

Comparative analysis of the evolution of the university research agenda

Análisis comparativo de la evolución de la agenda universitaria de investigación

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolution of research agendas within the Language Center (CENID) of the Technical University of Babahoyo over the academic years 2022 to 2023. With a faculty of 25 dedicated educators, the CENID serves as a vital hub for linguistic and pedagogical research. The study employs a descriptive and comparative methodology to analyze data gathered from archival records and scholarly publications. Findings reveal a significant increase in research productivity, with a growth in the mean number of publications per teacher. Despite facing challenges, such as limited resources, faculty members demonstrate resilience and adaptability, engaging in capacity-building initiatives and using innovative methodologies. The study highlights the department's commitment to creating a culture of research excellence and scholarly engagement while offering actionable recommendations for sustaining research growth and enhancing scholarly impact.

Keywords: research, agendas, language, scholarly productivity

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RESUMEN

Este estudio explora la evolución de las agendas de investigación dentro del Centro de Idiomas (CENID) de la Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo durante los años académicos 2022 a 2023. Con un cuerpo docente de 25 educadores dedicados, el CENID sirve como un centro vital para la investigación lingüística y pedagógica. El estudio emplea una metodología descriptiva y comparativa para analizar los datos recopilados de registros de archivo y publicaciones académicas. Los resultados revelan un

aumento significativo de la productividad investigativa, con un crecimiento en el número medio de publicaciones por docente. A pesar de enfrentar desafíos, como recursos limitados, los miembros de la facultad demuestran resiliencia y adaptabilidad, participando en iniciativas de desarrollo de capacidades y utilizando metodologías innovadoras. El estudio destaca el compromiso del departamento de crear una cultura de excelencia en la investigación y compromiso académico, al tiempo que ofrece recomendaciones prácticas para mantener el crecimiento de la investigación y mejorar el impacto académico.

Palabras clave: investigación, agendas, lenguaje, productividad académica

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-changing world of academia, the growth of research agendas within institutions demonstrates the dynamism and adaptability inherent in scholarly pursuits (Chen & Yang, 2016). This comparative analysis aims to analyze the growth of research agendas, focusing on the Language Center (CENID, by its acronym in Spanish) of the Technical University of Babahoyo. With a faculty of 25 dedicated educators, CENID serves as an important hub for linguistic and pedagogical research. The purpose of this study is to systematically chart the course of CENID’s research goals during two different academic years, 2023 – 2024.

Using comparative analysis, the attempt is to measure the compliance of goals and assess the methodological approaches (Ramirez et al., 2019), and scholarly publications that have defined the evolution of research within these academic periods. Through a thorough examination of archival records and scholarly publications, it seeks to evaluate trends, and factors of these changes. Furthermore, this comparative analysis seeks to explain the significance of this tendency for the academic community, providing insights into the mechanisms by which research agendas vary over time (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013; De Costa & Norton, 2016).

By contextualizing the findings within the frameworks of institutional growth and academic excellence, it aims to contribute not only to scholarly discourse in education but also to strategic planning and decision-making processes at the Technical University of Babahoyo and elsewhere. Through this, it explores the improvement and understanding of effective mechanisms that support intellectual inquiry and institutional growth in higher education areas (Vargas-Hernández & Vargas-González, 2022).

Initially, language education research has its own set of challenges, opportunities, and implications for teaching and practice. In this literature review, existing research goals and university agendas in language education were examined, concentrating on essential elements such as language acquisition, pedagogical approaches, curriculum creation, and assessment methods. According to Dalton-Puffer and Smit (2013), offer a research agenda for subject and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), emphasizing the need for additional research into the approach’s effectiveness in developing both language competency and subject understanding. Their research highlights the significance of investigating the relationship between language and content learning, as well as the implications of CLIL for curriculum design and teacher professional development.

On the other hand, De Costa and Norton (2016) advocate for a research agenda that highlights the role of identity in language learning and teaching**. Drawing** on sociocultural theories of language acquisition, they argue that learners’ identities are intricately linked to their language learning experiences and outcomes. Their research agenda calls for a better understanding of how identity construction intersects with issues of power, privilege, and social justice in language education contexts. Similarly, Lou and Noels (2019) propose a research agenda focused on promoting growth mindsets in foreign and second language education, emphasizing interventions that support learners’ beliefs in their capacity for language learning and development.

Their agenda emphasizes the importance of addressing learners’ beliefs about language learning and teaching in order to cultivate a positive and resilient learning environment, managing innovation in English language education, and emphasizing the need for systematic inquiry into the processes and outcomes of educational innovation. Indistinctively, innovation holds the potential to transform language education practices, its implementation must be guided by important research and evaluation, those studies explore the factors influencing the adoption of innovative practices in diverse educational contexts (Waters, 2014).

One important issue to analyze is the institutional context and academic culture of universities. While the University of Babahoyo is small and mostly has students from rural areas, it’s important to plan collaborations and influence scholarly publications within language centers. Friedman (2023) examines the intersection of language socialization and academic discourse in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, emphasizing the importance of understanding the socio-cultural dynamics that shape language learning experiences.

Holliday (2009) examines the role of culture in English language education, highlighting challenges expressed in cultural diversity and the need for educators to explore those cultural differences. This research underscores the impact of

institutional culture on language education practices and the importance of acknowledging cultural diversity within academic settings. Subsequently, Lou and Noels (2019) advocate for promoting growth mindsets in foreign and second language education, emphasizing the role of institutional culture in shaping learners' beliefs and attitudes towards language learning, looking for interventions aimed at supporting academic culture that encourages learners to work into challenges and persist in their language learning path.

Another important perspective is presented by MacSwan (2020), who critiques the standard language ideology inherent in academic English and calls for a renewed research agenda that recognizes the linguistic diversity of students and promotes asset-based language education approaches. MacSwan's work explains the influence of institutional norms and ideologies on language education practices, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable approach to language teaching and assessment.

Furthermore, Reinders and Benson (2017) propose a research agenda focused on language learning beyond the classroom, highlighting the role of institutional support and collaboration in facilitating out-of-class language learning opportunities, emphasizing the importance of aligning institutional resources and policies with learners' needs and preferences, underscoring the impact of institutional context on language learning outcomes.

Another important overview is the role of technological advances, which have revolutionized research practices within language education, offering innovative tools for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Chun et al. (2016) explore the pervasive influence of technology on language use, teaching, and learning, highlighting its potential to enhance language education practices. Their work underscores the role of digital tools and online resources in facilitating interactive and engaging learning experiences for language learners, thereby contributing to research methodologies in language education.

Dexter and Richardson (2020) analyze the leadership of technology integration in educational settings, highlighting how school leaders support a culture of innovation and technological adoption. Their research underscores the importance of leadership support and strategic planning in leveraging technology to enhance research practices and educational outcomes in language education. Haleem et al. (2022) underscore the impact of digital technologies on research practices within language education, including the use of online platforms for data collection and collaborative research projects. Furthermore, MacSwan (2020) critiques the standard language ideology inherent in academic English and calls for a renewed research agenda that assesses language education approaches, highlighting the potential of digital technologies to promote linguistic diversity and inclusive pedagogical practices in language education research.

Finally, Reinders and Benson (2017) also propose a research agenda focused on language learning beyond the classroom, emphasizing the role of digital technologies in facilitating out-of-class language learning opportunities through online resources, mobile applications, and multimedia platforms, supporting autonomous learning and enhancing research methodologies in language education. To sum up, the literature reviewed here highlights the impact of technological advances and research agendas on practices within language education, more so when teaching in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

The approach employed in this study is predominantly descriptive and comparative to analyze the data presented in tables and figures. The descriptive aspect involves summarizing and presenting the data in a clear and organized manner, allowing for an understanding of the distribution and trends observed within the dataset. Then, the sample population for this study consists of teachers who are part of the Language Center of the University of Babahoyo. Those were 26 and 29 teachers, respectively in 2022 and 2023, which form the basis of the study's data collection and analysis, representing a census of academic staff within the specific department under investigation.

For this study, different techniques during the year 2023 were derived from the collective efforts of these teachers and managing staff, who have engaged in various activities aimed at enhancing their research productivity and scholarly output. These efforts included specialized training sessions, workshops focused on research methodologies and practices, the use of academic and scientific software tools, and participation in academic events such as conferences, seminars, and symposiums. Through these activities, teachers gained the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to conduct research and produce scholarly publications within their respective fields of expertise.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explains the main analysis of the data obtained in the two-year period assessed in this case study, where the Academic Staff of the Language Center of the University of Babahoyo has developed research. These results were generated according to different team efforts such as specialized training, workshops, academic and scientific software, and some event participation, among others. Then, Table 1 explores the research areas where teachers participate in the evaluated periods.

Table 1

Research areas where academic teachers participated

Research areas	2022	2023
Education	1	7
Agriculture and Livestock Production	1	2
Languages	14	11
Literature y linguistics	0	1
Teacher training	1	2
Agrotourism	1	1
Entrepreneurship and Innovation	4	3
Public Health	1	2
Total	23	29
Variation rate	26,09%	

Note: this table identified the number of scientific publications in the years 2022-2023.

The table presents data on research areas and their respective publications in 2022 and 2023, providing insights into the trends and changes observed over the two years. In 2022, a total of 23 research publications were recorded across various fields, while in 2023, this number increased to 29, indicating a variation rate of 26.09%. In 2022, the highest number of research publications was observed in the field of Languages, with 14 research publications, followed by Education with 7 publications. Other research areas such as Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Agriculture and Livestock Production, and Public Health also recorded modest publications ranging from 1 to 4.

In contrast, the distribution of research publications shifted slightly in 2023. While Languages remained a prominent research area with 11 publications, it experienced a slight decrease compared to the previous year. However, Education saw a significant increase in publications, jumping from 7 to 11, indicating a growth in research activity within this field. Similarly, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, as well as Public Health, maintained relatively steady publications, while Agriculture and Livestock Production experienced a slight increase.

Interestingly, there were also changes in other research areas such as Literature and Linguistics, which had no recorded publications in 2022, and 1 research publication in 2023, indicating a new focus or development within this field. Additionally, Teacher Training and Agrotourism both experienced increases in publications from 2022 to 2023. On the other hand, Table 2 analyses descriptive statistics to inform publication rates in the evaluated periods.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics about academic publication rates

Evaluated aspects	2022	2023	Variation
Academic Staff	29	26	-10,34%
Mean of publications per teacher	2,17	3,31	52,26%
Max of publication per teacher	6	8	33,33%
Min of publication per teacher	1	1	0,00%
Standard Deviation of publications	1,04	1,41	

Note: this table identified some main statistics according to the numbers presented in the years 2022 and 2023.

Additionally, Table 2 provides descriptive statistics about academic publication rates for the years 2022 and 2023, offering insights into the productivity and variation among academic staff members. The table evaluates several key aspects, including the total number of academic staff, the mean, maximum, and minimum number of publications per teacher, and the standard deviation of publications. In 2022, there were 29 academic staff members which were reduced to 26 in 2023, representing a variation rate of -10.34%. Despite the decrease in the number of academic staff, there was an increase in the mean number of publications per teacher, rising from 2.17 publications in 2022 to 3.31 publications in 2023, indicating an important growth of 52.26%.

Furthermore, the maximum number of publications per teacher also increased from 6 in 2022 to 8 in 2023, reflecting a 33.33% growth. On the other hand, the minimum number of publications per teacher remained consistent at 1 for both years.

Moreover, the standard deviation of publications provides insight into the variability or dispersion of publication rates among academic staff. In 2022, the standard deviation was 1.04, indicating a relatively low level of dispersion. However, this value increased to 1.41 in 2023, suggesting a greater degree of variability in publication rates among academic staff members. Table 3 presents the information of the journals where teachers have published their research work.

Table 3

Scientific Journals where teachers have published their research

Journal	2022	2023
Centro Sur Social Science Journal	0	1
Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar	5	2
Colón Ciencias, Tecnología y Negocios	1	0
Dominio de las ciencias	3	1
Horizontes. Revista de Investigación en Ciencias de la Educación	1	0
Journal of Health and Medical Sciences	2	2
Journal of Science and Research	6	4
MDPI	1	0
POCAIP	1	0
Polo del Conocimiento	1	3
Revista Colón Ciencias, Tecnología y Negocios	0	3
Revista InveCom	0	12
Revista Oratores	1	0
REVISTA ORBIS COGNITA	1	0
REVISTA SOCIETAS	2	0
REVISTA SEMILLA DEL ESTE	0	1
Total	23	29

Note: this table summarizes the number of publications by journal during the years 2022 and 2023.

Table 3 presents data on the scientific journals where teachers have published their research during the years 2022 and 2023, offering insights into the distribution of research outputs across different publications. In 2022, a total of 23 research publications were recorded across different journals. Significantly, the Journal of Science and Research had the highest number of publications with 6, followed by Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar and Dominio de las ciencias with 5 and 3 publications, respectively. In 2023, the InveCom Journal highlighted with 12 publications. Additionally, Table 4 presents the information of the journals where teachers have published their research work.

Table 4

Scientific Journals where teachers have published their research

Evaluated Aspect	2022	2023	Variation
Scientific journals where articles were published	11	9	-18,18%
Articles in Regional Journals (Latindex 2.0)	22	29	31,82%
Articles in High Impact Journals (Scopus)	1	0	-100,00%
Book Chapters published	1	1	0,00%

Note: this table summarizes the number of publications by journals and their types.

Table 4 provides an overview of the types and distribution of publications by teachers in scientific journals during the years 2022 and 2023, highlighting changes and trends observed over the two-year period. In 2022, teachers published articles in a total of 11 scientific journals, which decreased slightly to 9 journals in 2023, representing a variation rate of -18.18%. This decrease suggests a consolidation or narrowing of focus in terms of the journals where teachers choose to publish their research.

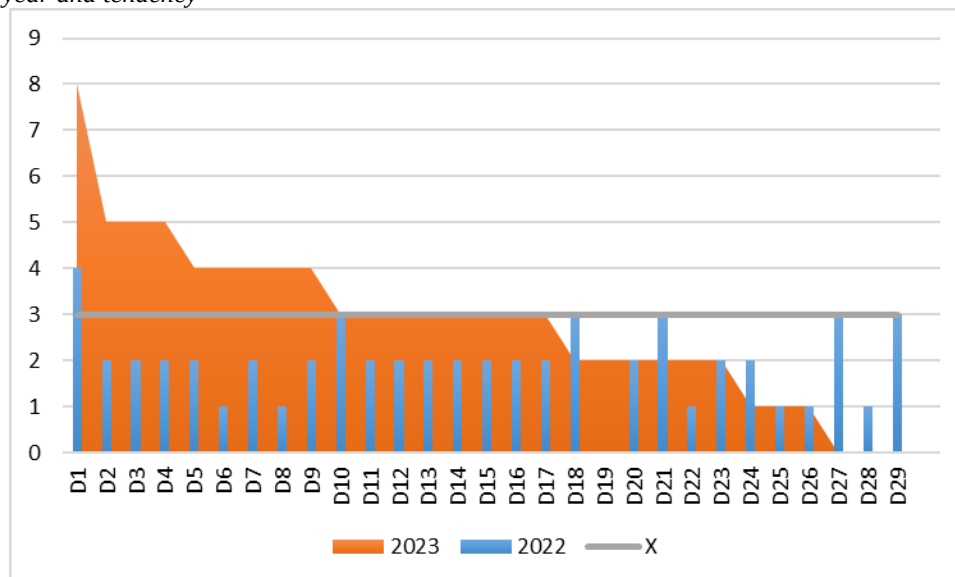
However, despite the decrease in the total number of journals, there was a significant increase in the number of articles published in regional journals indexed in Latindex 2.0. In 2022, teachers published 22 articles in regional journals, which

increased to 29 articles in 2023, indicating a notable growth of 31.82%. This increase reflects a heightened emphasis on disseminating research within regional and local contexts, potentially driven by a desire to engage with and address issues relevant to the local community.

Conversely, the number of articles published in high-impact journals indexed in Scopus decreased, while publishing 1 article in a high-impact journal in 2022, there were no publications in such journals in 2023, resulting in a variation rate of -100.00%. This decline may indicate challenges or shifts in publishing strategies, with teachers potentially prioritizing other types of journals or facing increased competition for publication in high-impact outlets. Finally, the number of book chapters published remained consistent at 1 for both years, indicating stability in this aspect of scholarly output. Book chapters can serve as contributions to academic literature, offering in-depth analysis within specific disciplinary contexts. Finally, Figure 1 summarizes the information on academic staff that have been published during both years and their tendencies.

Figure 1

Publications per year and tendency



Note: this figure compiles the information of the 29 teachers and their contribution during both years.

Figure 1 illustrates the publication productivity of academic staff members over the years 2022 and 2023, with 'Ds' representing individual teachers and 'X' indicating the mean number of publications in 2023. A significant increasing trend in publication output is evident across the academic staff, with most teachers contributing more publications in 2023 compared to 2022. The mean number of publications per teacher in 2023 is notably higher, indicating a collective improvement in scholarly productivity within the academic community. This upward trajectory reflects a commitment to academic excellence and research engagement among the academic staff, showcasing their dedication to acquiring knowledge and contributing to the scholarly discourse in their education fields.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the examination of data from the years 2022 and 2023, this study has remarked on the changing trends, priorities, and strategies employed by academic staff members to advance research within their respective fields of expertise. The findings of this study underscore the department's commitment to improving the culture of research excellence and scholarly engagement among its faculty members. Despite challenges such as limited funding and institutional barriers, the academic staff has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in academia. The staff has participated in training sessions, workshops, and academic events, and faculty members have honed their research skills and expanded their knowledge base.

One of the most notable findings of this study is the significant increase in the total number of research publications from 2022 to 2023, reflecting a growth trajectory in research activity within the department. This growth is indicative of the department's continuous efforts to expand its research portfolio, diversify its thematic areas, and engage with different issues relevant to both local and global contexts. Furthermore, the upward trend observed in the mean number of publications per teacher represented a considerable improvement in scholarly productivity among teachers, highlighting their dedication to advancing knowledge.

Additionally, the shift in publication strategies, with an increased emphasis on disseminating research findings in regional journals indexed in Latindex 2.0, aims to address issues pertinent to the local community. Overall, the findings of this study not only provide valuable insights into research autonomy within the Language Center of the Technical University of Babahoyo.

Moving forward, it is imperative for the department to continue investing in capacity-building initiatives, creating interdisciplinary collaborations, and working with new technologies to sustain research growth and innovation. By doing so, the department can further solidify its position as a leading hub for linguistic and pedagogical research, driving positive change and making meaningful contributions to society.

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