 2018). Denzin (2011 as cited in Fusch et al., 2018) stated the comparison with a crystal when looking through it as it is possible to perceive all the viewpoints of the data.

In other words, triangulation uses multiple data collection methods for the researcher to analyze it and present the results to understand phenomena. Denzin (1970, 1978 as cited in Fusch et al., 2018) defines four types of triangulations: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In this research, methodological triangulation or mixed method will be used; methodological triangulation consists of triangulating data from multiple data collection methods.

In this research, the data obtained from the data collection methods, survey and interview, and the information reported in the literature review will be the three dots to triangulate with the objective to obtain a clearer point of view. The data collected from the survey will be presented in graphs, also to present the data from the interviews the participants will be named with the with the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H.

Procedure. The process of collecting data was carried out within a period of four weeks during which the survey was shared through a link to the community of the Language School and the participants who agreed to be interviewed were contacted to

schedule a meeting. After that, the questions to be analyzed were selected and graphic to be analyzed in contrast with the literature and interviews.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important in any research either it is qualitative, quantitative, or a mixed method research as the data collected comes from people and the identity must be protected. Researchers need to protect the information given, promote integrity of research and guard against misconduct and improperly that might reflect on the participant's organization or institution (Creswell, 2014).

During the collection of data of this research each participant either in the survey and interview was informed that the use of their answers, their identity, and personal information such as name, ID number, and e-mail would be protected and only used for this research.
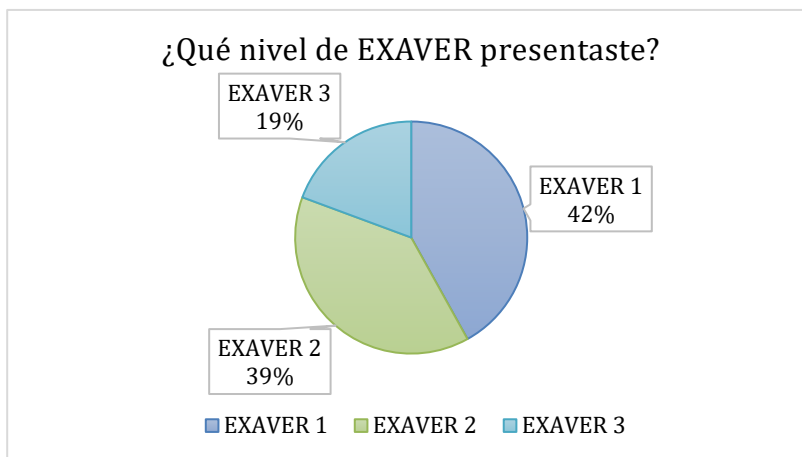
Final thoughts

In this part of the research the data analysis is presented using the data collected from the survey answered by 31 participants, the data from the 8 interviews, and the information reported in the literature; the data is analyzed through the triangulation method using the results from the three perspectives mentioned. This analysis is expected to answer the research questions and present relevant information to the community. In addition, the data collected was divided into four categories; the first called the participants and the EXAVER, the second called considerations before taking the EXAVER proficiency test, then the use of the EXAVER certificate, next general comments regarding the EXAVER proficiency test, and a last section where final thoughts are commented.

3.1 The participants and the EXAVER proficiency test.

In this section, it is presented the information around the participants and the EXAVER proficiency test to know the context of the participants who agreed to be part of this research.

The first question presented is to know the level that participants took. If they took the EXAVER 1 (A2), EXAVER 2 (B1), or EXAVER 3 (B2).

Graph 1. Question 3

¿Qué nivel de EXAVER presentaste?

EXAVER 3 19%
EXAVER 1 42%
EXAVER 2 39%

■ EXAVER 1   ■ EXAVER 2   ■ EXAVER 3

Source: own elaboration

The data showed that the most popular test to present is the first level as the majority (41.9%) took it. Then the level 2 with 38.1% of popularity and the highest level with only 19.4%; interestingly the lowest level of the EXAVER is the most popular among the participants. During the interviews there were no comments about why their choice of test nevertheless, some participants express the following:

"Cuando entré en la carrera no sabía mucho del idioma por eso tomé EXAVER 1 consideré que era muy básico y si es básico, en ese entonces apenas y tenía el nivel ya que lo acredité con C."

Participant B

"Presenté EXAVER 2 porque me ayudaba a cursar la materia que me faltaba de inglés"
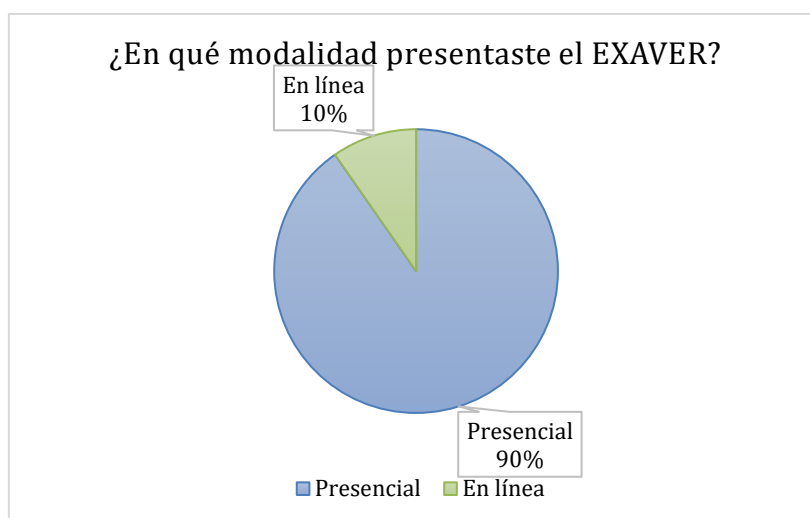
Participant D

"Cuando entré a la carrera presenté EXAVER 1 para revalidar materias."

Participant H

It can be inferred from the previous comments that the EXAVER 1 is the most popular because it is the easiest among the set, which according to the literature the EXAVER 1 certificates level A2, EXAVER 2 certificates level B1, and EXAVER 3 certificates level B2. In addition, to avoid enrolling into the levels 1 and 2 from AFBG students need the EXAVER 1 (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

The next question presents the modality in which participants took the test. They chose between presential or online.

Graph 2. Question 2

Source: own elaboration

Most of the participants (90.3%) took the test presential and the rest (9.7%) took it online. These results were expected due to the period that is being analyzed. However, there were no comments during the interviews about this.

In the literature, it is mentioned that in 2020 the applications in the three levels were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the next year EXAVER applications were online which caused the number of applicants to decrease by fifty percent (Peralta, 2022) The collected data confirms that online applications were not as popular as their usual modality.

As a followed-up question, it is considered relevant to know the score that participants got in their test. Participants could choose: A, B, C, D, or E.

Graph 3. Question 4

¿Qué calificación obtuviste?

- A: 16%
- B: 39%
- C: 35%
- D: 10%
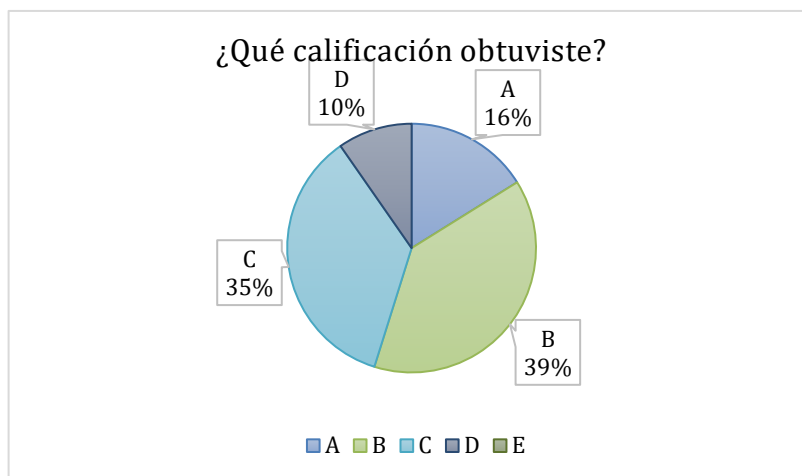
Source: own elaboration

Most respondents (38.7%) reported their score was B, then the 35.5% got C, followed by the 16.1% who got A, finally, the 9.7% of the participants reported they got D. During the interviews there were no comments from participants who did not approve the test, nevertheless some mentioned the following:

"La segunda vez presenté EXAVER 2 para tener nivel B1 pero no lo pase, y en la tercera volví a presentar EXAVER 2 y ahora sí lo acredité."

Participant E

"Hace poco presente EXAVER 3 pero no lo pase, tal vez lo vuelva a intentar."

Participant H

These comments might represent that students who do not approve the test do the test a second time or even a third. That is why in this research all participants were considered. In addition, it is important to recall that the literature stated that the EXAVER

proficiency test's scores are A, B, C, D, E, C; being A the highest and E the lowest which means that E and C are not approving scores (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

After being explained the context around participants and the EXAVER proficiency test the next section presents the information that participants considered before taking the EXAVER proficiency test.

3.2 Considerations before taking the EXAVER proficiency test.

To start with, it was important to know what information the students knew regarding the EXAVER as consequence they were asked if they were aware of the advantages and disadvantages of taking the EXAVER test before taking it.

Graph 4. Question 5
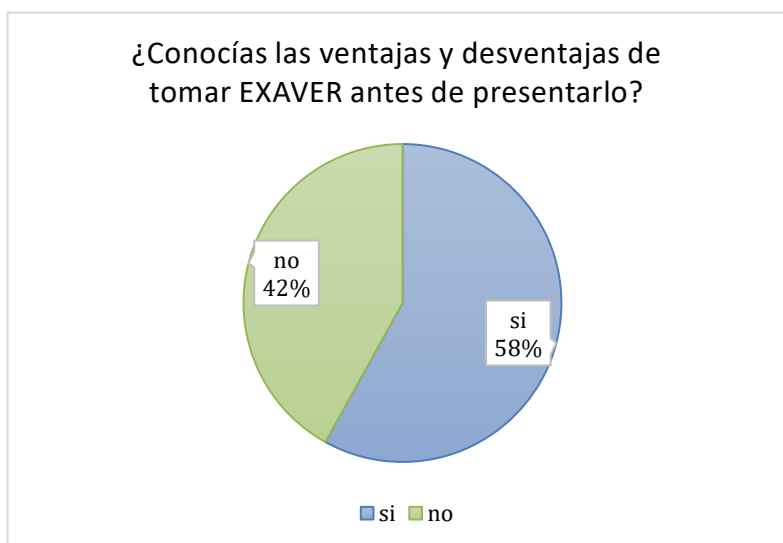
Source: own elaboration

It is observed that most of the participants (58%) knew the advantages of taking the EXAVER test. The interviews confirm that applicants usually know some information about the EXAVER, while the participants commented some of the advantages of it but no

disadvantages. Most of them knew it was a test created by the UV, it is valid in the state of Veracruz, and that it is possible to certify AFBG and AFEL with it. All the previous comments can be read in the following quotes:

"Sabía que podía adelantar las materias inglés 1 y 2 de AFBG, y también acreditar AFEL."

Participant A

"Sabía que es una certificación por parte de la Universidad Veracruzana que sirve para acreditar inglés 1 y 2 de AFBG y tiene validez en el estado de Veracruz además de qué se tenía que estar renovando."

Participant C

"Sé que tiene validez a nivel estatal y que sirve como certificado para algunas escuelas."

Participant D

"Conocía que sirve para revalidar algunas materias de la carrera para poder avanzar un poco más rápido y que se puede liberar las materias de inglés uno e inglés 2 de AFBG."

Participant F

"Sé que es un examen que lo diseñó la UV y sirve para revalidar las materias de inglés de AFBG."

Participant G

These affirmations can be confirmed by the literature. The EXAVER is a proficiency test designed by the UV in collaboration with the British Council, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Roehampton, enrolling into levels 1 and 2 from AFBG can be avoid having the EXAVER and students can obtain credits to certify AFEL as well as EXAVER can be used as a shortcut to courses from the B.A. On the other hand, EXAVER's validity depends on each institution except for the UV it has no expiration date (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).
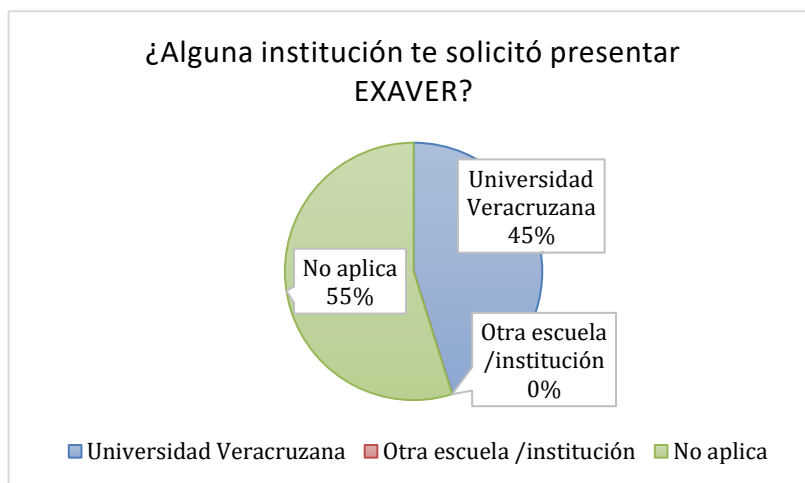
It can be said that participants only knew the uses within the B.A., mainly that the EXAVER may be used as a shortcut for some courses, as a whole they were not aware of all

the uses the EXAVER certificate may provide. Interestingly, no disadvantages were mentioned.

Then, the presented question was aimed to know if the EXAVER proficiency test was a requirement from an institution or not. The participants may answer that it was a requirement from de UV, a different school or institution, or it is not the case.

Graph 5. Question 7

¿Alguna institución te solicitó presentar EXAVER?

Universidad Veracruzana 45%

Otra escuela /institución 0%

No aplica 55%

■ Universidad Veracruzana ■ Otra escuela /institución ■ No aplica
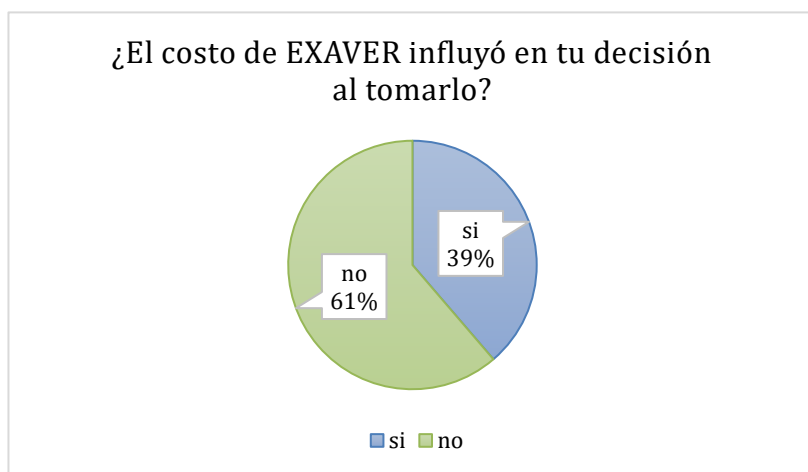
Source: own elaboration

It is observed that most of the participants (55%) did not take the EXAVER as a requirement from any institution; however, 45% of participants took the EXAVER as a requirement from the UV. During the interviews none of the participants mentioned that the EXAVER was a strict requirement from the UV, it can be inferred they took it from a voluntary decision and some of their thoughts are presented below on Graph 7 and Graph 8. The literature may confirm this fact as there was no proof that taking EXAVER at any of its three levels is a must for students; although it is not a must, participants may feel obligated to take it because it is seen as a shortcut to certify various courses within the B.A. as students may skip the courses beginners, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate from the B.A. curriculum, as well as level 1 and 2 from AFBG (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

Interestingly, these results show that any other institution or school requires this proficiency test which seems odd as according to the literature some applications were carried out in collaboration with various educational institutions in cities like San Andrés Tuxtla, Villahermosa, Campeche, Mérida, and Mexico City (Sandoval, 2018).

After analyzing the three perspectives it seems that most of the community of the B.A. in English language has not been involved with institutions, apart from the UV, that require this certificate.

In addition, one aspect that may seem relevant to consider among proficiency tests is how much they cost. That is why participants were asked if they considered previously the cost of the test.

Graph 6. Question 12.

¿El costo de EXAVER influyó en tu decisión al tomarlo?

si 39%

no 61%

si no

Source: own elaboration

It is observed that 61% of the participants reported that the cost was not an important aspect to take the EXAVER; nevertheless, the rest (39%) disagrees. During the interviews only one participant commented about the cost except that he remarked the cost with the quality of the test. His comment can be read in the following quote:

"No considero que sea un mal examen, pero al comparar el precio de EXAVER con una certificación de Cambridge hay una gran diferencia. Tal vez solo funciona para trámites escolares."
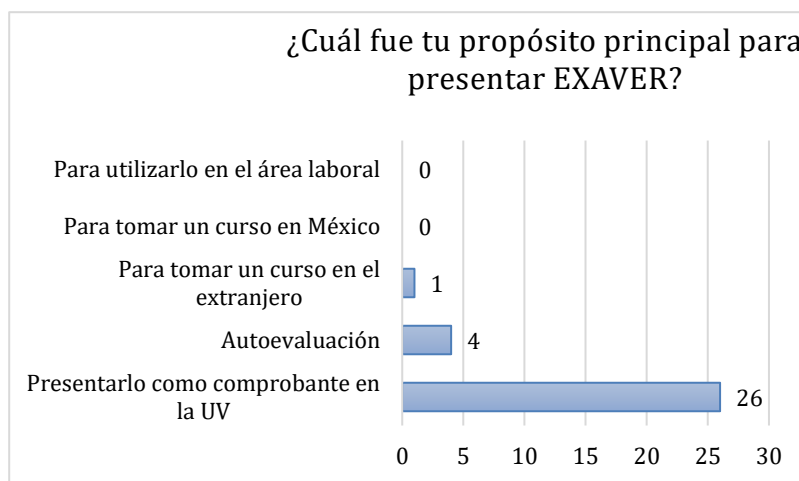
Participant D

Regarding the literature, the cost of EXAVER is lower than $1,000 MXN either for the UV community and the general public. This information indicates the majority would prefer quality over cost (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

The next section is about the after use of the EXAVER certificate. It shows the uses that participants have given to it once they have approved the EXAVER proficiency test.

3.3 The use of the EXAVER certificate

The following question represents what the participants' main reason was to use the EXAVER certificate. Participants may answer: to use it in a job, to take a course in Mexico, to take a course abroad, self-evaluation, or to use it within the UV.

Graph 7. Question 10

Source: own elaboration

Most of the participants (26) stated their main purpose to take the EXAVER test was to use it within the UV, 4 participants commented it was for self-evaluation and only one declared it was to take a course abroad. During the interviews all the participants explained

the most common use was within the UV, specifically their reasons can be observed in Graph 7.

"Decidí tomar el EXAVER 2 para revalidar materias de AFBG, AFEL y una del tronco común de la licenciatura."
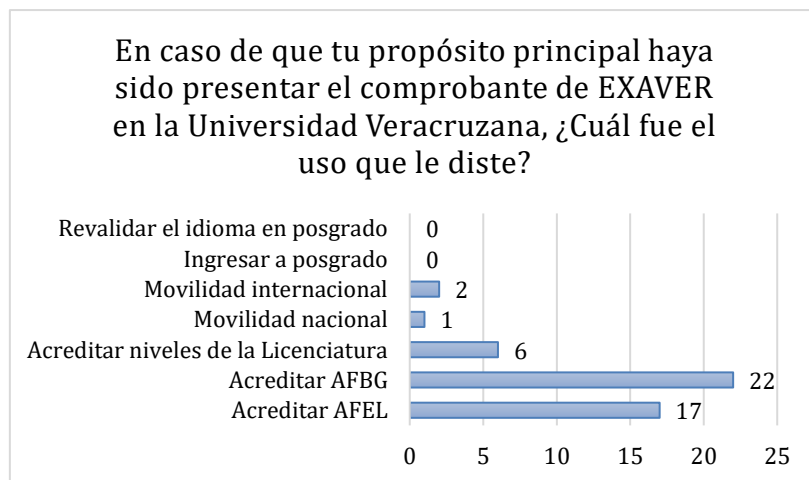
Participant D

"Recién entré a la licenciatura de Lengua Inglesa hice EXAVER 1 para revalidar Inglés 1 y 2 de AFBG y también lo utilice para obtener créditos de AFEL."

Participant H

Considering the characteristics of the participants precisely that some of them have graduated, they have not looked forward to any other use for the certificate aside from the use in the UV.

As a follow-up to the previous question, they were asked what the uses within the UV they gave to the EXAVER certificate. Due to a variety of uses within the UV are presented the participants were free to choose more than one option.

Graph 8. Question 11

En caso de que tu propósito principal haya sido presentar el comprobante de EXAVER en la Universidad Veracruzana, ¿Cuál fue el uso que le diste?

Revalidar el idioma en posgrado	0
Ingresar a posgrado	0
Movilidad internacional	2
Movilidad nacional	1
Acreditar niveles de la Licenciatura	6
Acreditar AFBG	22
Acreditar AFEL	17

0   5   10   15   20   25

Source: own elaboration

It is observed that most of the participants (22) used it to certify AFBG, followed by AFEL (17), certify courses of the B.A. (6), mobility within Mexico only 1, mobility outside Mexico (2), and no uses for postgraduates. During the interviews the participants declared they use it to avoid taking AFBG and AFEL classes; however, nobody mentioned any of the other uses. Some of the participants' answers in the interview can be read in the following quotes:

"Mi propósito principal fue para obtener créditos de AFBG y AFEL."

Participant B

"Lo presenté porque quería una certificación diferente a la que ya tenía, tenía PET, y porque podía acreditar Inglés 1 y 2 de AFBG, también me ayudaba obtener una mejor calificación de inglés principiantes y elemental."
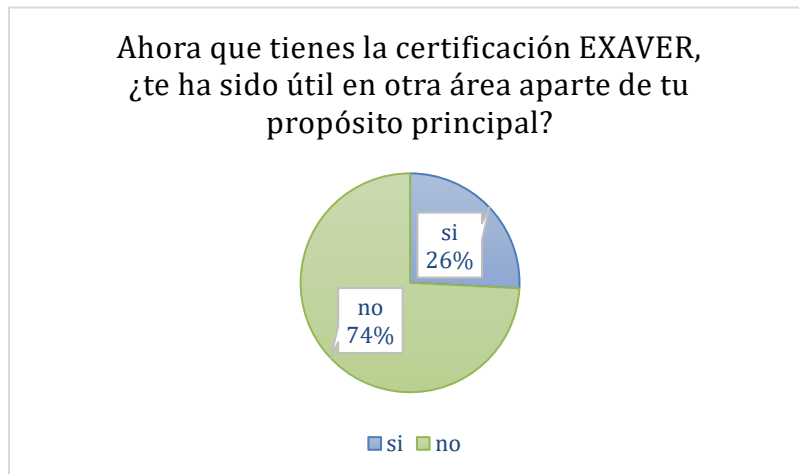
Participant C

"Lo presenté para revalidar inglés 2 de AFBG ya que las EE del centro de auto acceso demandan mucho tiempo, y mi carga académica ya era mucha."

Participant F

The literature establishes the EXAVER provides many opportunities for the UV community such as certifying English language for undergraduate, postgraduate, and mobility educational programs; including opportunities for the B.A. in English language, which is the focus of this study, including the enrolled time may be less (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023). However, even when there are many uses most of the focus community seem to take the EXAVER only to certify courses. In addition, it is important to highlight that most of the participants are still enrolled into the B.A. or have just graduated in the recent year.

Usually, English language certificate might be used in different areas apart from their main purpose, that is why the participants answered if the EXAVER certificate has had a different use apart from their main reason to take it.

Graph 9. Question 20

Ahora que tienes la certificación EXAVER, ¿te ha sido útil en otra área aparte de tu propósito principal?

si 26%
no 74%

□ si □ no

Source: own elaboration

Most of the participants (74%) answered that they have not used it for any other purpose apart from the original (see graph 7 and graph 8) and the rest (26%) have found it a different purpose. These results were confirmed during the interview as all the participants have not used the certificate for any other purpose apart from using it within the UV; even so, the EXAVER certificate was not accepted by an institution as it can be read on the quotes below.

"Aparte de obtener los créditos de AFBG y AFEL y la quise utilizar cuando empecé a trabajar como maestra en un centro de idiomas, pero no la aceptaron, aunque yo creo que después la podría ocupar para solicitar una plaza en la SEP porque vi que sí aceptan el EXAVER. De igual manera, siento que depende de qué institución sea porque considero que hay algunas donde si es válida."

Participant A

"Me ha sido útil para probar mis habilidades y principalmente para adelantar EE en mi carrera, para que en poco tiempo titularme y no llevar mucha carga académica."

Participant F

In the literature, it can be read that most of the uses are within the UV except for the paperwork to get the CENNI, which is a Mexican certificate mostly used in public schools (British Council México, 2020); however, when talking about the EXAVER validity it will

depend on the institutions. Bearing that information in mind, the EXAVER certificate seems not to be the best option in case the applicant is not interested in any service that the UV offers or to obtain the CENNI.

It is important to highlight that the majority have not used the EXAVER certificate in any other situation than their main purpose even when some participants have graduated, and others are in their last years.

Apart from the uses the participants have given to the certificate they were asked based on their experienced if the EXAVER proficiency test evaluates correctly English language skills. The next section shows the participants' comments and opinions regarding the EXAVER proficiency test.

3.4 General comments regarding the EXAVER proficiency test

Another question related to the category was if they considered that the EXAVER evaluates English language skills correctly.

Graph 10. Question 13

¿Consideras que EXAVER evalúa correctamente tus habilidades en Inglés?

no 29%

si 71%

si no
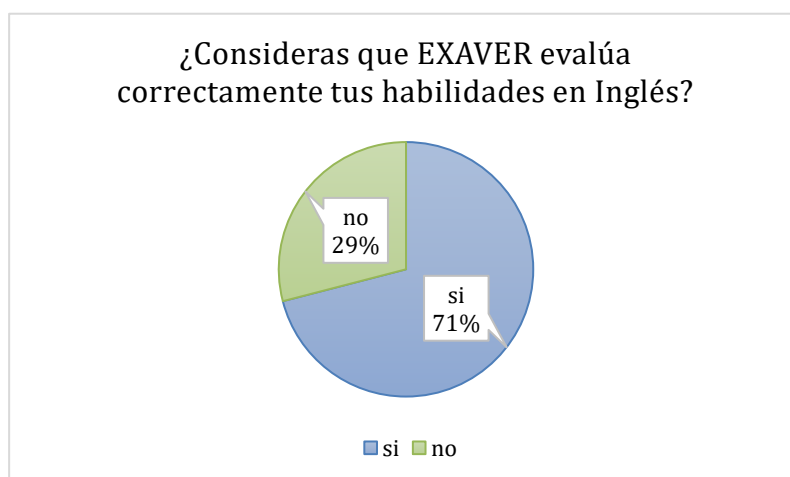
Source: own elaboration

Most of the participants (71%) stated that the EXAVER evaluates English language skills correctly and 29% disagreed with that. During the interviews, most of the participants agreed that it evaluates English language skills correctly for different reasons such as the training of the examiners, the test's format, and the skills it evaluates. Nevertheless, some participants think there are papers that could improve. These opinions can be read in the quotes below.

Participants who agreed that EXAVER evaluates English language skills correctly:

"Considero que los aplicadores son profesionales, tienen buen nivel, y el examen también me parece que tiene un formato ideal."

Participant B

"Lo considero un buen examen, cuando lo presenté por primera vez de las tres lo sentí muy completo. Los maestros están muy atentos a todo, sobre todo con las instrucciones."

Participant E

"Sus exámenes son muy completos y variados, porque incluyen todas las habilidades en un solo en un solo examen y tienes que estar preparado para ello. Entonces yo digo que sí es una buena opción evaluativa de certificación."

Participant F

Participants who disagreed that EXAVER evaluates English language skills correctly:

"Siento que en algunas secciones no se evalúan bien. El speaking me gustó porque hay que interactuar, sin embargo, hay preguntas o temas que no son fácil de responder por todos. En el apartado de listening hay una sección donde hay que escuchar un audio largo y después responder y considero que son ejercicios en los que hay que trabajar la memoria y siento que no es algo que sucede en la vida real."

Participant A

"Yo tengo EXAVER 3, y no evalúa la producción escrita a manera de redacción, sino que es una sección más gramatical."

Participant C

"No me parece que evalúe todas las habilidades del idioma, a mi parecer falta la sección de redacción y la sección oral por parejas es complicado."
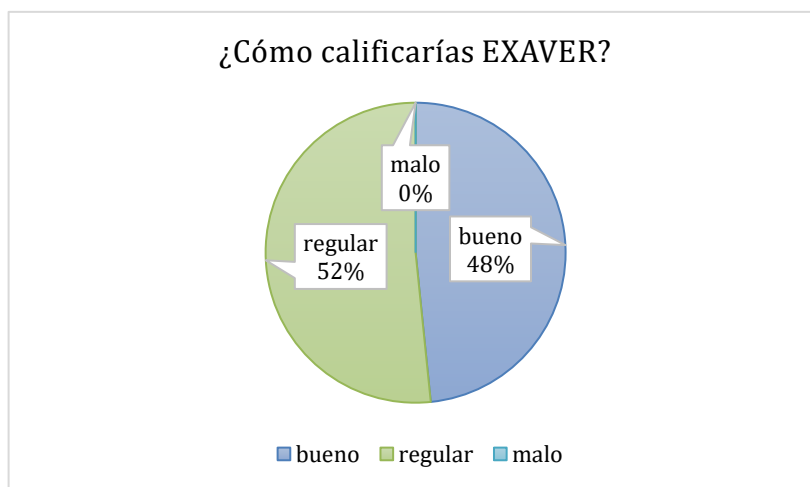
Participant G

These disagreements may occur because of several reasons such as the test the participant presented, the experience they have with proficiency tests, how prepared the participant was when taking the exam, even the participant's state of mind, the participant's purpose to take the EXAVER. These could be some reasons for such disagreements.

Alternatively, the literature stated the three EXAVER tests are different from each other; apart from the level, the time each one lasts varies. The EXAVER 1 lasts approximately 1 hour 40 minutes, the EXAVER 2 is around 1 hour and 50 minutes, and the EXAVER 3 is 2 hours 20 minutes; the amount of time for each paper varies as well as in each paper which may also affect the number of items. Moreover, the speaking paper is in fact in pairs and the established time is without considering the waiting time in case needed after paper 2 (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023). In addition, the process for designing this proficiency test as described by Dunne (2007) corresponds to the one stated by Orozco & Shin (2019) which means that the test was tested and corrected many times before even piloting.

As it could be seen in the three analyzed perspectives, the EXAVER test seems to need some improvement to evaluate accurately the English language skills; nevertheless, mixed thoughts were found during the interviews and the fact that each opinion is based on their own experience should be considered. As mentioned before, there are no exact reasons for these disagreements to occur.

On the next follow-up question the participants should have graded the EXAVER test as good, satisfactory, or poor according to their own experience.

Graph 11. Question 18

¿Cómo calificarías EXAVER?

malo
0%

regular
52%

bueno
48%

bueno   regular   malo
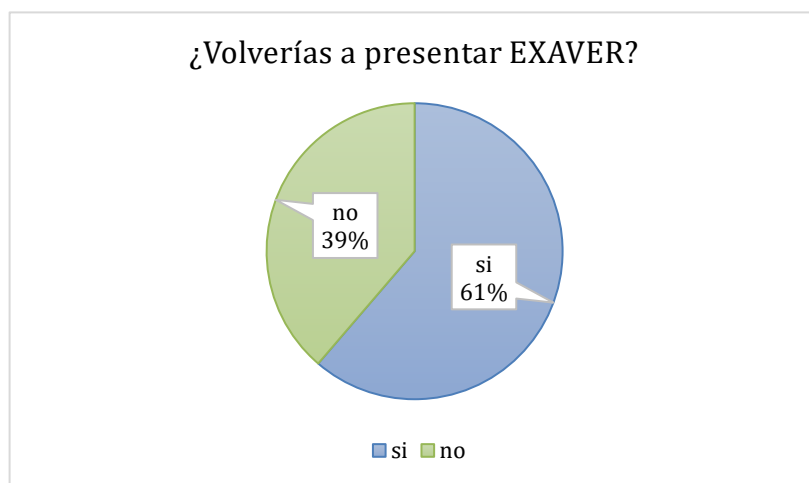
Source: own elaboration

It is observed that most of the participants (52%) graded the EXAVER as good, followed by the 48% of participants graded it as satisfactory and nobody graded it as poor. As it can be seen in the quotes from the interview in Graph 10, there were mixed opinions about if the EXAVER evaluates English language skills correctly; participants described it as a good option, but it may need some changes on the format.

Recalling from the literature, the EXAVER is based on the guidelines of the CEFR; explicitly the EXAVER 1 is based on the standards of the paper Waystage, the EXAVER 2 on the standards of the paper Threshold, and the EXAVER 3 on the paper Vantage. The three papers made by the Council of Europe (EXAVER – Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023).

As a whole, the EXAVER is not perceived as a poor test; on the contrary, it may be featured as a good proficiency test depending on the end purpose to take it. Whereas, as shown in Graph 10 there are mixed thoughts regarding the format of the test.

Finally, the participants were asked if they would re-take the EXAVER test.

Graph 12. Question 22

Source: own elaboration

Interestingly, most of the participants (61%) would take the EXAVER again and the rest (39%) would not. During the interviews some participants mentioned they would take the EXAVER again to obtain a higher level, even some commented they have taken it more than once.

"Tengo EXAVER 1, en este momento que estoy por graduarme creo que ya no me sirve de nada, pero planeo tomar EXAVER 3 para certificarse en B2 porque casi en cualquier trabajo relacionado con la docencia o traducción solicitan una certificación porque el título de la licenciatura no siempre es suficiente"

Participant B

"Ya lo presenté tres veces, la primera vez fue EXAVER 1 para acreditar algunas clases, la segunda hice EXAVER 2 para tener nivel B1 pero no lo pase, y en la tercera volví a presentar EXAVER 2 y ahora sí lo acredité.

Participant E

"Cuando entré a la carrera presente EXAVER 1 para revalidar materias, y hace poco ya casi por graduarme quise hacer EXAVER 3 pero no lo pase, tal vez lo vuelva a intentar."

Participant H

As expressed before, the EXAVER offers an extensive variety of opportunities for the UV community who have got the EXAVER certificate, however they all will depend on the level they have got it. In addition, there was no evidence found about any kind of restriction to take the EXAVER more than one time, except that if the applicant wanted to take it again during the same year (EXAVER - Exámenes de Certificación de Lengua Inglesa. Universidad Veracruzana, 2023). Finally, it seems very common for the community to take the test more than once for different reasons like the ones quoted above especially for the ones who wish to take advantage of the opportunities the UV offers.

3.5 Final thoughts

It is observed that the EXAVER test is a known proficiency test among the B.A. in English language community. Most of the participants knew general information about it such as it is a local proficiency test and it can be used to avoid enrolling to some courses; however, they do not know all the advantages, and disadvantages (in case there are any, as there were no mentioned) that the EXAVER certificate may provide. Some advantages for example, the CENNI can be obtained with the EXAVER certificate, and its validity is permanent within the UV.

It is important to consider the context of participants due to not all of them bear the same characteristics specifically some are still enrolled in the B.A. and other have already graduated. In general, it seems that the main use for the EXAVER certificate is as a shortcut within the UV according to the results obtained.

In addition, the data points that the proficiency test is graded as good-satisfactory. Mixed opinions were presented related to the quality of the test; nevertheless there is no

evidence to believe that the EXAVER proficiency test is not well-founded, also there must be a number of reasons for these disagreements to occur.

Conclusions

Through the triangulation of data collected from the collecting data methods and the literature review reported it is possible to answer the research questions accurately. We can bear in mind a hint of why students from the B.A. in English language take the EXAVER proficiency test, its main use, and the opinions around the EXAVER.

The EXAVER proficiency test being created by a local public university in collaboration with international universities and based on the guidelines of the CEFR has been proven to provide many uses for the community of the B.A. in English language. The present study is evidence of the importance that the EXAVER proficiency test has gained through the years among the community of the Language School as its main use is within the UV.

There is proof that the test is well founded by all the contributors, even when there were some disagreements obtained there are no reasons to believe that the EXAVER does not evaluate English language skills correctly. In addition, the data obtained shows that even when it is an affordable option in comparison with international certificates the cost is not an aspect that participants consider.

Regarding the students' opinions, the EXAVER is a good – satisfactory proficiency test recalling the participant's answers and that the set was based on the standards of the paper Waystage, Threshold, and Vantage by the Council of Europe, so it must evaluate the applicants' English language skill accurately. Nevertheless, the fact that the EXAVER was not accepted by a local institution is remarkable as it shows off to be a valid and trustworthy test. Moreover, the acceptance of the EXAVER proficiency test among the community of the B.A. in English language can be seen in the participants' comments saying they would retake the EXAVER test to get a higher level.

Finally, after the information analyzed and obtained through the collection methods, we can state that the EXAVER proficiency test is a good option to apply to, as presented

above in the literature there are more uses than just being a shortcut which should be put into practice. Also, it is a well-structured test considering its bases and process of design. Finally, the EXAVER proficiency test bears specific purposes for use as any other proficiency test.

Main contributions

This research is aimed to provide to the community of the Languages information around the EXAVER proficiency test. Mainly because this test is proof that a local proficiency test can be developed with the necessary sources. Specifically, this research reports the main uses that the EXAVER certificate bears so the community within the Language School might be informed in case they are interested in this test.

Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implications in this research are addressed to students who are interested in measuring their English language skills. As there is a variety of tests with different purposes, proficiency tests are the best option to certify a learner's English language skills.

Limitations

During this research there were some limitations. First, the limited access to data regarding the EXAVER proficiency test, it was hard to find information about the test apart from the one in the official website. Then, to directly contact the students who had taken the EXAVER proficiency test at any of its three levels and approved it was not easy due to the data protection that exists around the applicants' data; that is why it was a small group of participants on the surveys.

In addition, the participation on the interviews was limited due to the few willingness to participate. These aspects may provoke weaknesses in the results, nevertheless the triangulation method assures that the data presented might be reliable.

Further research

The EXAVER proficiency test was graded in the range of good – satisfactory and there were some mixed opinions about the structure of the test; it might be interesting for further research to inquire more about those comments to focus on the structure of the test to reassure the correct evaluation of English language skills. Also, to focus the research on a closed group of participants who have already graduated to explore if there are more uses for the EXAVER certificate.

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