

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about COVID-19  
Pandemic

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Universidad Pedagógica Nacional  
School of Humanities  
The Master's Program in Foreign Language Teaching  
Bogotá D.C, Colombia  
2021

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A thesis submitted as a requirement to obtain the degree of M.A in Foreign Language  
Teaching

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Bogotá D.C, Colombia  
2021

Note of acceptance

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**Dedicatoria**

Dedico esta tesis a mi madre y a mi hermana por su amor y apoyo incondicional. También, a todos los estudiantes y maestros quienes ven la educación como la llave para transformar nuestro país desbordado por la inequidad.

### **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I wish to thank PLE (Programa Segunda Lengua) from Universidad Nacional de Colombia for giving me the opportunity to carry out this research study during this semester. I thank you for giving me the freedom as a teacher to develop this pedagogical intervention and other previous activities where students as main actors, have always stated their critical stances.

I want to thank all my professors at the Master program for allowing me to see that teaching a language requires more human, critical, and social attitudes where we as teachers need to reflect on and transform our own practices instead of perpetuating traditional ones. Thanks to all professors who have shared their knowledge with me and have aroused my curiosity to continue learning, namely, Patricia Moreno, Ángela Camargo, Jair Ayala, and the most important, Vladimir Núñez who thanks to his guidance, support, and readiness to help enabled to develop and conclude this challenging but wonderful research study.

In the same way, my special appreciation for my students of level 2 from PLE, their commitment, interest, and confidence to express their critical positions about so many social issues which have negatively affected most of Colombian population, made possible the blooming of this critical discourse analysis research study. Finally, thanks professor Pedro Vargas and Jay for your priceless friendship and for all our pedagogical discussions which have always looked for improving Colombian educational practices.

My greatest acknowledgments to all of them.

### **Abstract**

Critical reading and thinking of social local news are important topics to explore in the language teaching Colombian field. In this study, I focus on finding out what outcomes emerge when a group of undergraduate university students in an elementary English course interact with local news. Firstly, I explain why this research project is important for students of Programa Lengua Extranjera (PLE) at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Then, I develop the concept of criticism starting from the philosophical stances of Kant and Marx until the Frankfurt School, and its contribution on social analysis of society, suppression, and the search of emancipation. Later, I explain how a pedagogical intervention carried out in the classroom for three months, allowed me to gather the necessary data to answer the research question of this study. Finally, I analyze, interpret, and categorize the answers and reflections provided by students through the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model which Norman Fairclough and Lilie Chouliaraki propose.

**Key words:** *critical reading, critical thinking, social local news, critical discourse analysis, undergraduate university students, pedagogical intervention.*

### **Resumen**

La lectura y el pensamiento crítico de noticias locales sociales son temáticas importantes para explorar en el campo de enseñanza de una lengua en Colombia. En este estudio investigativo me enfoco en indagar cuáles resultados emergen cuando un grupo de estudiantes universitarios de un curso de inglés elemental interactúa con noticias locales sociales. Primero, explico por qué este proyecto de investigación es importante para los estudiantes del programa PLE (Programa Segunda Lengua) de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Posteriormente, desarrollo el concepto de crítica, comenzando por las posturas filosóficas de Kant y Marx hasta llegar a la escuela de Frankfurt y su contribución en el análisis social de la sociedad, la supresión, y la búsqueda de emancipación. Después, explico como la intervención pedagógica que llevé a cabo en el aula por tres meses, me permitió recoger los

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datos necesarios para responder la pregunta de investigación que planteo en este estudio. Finalmente, analizo, interpreto y categorizo las respuestas y reflexiones de los estudiantes a la luz del modelo de análisis crítico del discurso que Norman Fairclough y Lilie Chouliaraki proponen.

**Palabras clave:** *lectura crítica, pensamiento crítico, noticias locales sociales, análisis crítico del discurso, estudiantes universitarios, intervención pedagógica.*



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## **Chapter 1**

In this chapter I introduce the generalities of my study as well as the reasons and rationale of my research study. The research question and the objectives are also specified.

### **Introduction**

This qualitative research project attempts to analyze critically undergraduate students' discourses when interacting with local social news related to covid-19 pandemic which has affected the whole world without distinguishing age, race, social statues, or place of origin. Such impacts have been much more devastating in developing countries than in developed ones. Colombia, as a developing country, before the pandemic did not count on a strong economic model which could support all citizens.

On the contrary, according to Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística DANE (2020) before the pandemic, Colombia had more than the 50% of informal jobs and a significant percentage of poverty and extreme poverty. With the pandemic arrival and the mandatory lockdown, unemployment increased because many small and medium size companies were obliged to close. A significant number of people lost their jobs, therefore, economic problems appeared at home, inequality grew, and due to the lack of incomes, some students were forced to drop out university, and others postponed their studies because of the lack of internet access in and out of the city to fulfill the government requirement to study online to avoid contagion.

Under this socioeconomical context, it was impossible to ignore that harmful social reality which has been affecting us and keeping in mind my role as a teacher from a public university where students were suffering the pandemic effects and as a citizen who cannot ignore such awful social context, I decided to choose and implement two pieces of news. The first one was aimed at understanding the economic impact in Colombia and the second

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It is important to mention that at the beginning, this research project was thought to be carried under different conditions. It means that the idea of this study became to transform little by little when the pandemic started and due to the long lockdown, virtual education was established. Additionally, at the onset of this project, different social local news had been selected to read in class with students, however, virtual classes presented different obstacles that prevented me to carry out the research study and gather data how it had been planned. Later, in 2021, the local social news in Colombia reported the adverse repercussions that covid-19 had caused in all spheres of society; for this reason, economics and education were the topics chosen to be tackled with students in class.

Another important aspect that I have noticed during my teaching experience, and I would like to highlight here is the lack of authentic material which is not read with elementary students in foreign language classrooms because it is believed that they do not have the proficiency level to understand it. In consonance with Hall (1995), "authentic materials are materials which have not been designed for teaching purposes, are potential learning tools due to the authenticity of the language and their intimate relation with the communicative language teaching approach" (p.9).

Nevertheless, in this research study, students interacted with authentic local news because they were acquainted with the vocabulary and the most important, with the social context they were living in. Hence, students understood the content of the news and were able to state their critical stances through the development of different activities proposed in class.

This research study is meaningful because critical reading and thinking go together to analyze and view Colombian reality from a critical perspective in the EFL (English Foreign Language) classroom. As is known, most readings are suggested by foreign editorials books that follow CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for languages) regulations,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic ignoring the reality of countries, in this way, such readings are neither meaningful nor interesting for students because they do not feel identified with them.

Now that I have described the main concern of this study which aimed at analyzing what outcomes emerge from students when interacting with social problems readings: news, I proceed to explain this research project organization.

To start, in the first chapter I explain the statement of the problem, I introduce the main question, objectives, and rationale. Hence, you can find the contextualization and the relevance of this study. Second, in this chapter I outline the literature review and the theoretical framework which support this project. In this section, I point out what criticism is based on different authors from different periods. Besides, I foreground important concepts such as critical reading, critical thinking from a social perspective, and critical discourse analysis. To end up this section, in the state of the art I mention the national studies which have been done related to critical reading and thinking topics related to reading news. Subsequently, in the third chapter I present the research paradigm, setting, participants, researcher's role, data collection, instruments, and research procedure. Immediately after, in the section fourth, I explain the pedagogical intervention that was made up of two reading workshops which were carried out in class for three months. Then, in chapter five, I examine data and the research findings following Chouliaraki and Fairclough critical discourse analysis model. Finally, in chapter six I present the conclusions, implications, limitations, along with further research recommendations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reading has been one of the most important achievements in my life because it has allowed me to discover new worlds line after line, it has awoken a myriad of possibilities to dream and create my own stories; but it has also shown me unimaginable realities such as war, inequality, poverty, among others, that different sociocultural groups have faced for so long. When I grew up, I focused my attention on social literature genre, and ever since, I

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learnt that books can be tools to escape from reality, or mirrors of language, culture, politics, and society, which make you aware of the world where you live. Undoubtedly, to comprehend their content, we need the ability to read, the power to understand, the opportunity to forge a critical stance, and the commitment to transform our roles as social actors.

However, during my experience as an educator, I have seen how reading skill has been addressed as academic by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) emphasizing the importance of reading ability into four categories: Reading comprehension, reading correspondence, reading for orientation, and reading instructions. Unfortunately, critical reading is not mentioned in any of the previous categories. This aspect reinforces how a foreign external institution standardizes education and narrows reading ability into simple categories to pass an international language test which, according to *British Council*, makes you proficient to use the language. In consonance with it, Guerrero, and Quintero (2009) stated that:

... the implementation of the National Program of Bilingualism (PNB by its acronym in Spanish) carried out in Colombia through the “aid” of the British Council (i.e., the positioning of products of British publishing houses, the marketing of standardized tests that have the seal “certification of quality” of British universities, and imposition of short non-academic and skill-based teacher training courses) affects what happens in schools or universities (p.137).

Furthermore, Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia (MEN, 2006) describes English as a language which has increased its importance for business and workforce.

El inglés es un idioma que aumenta su protagonismo como lengua para los negocios y el trabajo. Asimismo, puede accederse muchas de las opciones culturales y de entretenimiento si se dominan lenguas extranjeras. (p. 9)

As can be seen, MEN do not mention the importance of including critical reading and thinking during undergraduate English classes as valuable opportunities to keep on developing autonomy, discussion and self-reflection that may permit students to be

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic conscious of the society they take part, neither it highlights their social responsibility to make of this country a better place for themselves and for others. According to this, Gómez (2017) citing (Bonilla Carvajal and Tejada-Sánchez, 2016; Reyes, 2015) mentions that:

The document for socializing the PNI (Programa Nacional de Inglés, MEN, 2014) suggests that it was born to attend to the needs of industries and elites who are in search of a cheap workforce able to communicate in English, rather than to *the need to foster social development* (form human beings able to transform the Colombian reality by means of creating industries and innovations, conducting research, strengthening the local economy, etc.

Additionally, MEN (2010) pinpoints that as a governmental institution, it evaluated the English level of students and teachers, and a policy was mainly created to improve the economic development and human capital through the increase of global economic participation which is mostly anglophone. Moreover, British Council (2015) considers that the role of higher education in English is to foster students to learn the language and to reach B1 level when graduating. For this reason, public and private institutions have taken part in the project that Programa de Bilingüismo (BP), in the frame of Política de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Superior to impulse English as a language of competitiveness.

As the authors also mentioned, MEN and English Teaching Programmes, such as *Colombia Very Well* urge improvement on the policies to prioritize education as an opportunity to facilitate students' conditions. Additionally, teaching languages, as any other subjects, requires professors to remember and reinforce the social responsibility that students have as citizens.

The main implication is how a foreign entity such as *British Council* tells Colombia how to teach a language without paying attention to individual, social, or even cultural differences. It means that MEN in alliance with British Council (BC henceforth) and the implementation of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in every educational institution, promotes bilingualism without realizing inequality that Colombian students face.



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As reported by Álvarez and Ayala (2005), Implementing standards in urban or rural, public, or private schools of the country brings up some things to consider. For instance, this proposal does not seem to account for the differences that separate urban and rural as well as public and private education. It is undeniable that these contexts differ in logistics, student population needs and teachers' training (p.9).

So, there are many issues to consider before implementing bilingualism as the highest achievement.

Currently, I am teaching English at a local public state university, where CEFR was considered to design the four levels (level I, level II, level III, and level IV) syllabi of *Programa Lengua Extranjera* (PLE) which is the programme in charge of preparing undergraduate students to achieve level B1, as a requirement for graduation.

Also, this English Programme displays an emphasis on the word *academic* next to other skills, for instance: *academic reading, writing, and speaking*; yet critical reading and thinking, which are equally important, are not mentioned. The following information was taken from ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Washington DC. (Short, 2000, p.12) which is the basis of the standards that are still implemented in the English programme where I work:

**Goal 2: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas.**

Standard 1: Students will use English to interact in the classroom.

Standard 2: Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.

As observed, the main achievement is to teach English to university students to help them successfully perform in academic abilities, but it is not mentioned how important and urgent is reflecting on our social reality. At this point is where academia has the role to open spaces to address local issues and promote discussions with a transformative purpose.

According to Freire (1991): ... "el establecer la vinculación analítica entre lo que se lee y la

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic realidad, es lo que hace posible llevar a cabo un verdadero proceso de conocimiento transformador propio y del mundo” (p.31). As Freire proposed, connecting what we read with our reality is what allows a real transformation knowledge process of oneself and the world.

The importance to bring social realities to university classrooms is what has given life to this project, where critical reading and thinking must be the most outstanding goals inside and outside ESL classrooms. As Freire (2004) explained, critical reading has the obligation to bring social problems to the classroom, reflect on them to help students become conscious of their political responsibility and to awake the need of transformation. Morales (2018) takes Freire’s ideas about critical reading and thinking, summarizing them:

...como un instrumento para el desarrollo de la sensibilidad individual cuyos cometidos intentan llevar al sujeto a la construcción conjunta de mejores formas de vida, en un operar activo fundado en el uso de la autonomía y de la libertad de pensamiento, como medios que le permitan problematizar el mundo y buscar recurrentemente razones y explicaciones desde las que le sea posible según Freire (1991) el “abrir los ojos a la exploración de su propia realidad, de la que muchas veces solo tiene nociones o simplemente ignora como resultado de una cultura acrítica impuesta históricamente” (p. 15).

Additionally, as an ELT teacher, I observed other two relevant problems that called my attention and worth to mention in this research. First, English textbooks that the university provides to students are sold by international editorials, which do not promote significant content for our Colombian students because British and American contexts look decontextualized from our culture, besides promoting native speakerism. The center-based textbook industry has been taking certain tactical measures aimed at maintaining its domination. They are now producing global textbooks with a variety of add-ons to meet the demand for a local fit). Creative strategies and innovative marketing techniques cleverly

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic mask the fact that centrally produced global textbooks continue to preserve and promote native speakerism (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p.75).

These international companies do not know how to approach social, political, and cultural issues that turn reading and other skills in meaningful tasks for students, as a result, students can not feel identified. This situation clearly shows how Colombian institutions are subjected to European entities, attitude that reflects two serious issues: a subjugation of a Latin-American country to eurocentrism, exemplified by colonialism of power and knowledge, defined by Quijano (2014):

Tal como lo conocemos históricamente, el poder es un espacio y una malla de relaciones sociales de explotación / dominación / conflicto articuladas, básicamente, en función y en torno de la disputa por el control de los siguientes ámbitos de existencia social: 1) el trabajo y sus productos; 2) en dependencia del anterior, la “naturaleza” y sus recursos de producción; 3) el sexo, sus productos y la reproducción de la especie; 4) la subjetividad y sus productos materiales e intersubjetivos, *incluido el conocimiento*; 5) la autoridad y sus instrumentos, de coerción en particular, para asegurar la reproducción de ese patrón de relaciones sociales y regular sus cambios (p.6).

The previous explanation illustrates how control executed by foreign institutions is the weapon to regulate not only countries which are imposed to learn English, but also, there is domination on the way professors should teach, how to teach and what to teach. That is what publishing houses offer and Colombian institutions accept. For Kumaravadivelu (2016), the hegemonic forces in ESL field keep themselves “alive and kicking” through various aspects of English language education: curricular plans, materials design, teaching methods, standardized tests, and teacher preparation. But it is primarily through center-based methods and center-produced materials that the marginality of the majority is managed and maintained because students are not in the center of learning, instead, the

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic teacher and their traditional methods are, in this way, these are the engine that propels the hegemonic power structure.

Second, during my teaching experience as a university teacher, I have realized that some undergraduate students read fast to answer questions, and get meaning by context, because testing is part of academic life, but the texts proposed by these publishing houses, do not promote either critical reading activities or cognitive skills.

Recently, due to budget cut, the *Programa Lengua Extranjera* coordination created four booklets respectively for each of the levels in 2019, unfortunately, this material needs to be improved according to the students' needs, especially now that we are in a pandemic and virtual education has been implemented by university.

Consequently, teachers have selected extra material besides the booklets to provide students real and interesting material that fulfill students' needs and promotes learning. For instance, international news has been proposed to boost proficiency level of students, meanwhile other professors prefer *Penguin readers* books or scientific articles from international magazines. These initiatives aroused my curiosity to ask teachers if social problems readings are explored in the EFL classroom to review local problems, and based on these texts, to acknowledge students' perceptions. When asking this question to four professors of the PLE (Programa Lengua Extranjera) programme, the following reflections came to their minds: Teacher A: "I promote spaces to speak about social problems because language is culture and culture is society, so if we do not talk about these topics, students cannot dream of solving issues, for example, I always do an activity called community helpers."

Teacher B: "Not by reading but for discussions or essays. English or American books show realities that are far from our context, so talking about these topics, help us know how students think".

Teacher C: "Long time ago, I have discussed with my students what being a Colombian person is. There are many things that are unfair, so I proposed these topics for

discussions, so we share visions, and compare what other cultures do, that is part of my mission”.

Teacher D: “Students learn how to use the language meaningfully, when they talk about their reality, also, develop creative and critical thinking, and through problem resolution. I discuss problematics when the content allows me to do it”.

On the other hand, when asking four students if they would like to include social problems readings and discussing them in the ELT classroom, they answered:

Student A: “Yes teacher! I think that a way to change or correct the problems of our society is analyzing what is wrong and thinking how to react against this”.

Student B: “I think that it is interesting to talk about those topics because there are many problems in the country, so many that we don’t know. It could be fantastic if we can practice English and know the problems of the country, because it may motivate more people to work or intent to work on these problematics in our careers. Any person shouldn’t be indifferent to the problems that surround us”.

Student C: “I consider that it is important to promote those kinds of moments, because knowing and being able to express our problematics in other language, would help to develop a sense of belonging and security with other language”.

Student D: “I think that we usually don’t know the space, the city, the neighborhood, the country where we live, so many of my partners live in a little bubble and that is a problem. Social problems involve and affect us, we don’t have other visions or other points of view of the reality. We are worried only about our personal problems and forgetting the reality of other people who don’t have the same luck as us. When I watch the news, I say... why, why all these things happen? I consider that there are many things that are bad in our society, we are indifferent, teacher, we don’t care about others pain”.

As can be observed, professors and students’ perceptions let us perceive their interest to problematize Colombian social problems in the classroom with language and

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic social purposes. Besides, all the professors' reflections came from a personal interpretation of what they think works best in each situation. For many teachers, a teaching approach is something uniquely personal which they develop through experience and apply in different ways according to the demands of specific situations (Richards and Lockhart, 2016). For instance, the requested teachers explained that they take on these problematics through speaking activities such as discussions or hypothetical proposals inspired by their careers, using their critical and creative thinking skills, which are important actions in the classroom. However, any of them mentioned the use of local social readings in class to analyze their content, criticize it and be proactive about the real problems which are found in our society.

Besides, one professor pinpointed the lack of sociocultural context of English and American books, which is a decisive thought for this research project. This professor proposes local problems topics to develop speaking and written activities. Third, one professor said that he has promoted these discussions for long; he also highlights what being a Colombian person is, compared to other cultures, so this is another important contribution in terms of analyzing inequality and power relationships. Finally, only one professor mentions that he tackles these topics when the book content permits to do it. In general, these interventions allow to see that speaking strategies are fostered in the EFL classroom to discuss social issues.

Contrarily, students provide a variety of reasons to discuss social issues. To start, three students emphasized on the importance to analyze the problems and take actions, besides this, two of them assured that there is not knowledge about all the real problems in Colombia, so EFL classes need to promote spaces to reflect upon them. Also, one student reaffirms that we do not know the geographic and social space where we live, and indifference is a huge problem in our society.

Finally, one student privileged the opportunity to discuss about social problems to obtain more confidence in the use of a second language. In brief, these interventions reassure the importance of discussing about social problems in two ways, firstly, to know, analyze and

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic take actions from students' stances; and second, to use English language as the tool to problematize these issues.

Because of the evidence elicited through professors and students' reflections, it is possible to observe that there is an interest in tackling social topics to do mainly speaking activities which may permit students to express themselves and reflect upon Colombian problems. However, there is little information about the use of social readings to deepen on these issues, trying to know what, where and when these problems have appeared in our society and how these affect us. Hence, it is relevant to complement the students' dialogue through critical reading implementation, and at the same time, students will be more aware of their role as social actors.

As a result, this project proposes the use of social content readings in the EFL classroom to complement both actions, critical reading and thinking on students, with the aim to make them conscious about their transformative role as students and citizens.

Since Latin-American Critical Theory, Guelman (2018) outlines criticism as:

La crítica es un modo de pensar, es una episteme que va más allá de citar autores considerados críticos; da cuenta no sólo de una actitud y aptitud para pensar de manera compleja, problematizando el presente, buscando comprenderlo más que explicarlo; de poner bajo sospecha los fenómenos que se evidencian pero que también hacemos emerger de la realidad, si sabemos escucharla y observarla, abriéndonos a la complejidad de sus múltiples relaciones políticas, económicas, culturales, medio ambientales, etc. y de los sujetos y subjetividades que se mueven en esa realidad en sus especificidades históricas. Es por lo expuesto que, además, la crítica asume que la historia está atravesada por la dimensión política lo cual nos lleva a comprender a cabalidad la profundidad de lo que implica construir conocimiento como conciencia histórica (p. 12).

Based on the meaning of criticism from our Latin-American reality, it is convenient to mention the following hypothesis: the more students reflect on social local issues, the more

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### **Research Question**

- What discourses emerge from students when interacting with social problems readings: news in English language?

### **General objective**

- To analyze how students perceive local social problems readings when interacting with them in an EFL classroom.

### **Specific objectives**

- To develop a pedagogical intervention in the ESL classroom to connect critical reading and thinking skills with the aim to analyze local problems readings.
- To describe how local social news enable critical thinking stances in the Colombian context.

### **Rationale**

The importance of this study relies on using social problems texts in the ESL classroom in order to strengthen the bond between critical reading and thinking for two main reasons. First, at educational institutions, there is a strong tendency to teach a second language under the regulations of CEFR, which main objective is to categorize the language proficiency in levels from A1 to C1, and with the aim to pass an international exam that qualifies the student's knowledge of the language. To help students, pass the test, professors focus their attention on the academic activities that are offered by the textbooks, minimizing the importance of analyzing local social issues in the classroom.

Second, students and professors from the English Programme are aware of the problems we have in our country. Due to it, EFL professors planned a variety of speaking activities where some students speak out about their thoughts and reflections related to



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic Colombian or their own communities' problems. However, the actions carried out in the EFL classroom can be more meaningful if they are complemented with local readings because, according to Freire (1987), this activity allows human beings transformation due to the fact that critical reading is seen as an empowerment tool which enables human beings to judge reality and take an active role in the society through exercising concrete actions which look for improving the social field Morales (2017).

Following this line of thought, the aim is to take advantage of all students' knowledge to analyze the social context through the interaction with social problems readings to know what is between and behind lines, find causes and reaffirm ideas through critical thinking.

The target group of this public university are undergraduate university students who belong to different undergraduate programs and who have decided to enroll a level 2 mandatory English course to pass this level and graduate. Furthermore, as these students possess different types of knowledge and some of them are involved in community projects, they have been able to identify social problems in our country that are occasionally tackled in the EFL classes through speaking activities. To gain more profound understanding of these social realities, it is proposed to read articles related to these topics to reaffirm their critical stances.

This research is a contribution to critical reading and thinking skills at university, because few studies have been identified about students' critical discourse analysis in primary and high school, but not in higher education in Colombia. Second, this study is based on the principles of the Latin American critical theory and Critical Discourse Analysis that allow to address the local problems from our own perspective, rethinking and relocating our practices in our Colombian context, to create knowledge based on social and close realities. As academic Clavijo (2009) claimed: "becoming more independent intellectually as a nation from the imposed dominant ideologies and being able to value and support local knowledge and production is a priority in our country".

All in all, this research project is a contribution in the critical discourse analysis field because public university students' discourses related to Colombian social local news are examined under scrutiny of Chouliaraki and Fairclough's transdisciplinary model, where social problems are studied through language and from a variety of knowledge fields, provoking a deeper comprehension of the issues and the role of students in this social context.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents the key theoretical foundations of this research study. To begin, the meaning of criticism is explained from authors such as Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx. Second, the concept of critical theory is discussed, based on the School of Frankfurt legacy and how it was taken by Latin American critical thinkers. After, following this line of thought, the meaning of critical reading and thinking are explained, and how these concepts are intertwined. Finally, it is described how through the methodology of critical discourse analysis approach (CDA), social local texts' discourses can be interpreted, described, and explained to understand and become conscious of social inequalities.

#### **What is criticism?**

According to Kant (1781) criticism from the modernity scope, is the capability to reason with respect to all knowledge which reason aspires independently of experience, in other words, he understands by Criticism of Pure Reason, the decision about the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics as it is, and the determination of its sources and its limits, starting from the beginning. Metaphysics is understood as the science containing the first grounds or the principal truths of all human knowledge. This can be called the nominal definition of metaphysics as put forth by Meier and the school he belonged to (Rotenstreich, 1954). Also, it can be considered as a science dealing with God, world, and the human soul, or with things in general".

As can be seen, Kant considers finding and stablishing the limits of reason, or even better, the capabilities and inabilities of human cognitive apparatus. He was interested in recognizing the limits of knowledge and how far it could go; therefore, he answers these questions by means of “reason”; if subjects use it well, it will be possible to know its limits. “La crítica resuelve la posibilidad o imposibilidad de una metafísica en general y determina, no sólo las fuentes, sino también la existencia y límites de la misma, todo ello, empero, por principios”.

Additionally, “criticism” permits to evaluate the proposed claims by other philosophical methods, tradition, or authority, and it allows to distinguish between valid and non-valid different types of knowledge. “La crítica, como método, alumbró la plataforma racional desde la que podemos juzgar acerca de la validez o invalidez de los principios, y que nos permitirá construir el sistema de todo saber posible (Cortina, 1982)”. Following this line of thought, Kant proposes criticism as a method which is based on “*reason*”, so he defines it as:

...la razón es la facultad de lo intersubjetivo: si el saber y el obrar humanos contienen principios, intereses y fines universales, es que hay una facultad extensible a todos los hombres, de la que proceden esos principios, que se mueve por esos intereses y que propone los citados fines. A esa facultad denominamos razón» y es la condición de posibilidad de la comunión en una humanidad”.

This concept of reason was taken again in 1784 when Kant wrote his essay: *What is enlightenment?* Where he defined it as the overcoming to *age of majority*, referring not to maturity but the capability to have the courage to use humans being reason and understanding itself without others guidance. Kant summarized the idea of his essay in three words: *Sapere aude!* or “Dare to know”, which means mainly to use subjects' own reason by means of independent and critical attitude in all spheres of life through freedom, because it allows people to make public use of their reason. Kant (1783) claimed that “... el uso público

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de la razón debe ser siempre libre y éste solo puede lograr realizar la ilustración entre los hombres”.

To conclude, Kant revolved the traditional conception of metaphysics (*naturalis metaphysica*) to a new one based on humanity and pure reason that reflect on the conditions of its own possibility (Madore, 2015), but also, in the Enlightened age, it was conceived as the power to think by itself.

### **What is criticism from Marx's stance?**

Criticism continued changing after Kant conceived it as the power men have, to use their own reason without any subject's guidance. For instance, Karl Marx (1844) criticized Hegel and Kant traditional philosophy, proposing a revolutionary practice which was focused on how the productive forces developed by bourgeoisie in the capitalist society affected the working class; and second, the man was analyzed as a creation of his social and historical circumstances; his socio-economic conditions are the true agents to get a historical transformation, and reach freedom. (Lander, 1984)

Mientras que en el marxismo científico predomina el análisis estructural, determinista, el hombre como producto de sus condiciones histórico-sociales, análisis en el cual las estructuras socioeconómicas son los verdaderos agentes del cambio histórico.

Based on Lander (1984) analysis, critical Marxism lied in the conscious and voluntary action of men to change the course of their history, because for Marx, circumstances make men, just as men make circumstances, that is why he proposed to change those circumstances and modify human activity; but how could it be possible, if men were considered controlled products by the capitalist world? To bring about that reframing change, Marx stated that man's social, cultural, and subjective actions were the foundations of knowledge that led to power of revolution. How could those actions become transformative? Through the exercise of praxis which is defined by Sánchez (1977) as a “

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a project to transform reality based on a radical critique of what exists, based on a reality that is intended to be transformed." From a Marxist conception, praxis is the highest human activity which allows men to analyze reality through a genuine exercise of critical thinking, on the basis from which a man produces his historical reality and is produced by himself. In this sense, the idea of praxis has an essential anthropological dimension. Praxis is precisely what defines a man such a man, for Marx, he is a being of praxis. (González, 1991). In this way, "praxis" is a conscious and a practical human activity to examine, criticize and transform the social reality radically.

Esta es una actividad "crítico-práctica" en la cual se opera la "coincidencia del cambio de las circunstancias con el de la actividad humana o cambio de los hombres mismos". Es por esto por lo que, con razón, Kosik puede decir que "La praxis es la esfera del ser humano". (González, 1991).

Following this line of thought, the concept of praxis proposed by Marx was developed bearing in mind three significant objectives: first, to know the structural logic of the capitalist mode of production. Two, criticize the dehumanizing effects of it, and third, propose from its knowledge and criticism, a radical project which can be overcome from its own roots (Gonzalez, 1991). To achieve these aims, Kant did not only introduce a critical theory model which was in charge of analyzing and studying the class struggle due to social inequality between bourgeoisie and proletariat, besides, he proposed revolution as a transformative weapon to abolish inequality caused by capitalist and economic system.

Capitalism as the mechanism of bourgeoisie class looked for its own wealth and self-satisfaction through maximum exploitation of working class, controlling them and getting their *surplus value*, where the laborer overworked and was underpaid. Surplus or added value is equal to the new value created by workers in excess of their own labor-cost, which is appropriated by the capitalist as profit when products are sold (Engels & Marx, 1970).

Rubel (1970) explained that:

...el obrero sabe que proporciona al capitalista un excedente de trabajo, un producto por el que no recibe nada a cambio, pero ignora el grado exacto en que es explotado; en otros términos, desconoce la relación entre el trabajo necesario y el excedente, puesto que uno y otro son realizados en la misma jornada de trabajo. Su resistencia a la prolongación de la jornada de trabajo es la expresión de esta certidumbre. El capitalista, cuya sed de ganancia jamás llega a saciarse, evoca las leyes del intercambio de mercancías al intentar obtener el máximo de beneficio representado por la mercancía-trabajo.

Consequently, Marx saw work as a precluding activity to exercise praxis completely, because the man, as a human being, by transforming natural and social reality, transforms himself, assimilating and incorporating into his own reality the potentialities of external reality. (González, 1991). As can be observed, these disastrous consequences of capitalist and economic system urged a transformative project to claim sociality of humanity, the development of the human being, the conscious and political participation of working class in the construction of a new society where class strata should be abolished to finally achieve the universal development of human beings.

To finish, it is important to highlight that Marx political and economic writings have executed a huge influence on different revolutionary movements around the world since his ideas have been used to claim freedom and political participation from oppressed groups. Also, he prioritized the importance of liberating praxis as a necessary action for every human being to analyze reality and find the way to change its historical background. Finally, this criticism made visible the power of capitalist system and its social, political, and economic consequences that are still affecting humanity.

### **The Frankfurt school of critical theory**

The Institute of Social Research or the Frankfurt School (1923) was a social, political, and philosophical movement of thought which originated the concept of Critical Theory,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic taking as its basis the development of Marxist and psychoanalysis studies to focus them on social analysis. For Horkheimer, it was necessary to link the science research problems to the social context, in this way, this connection allows to analyze it from the social totality, as a result, it permits to find true objectivity of phenomena. (Horkheimer) Additionally, Horkheimer, Adorno and Benjamin wanted to promote a myriad of research studies related to criticism of society, new forms of alienation, search for emancipation and suppression of social injustice." (Horkheimer, 2008:270). (Galafassi, 2002).

Besides, Critical Theory appraises how instrumental rationality used by positivism and modernity looked for learning about nature, and later dominate it completely, and, as a result, it developed effective instruments to subjugate nature, but at the same time, the man subjugates himself. Therefore, man-nature conflict affected both external and inner relationships to the point that man loses his rationality and autonomy, becoming in an alienated being. "Es así, como Adorno y Horkheimer señalan que el afán del hombre por dominar a la naturaleza y poner a la razón al servicio de esta empresa, conlleva al desarrollo de una racionalidad calculadora, de medio-fin, lo cual dio paso a la reificación primero del hombre y luego de la sociedad (Vega 2019).

In order to analyze instrumental rationality, Horkheimer, in his essay *Traditional Theory and Critical Theory*, highlighted the first concept of criticism which was very closed to Marxian ideology in terms of identifying the man- society relation and its separation, without ignoring the hidden structures of society. Additionally, Horkheimer proposed using reason by rescuing Aristotle and Socratic philosophy which posited to stimulate nature comprehension in and for itself, to achieve absolute truth which allows human beings to understand true nature of things (Galaffassi, 2002).

Years later, under the sociopolitical context of the World War II, totalitarian regimes in different regions of Europe, and the influence of the mass culture, Horkheimer and Adorno reflected on how the actions of a bureaucratic and modern rationality, under equality, unity

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic and immanent ideology, led to a devastated reality without freedom of thought (Rojas-Crotte, 2001).

La misma forma deductiva de la ciencia refleja jerarquía y coacción. Lo mismo que las primeras categorías representaban la tribu organizada y su poder sobre el individuo singular, así el entero orden lógico —dependencia, conexión, extensión y combinación de conceptos— está fundado en las correspondientes relaciones de la realidad social. Rojas-Crotte, citing (Horkheimer y Adorno, 1998: 75).

With such war scenario, Horkheimer and Adorno in their book *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Dialectic of Enlightenment), seeks to respond why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, sinks into a new species of barbarism. To answer this question, the authors develop the concept of enlightenment, considering it as a vicious circle where there is not any possibility of transformation: "Myth is already Enlightenment "and" Enlightenment becomes myth again ". Horkheimer and Adorno (cited in Rojas, 1999) explains:

La Ilustración... ha perseguido desde siempre el objetivo de liberar a los hombres del miedo y constituirlos en señores... Pretendía disolver los mitos y derrocar la imaginación mediante la ciencia... el intelecto que vence a la superstición debe dominar sobre la naturaleza desencantada. El saber, que es poder, no conoce límites, ni en la esclavización de las criaturas ni en la condescendencia para con los señores del mundo (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1998: 61-62)".

As it can be observed, Enlightenment only lied beneath the foundations of scientific knowledge established by Descartes and Bacon, because the unique valid knowledge was constructed on the rational experience of the subject; who was the center of the universe and who had the power to dominate nature, undermining previous, or extra scientific knowledge: "Las diversas figuras míticas pueden reducirse todas, según la Ilustración, al mismo denominador: el sujeto" (Horkheimer y Adorno, 1998). In this way, scientific knowledge was immovably carried out through principles, laws, and steps that modernity validated, this is the main reason, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, why enlightenment



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic mythologizes itself insofar it becomes an immutable law of infinite repetition and destroys myths becoming one more myth.

Contributions made by Horkheimer, and Adorno allow to see the transformation of critical theory approach, where freedom, creativity and thought were vanished due to imposition of Modernity rationality in every single space until controlling human beings completely. To illustrate this idea, the authors observed mass and culture production institutions as oppression systems that standardize and impose idealized behaviors considering them as the correct ones. Consequently, the man is seen as an object that can be manipulated. "El individuo queda ya determinado sólo como cosa, como elemento estadístico, como éxito o fracaso. Su norma es la auto conservación, la acomodación lograda o no a la objetividad de su función y a los modelos que le son fijados" (cited in Rojas-Crotte (2012) Horkheimer and Adorno, 1998: 82). Undoubtedly, the man needed to be free from the chains imposed by modern rationality, condemned in Dialectic of Enlightenment.

As has been pointed out, Horkheimer and Adorno postulated a critical vision of social phenomena where human beings can develop a deep critical consciousness of historic and political memory to analyze the man, the dominant system, and, at the same time, unveil the control mechanisms which support the foundations of instrumental rationality. In this way, each man can achieve its liberation and societies can fight for its emancipation, democracy, and self-determination.

## **Latin American Critical Thought**

### **Historical roots**

The discovery, conquest and colonization of America, Africa and Asia by the European Empire changed the history of those ancestral societies due to the fact that European conquerors imposed catholic religion by means of violence that led indigenous and black people to slavery inside a land that once belonged to them, and then it was taken

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic over by foreigners who brought death and destruction. That oppression system which caused thousands of millions of deaths, prohibitions of cultural groups practices and over-exploitation of natural resources searched for destroying the cultural wealth of “Others” replicating the European tradition in the “New world latter known as America”, and homogenizing them as believers of Catholic faith.

Philosopher Dussel (1994) explained how Matthias Ringmann and Martin Waldseemüller in the article *Cosmographiae Introductio* (1507), described the word *discovery* when one quarter of the land was found and named as “America” in honor of its explorer: Amerigo Vespucci who claimed when saw the new land: “it will take years to start rebuilding an entire millennial Weltanschauung (Cosmovision), ... in addition, inhabited by very human primitive and naked”. That preposition explained how ‘other primitive’ was not accepted because he was different, instead, the explorer recognized the divine power of “ego cogito- “I think, therefore I am” that was described by Dussel (1981) as God on earth who has dominion over the whole world.

Years later, when the conquerors arrived in the new world, indigenous and black people (the other) were pacified through violent dominance that can be defined as slaughter and land occupation. ‘The conqueror’ is the first modern man who imposed his violent individuality to “the Other” who was denied, oppressed, and entrusted to fulfill the Spaniards desires. (Dussel, 1994). At that point, it was not possible to describe that discovery as an encounter of two worlds, instead, it was the disappearance of ‘the Other’ who was tricked into believing that Hernan Cortes and his army were gods, who defeated Aztecs empire treacherously, using dishonest strategies which were only used in Europe to conquer and reign. The conquest is the practical assertion of ‘I conquer’ and negation of “Other” as the other or different human being (Dussel).

According to Dussel (as cited in O’Gorman) “dicha experiencia no es un “descubrimiento” de lo nuevo, sino, simplemente, el reconocimiento de una materia o potencia donde el europeo comienza a “inventar” su propia “imagen y semejanza”. América

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no es descubierta como algo que resiste distinta, como el Otro, sino como la materia a donde se le proyecta "lo Mismo". No es entonces la "aparición del Otro", sino la "proyección de lo Mismo" (35). This author explained how Europe considers other people and cultures as covered objects which have been dis-covered as *others* but later constituted as *the same*.

The discovery of a new continent privileged Europe to be in the middle of the world transforming it as "modern Europe- continent". For Dussel (1994) modernity of Europe localized other cultures as peripheries where "the other" was denied and forced to follow the programme of modernization. The first component of modernization after defeating ancestral civilizations, was given by indigenous and black people colonization on culture, education, politics, economics, sexual practices, and imposition of institutions, following the European model. It was the beginning of domestication, structuration, and colonization, that Dussel (1994) illustrated as follow:

Sobre el efecto de aquella "colonización" del mundo de la vida se construirá la América Latina posterior: una raza mestiza, una cultura sincrética, híbrida, un Estado colonial, una economía capitalista (primero mercantilista y después industrial) dependiente y periférica desde su inicio, desde el origen de la Modernidad (su "Otra-cara": te-ixtli). El mundo de la vida cotidiana (Lebenswelt) conquistadora-europea "colonizará" el mundo de la vida del indio, de la india, de América.

Exploitation of indigenous men and black population slavery were relevant characteristics of modernization practices, since they were obliged and controlled to get gold and silver through force labor. Those natural resources were smuggled and negotiated by the Spaniards to different European countries increasing the amount of wealth over there, while impoverishing the land which used to become part of their ancestors. It was the first form of trading capitalism in America that became the new god in modern times. Capitalism as a system of relations of production, that is, as the heterogeneous linking of all forms of control on labor and its products under the dominance of capital, was constituted in history only with the emergence of America. That was the genesis of control of work which has

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic evolved with singular structure of relations of production in the historical experience of the world: *world capitalism*.

Never has capitalism been predominant in some other way, on a global and worldwide scale, and in all probability, it would not have been able to develop otherwise (Quijano, Nepantla 551). Besides, economy as a sacrifice, as a cult, money (gold and silver) as a fetish, as a third religion (not heavenly), weekly (not sabbatical, as Marx indicated in *The Jewish Question*) began its course 500 years ago. (Dussel, 1994/ conference 3).

As can be observed, since capitalism arrival, an unequal relationship between European and not-European countries (Africa, Asia, America) has been carried out for more than five centuries, making more visible race hierarchy and white culture violent enforcement on “the Other”. It was the beginning of coloniality of power from European men on the peripheries who erased nonwhite different cultures and traditions, instead, their aim was to homogenize them as inferior races. The conquered and dominated peoples were situated in a natural position of inferiority and, as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society’s structure of power (Quijano, 535).

Following with this line of thought, European colonialization in America brought two facts that have been inseparable until now in times of global capitalism. On the one hand, force and free labor of black and indigenous people who were subjugated beings to slavery, serfdom, and petty commodities. On the other hand, race and social hierarchies placed the European on the summit of the pyramid dominating and acquiring wealth, while the non-white men (indigenous and black) were located on the bottom as the poorest and inferior race. A new technology of domination/exploitation, in this case race/labor, was articulated in such a way that the two elements appeared naturally associated. Until now, this strategy has been exceptionally successful (Quijano,2000).

### **Searching for independence**

For three centuries, continuous abuses on land and population were carried by the European viceroys in Latin America. Consequently, indigenous, *mestizos*, and black people looked for a social reform where they were free and had social rights, because they were still working under miserable conditions in farms and lands of high class *criollos*, who desired more political participation and administrative jobs in the viceroalties. Keeping in mind the sociopolitical factors which occurred inside the colonies, the Spanish regulations that aimed to financially maintain wars with Latin American resources, and recent news related to French, and the United States rebellions inspired an urgent independence in Latin America.

French revolution aphorism: “liberty, equality and fraternity” had a great influence in awakening the dream of independence in *criollos* elite, reaching the dream to have the power to rule their own government, instead of being ruled by a foreigner monarch. Besides, Spain was invaded by French army, generating a feeling of rejection against another form of European regime. At that moment, two important revolutionary movements occurred, one promoted by high class *criollos* that looked for power access and which took place in the cities. The second, led by Mexican priests and supported by indigenous, *mestizos*, peasants, and low-class population in 1810. However, that was an unsuccessful attempt because *criollos* and the Spanish defeated it.

Between 1810 and 1831, independence in Latin and Central America took different paths. For instance, in Argentina, Spaniard authorities were deposed, and the power was taken by the small bourgeoisie that established a city council and then a patriotic board to rule the vicerealty. Nevertheless, Paraguay, Uruguay, and later Chile became independent nations of one another. In Central America, the rural revolutionary movement started by priests and supported by *mestizos* and indigenous, was suppressed by *criollos* and Hispanic army who were against of their uprising and social demands. With the *Plan of Iguala* and Cordoba Treaty, Mexico was declared independent. The other countries created

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the “united provinces of Central America” which disagreed with the union of Mexico, generating the independence of each nation.

In Peru, Nueva Granada and Venezuela, the Spanish government was deposed as well, and an open council was created to analyze the future of Nueva Granada viceroyalty, where many types of governments coming from Quito, Venezuela, Panamá y Cartagena had the unique interest to control the territory, as they did not reach any agreement, they decided to become independent. Although, seeing how the Spanish monarchy had returned to Nueva Granada as if nothing had happened in 1819, the Liberators Simon Bolivar, Antonio Jose de Sucre and their armies fought against the Spanish resistance in the battle of Ayacucho on December 9, 1824, making Peru and Nueva Granada free. Later, Simon Bolivar made his dream true of creating *República de Colombia* formed by Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Yet, social, and political interests were so different, that these three countries separated, starting with Venezuela, then Ecuador and finally Colombia decided to become independent one of another.

Latin America was free, but Spain still had control on some Caribbean Islands such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Philippines. The most important one was Cuba because Spain imposed its monopoly there, besides that, the United States obtained more than the 80% of Cuba production and wanted a reduction on customs tariffs. Under that exploitation background, Jose Marti, Maximo Gómez, and Antonio Maceo invigorated the independence revolution in 1895, however, this uprising promoted a war between Spain and the United States which lasted until 1898 when the sinking of the American warship Maine took place, and the Spanish army was blamed for it. Additionally, the Spaniards were defeated in Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, obliging them to surrender and asked for peace. On December 10, 1898, the United States and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris that recognized Cuba as an independent island.

Latin American independence brought different social, political, and economic consequences that changed society significantly. Talking about the social area, citizens

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were free and racial differences were abolished, but the new model of society was based on social class and wealth. Also, slavery disappeared slowly since 1803 until the second half of the eighteenth century thanks to the abolitionist laws established in each country. On the other hand, indigenous became citizens but their right to land was reduced because they were displaced by rich landowners who expelled them to their fate. Zea underpinned:

El proyecto civilizador se va a caracterizar así por su preocupación por el logro de las siguientes metas: cambio de sangre, cambio de mente y también, cambio de dependencia [...] Una raza sustituirá a otra; el hombre, hasta ayer educado en abstracciones, será instruido en el uso de técnicas de lo que no depende la patria, será entregada a quienes hagan posible esa patria sabiendo cómo explotarla. Otra sangre, otros maestros y otros señores sustituirán la sangre, los maestros y los señores heredados de la Colonia. Sangre de población sobrante de la civilizada Europa; maestros del utilitarismo y el positivismo en que se formaron los hombres de esa misma Europa y los Estados Unidos sustituirán al ya anacrónico maestro formado en la Colonia; industriosos creadores de la gran burguesía occidental sustituirán a los ya anacrónicos hidalgos y aristócratas que dejó la conquista y la colonización” (as cited in Castro, 2011).

The most significant political consequence is the emergence of nation states with independent political systems that started with liberalism but ended with authoritarianism, due to the civil wars which were aroused by *criollos* and military power. Castro (2011) explained that:

Personajes de acción como Bolívar, Miranda y Rodríguez formularon la utopía de la nación americana, la Gran Colombia que reuniría a todos los pueblos de origen hispánico en una comunidad de hombres libres (1978: 188ss). Pero una vez lograda la independencia, se hicieron evidentes las limitaciones inherentes a este “primer momento dialéctico de la conciencia americana”. Los ilustrados criollos pensaron ingenuamente que bastaría con imitar las constituciones vigentes en Europa y los

Estados Unidos para que las naciones hispanoamericanas alcanzaran milagrosamente la libertad. Pero esa libertad que prometían las arengas revolucionarias no parecía corresponder a la realidad de las jóvenes repúblicas, sumidas ahora en sangrientas y dolorosas guerras civiles. El optimismo que precedió al movimiento de independencia se tornó muy pronto en hondo pesimismo. A mediados del siglo XIX, llegó la hora de que el pensamiento latinoamericano avanzara hacia un segundo momento de autoconciencia (104).

### **Philosophy of Liberation**

The economic, social and political scenario in Latin America in the 60's was very complex since different regional revolutions such as Mexican Tlatelolco, French May and, Argentinian Cordobazo took place to manifest inconformity against peripheral exploitation, dependent capitalism and North American imperialism. Under this context, philosophy of Liberation emerged from a group of Latin American philosophers who denounced European Modernity and, it appears in parallel to the modernity birth- as an internal criticism from the periphery and with the pretense of being its overcoming (Dussel, 2006). Besides, philosophy of Liberation intended to recover the Amerindian Philosophy (*tlamatinime mexicanos'* or *amautas incas*), as an authentic critical origin of a process of constitution of the Latin American philosophical-cultural identity.

Searching for overcoming, philosophy of liberation recognizes its subalternity condition which must recognize its own historical experience or historicism which is focused on recognizing the man as a valuable actor or as a *historical community subject* (we) who becomes aware of his own history to not repeat the same mistakes which were made in the past. On the contrary, the man who proposes philosophy of liberation takes a critical and transformative position of his condition (Roig as cited in Castro, 1991).

No repetir errores significa superar el "bovarismo" o espíritu de imitación que llevó a nuestros antepasados a romper tajantemente con el pasado para querer ser como



otras naciones. No se trata, pues, de seguir buscando soluciones a nuestros problemas en modelos extraños sino en nuestra propia tradición cultural, puesto que en la historia latinoamericana hubo imitación, pero también recreación de lo imitado. (Zea as cited in Castro, 1991).

The imitation of the European model withheld the origin, culture, and history of the Latin American or other peripheral man, in this way, philosophy of liberation proposes to recover historical roots, recognize the dominant and dominated structures, and achieve human conditions that every Latin American person deserves.

Additionally, the socio-economic reality of peripheral countries such as Latin America, Africa and Asia was the outbreak to introduce philosophy of liberation due to the hardship, poverty, inequality, and hunger which suffered the majority of population owing to the USA capitalism, as an oppressive system, that was built to get wealthier while the peripheries get poorer. The new capitalism divided the world in two parts: on the one hand, the great economic powers located in the north; and on the other hand, the poorest countries or peripheries invaded by multinationals which are subjugated to produce commodities, industries, and services, where oppressed men sell their workforce cheaply but the product itself becomes more expensive and multinationals gain higher profits.

Ahora son propietarias de las empresas claves, directa o indirectamente, que producen las materias primas, las industrias y los servicios de la periferia. Además, dicho imperialismo controla políticamente a sus neocolonias, a sus ejércitos. Pero lo que nunca había acontecido, posee el imperio una política de producción de los deseos, de las necesidades. Esto le lleva, por la publicidad en los medios de comunicación masiva, a dominar a los pueblos periféricos, a sus propias oligarquías nacionales. Se trata también de un imperialismo ideológico (Dussel, 2001).

For Dussel, capitalism is the economic system of modernity which is destroying the possibilities to maintain and reproduce life on our planet. If modernity continues, it will end life on planet earth. In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, philosophy of liberation

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic appears as an emancipatory form in the peripheries where *'the others or the damned of earth'* as Fanon called the marginalized, reached their liberation through the exercise of their own praxis.

La liberación que propone esta filosofía con su discurso, pretende ser un modo concreto de sumarse a la praxis libertadora social y nacional. El punto de partida que da fuerza y contenido a este impulso es el de la conciencia oprimida en un mundo periférico que puede por, eso mismo, como alteridad arrojada fuera de la historia universal, proponer categorías integradoras realmente ecuménicas" (Dussel, 2006).

According to Dussel, liberation is the act of the oppressed and repressed to reach freedom and achieve self-realization, through self-affirmation of being denied by the system: the oppressed who is hidden because he is "different", and as a consequence, he does not have a place in the world, but understanding his denial as a human being and becoming conscious of the effects of Eurocentric colonization in his history, he will recover his place and freedom in a whole world that is formed by "others". In this way, the philosophy proposed by Dussel is a Latin American criticism project which takes the place of each victim who is dominated by the power systems, clarifying that there are thousands of victims who have different positions in the exploitation system due to their allegiance to peripheral cultures that make them more vulnerable.

Bearing in mind the Latin American reality as the basis of philosophy of Liberation, the author chose the following essential categories: proximity, totality, mediations, exteriority, alienation, and liberation, as the most relevant ones to analyze the reality of "praxis of liberation" of the oppressed.

According to Dussel, proximity emphasizes on approaching fraternity, bridge the gap with someone who can wait or reject us, help us, or hurt us, kiss or kill us. It refers to understand the genesis of historic political discourse to know its archeology and understand the reality of the Other, taking his place through the exercise of praxis. "Es un obrar hacia el

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otro como otro; es una acción o actualidad que se dirige a la proximidad. La praxis es esto y nada más: un aproximarse a la proximidad". (Dussel, 1996)

The second category that the author discusses is totality defined as the capitalistic world, since it is based on reaching more surplus value and more profit. "cuando nos referimos a totalidad sin otra indicación, hablamos de mundo. Todo mundo es una totalidad". En nuestra sociedad, la totalidad del ser se funda en el valor, en el capital. Desde el fundamento del capital se despliega el "mundo" como totalidad concreta, histórica" (Dussel, 1996). Philosophy of liberation criticizes totality completely, since it denies the being of the Other, for that reason, the critical process that Dusselian philosophy proposes, comes from the Other who is oppressed and totalized by the system.

Other argument to criticize totality is how the location of powerful and wealthy systems are in its center (ego-cogito), while peripheries which are far from it, are completely unprotected. The location where the Other is born, marks his past, predetermines his present and his future. However, each entity that makes part of the world is formed by his identity and it makes him different and dependent of the capitalistic system. "Ser, identidad y fundamento son el desde-donde surge el ente, la diferencia y la dependencia. Depende el ente porque se funda en el ser del sistema. En nuestra sociedad, el fundamento de la identidad es la valorización del valor del capital" (Dussel, 1996). Philosophy of Liberation reaffirms the Other who does not have a place in the totalized world but who belonged to alienated realities: the poor, the "inferior woman", the alienated Oedipus, peripheral nations victims of capitalism, etc. (Dussel, 2006).

The third category is mediations which are actions to reach the final objective of a project. For Dussel, the role that a man does in nature to create a product and the value it acquires, is considered as a mediation (*poiesis*). "El valer es el hecho mismo por el que la posibilidad posibilita, la mediación media, el proyecto se implementa. La posibilidad en tanto que posibilidad es el valor del fenómeno o el ente" (Dussel, 1996). Besides, the author

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic describes mediation as a possibility to find freedom, based on the objective the man wants to achieve.

...el hombre está como asediado por decisiones por tomar, caminos que se abren y se cierran, ...esta capacidad o señorío sobre las mediaciones, desde los clásicos, se denomina la libertad. En efecto, el hombre se realiza por determinaciones electivas. La elección de esa posibilidad hace imposible todas las demás. Por determinación tras determinación el hombre va construyendo su propia biografía, su historia. La libertad es posible porque ninguna mediación cumple del todo el proyecto humano. Indiferente o expectante ante las posibilidades que se le presentan al fin elige una, no la total ni acabada; sino la posible, concreta, prudente...

However, Dussel (1996) reaffirms that in our society, the laborer is "free" in a complete opposite way as freedom is defined, because the "free laborer is the man in grinding poverty", it means without land, means of production or livelihood, he can only sell his skin. Therefore, the laborer as the Other, is hidden from the capitalist system, so he does not have any possibilities to choose or become free, he can only sell his workforce.

The fourth and the most important category is called exteriority or inner transcendentalism. It refers to the place where the worker as a "free- poor man", who does not belong to the system, is discovered. "El trabajador "libre" es la exterioridad con respecto al capital (al capitalista), cuando todavía no ha vendido su capacidad de trabajo. Pero es igualmente exterioridad, "plena nada", el pobre (pauper decía Marx) desocupado por el capital y expulsado del "mundo" (Dussel, 1996).

The Other, who is outside the capitalist totality, possesses sacred rights because his human dignity stands above any system, and as a free human being, he deserves respect. In this category, Dussel (1996) pins down freedom not only as the right to choose, but as the unconditionality of the Other regards to the world where each human being lives, it means that exteriority allows human beings to be free.

Additionally, philosophy of Liberation poses metaphysics as an alternative which permits to think the world from the exteriority where the Other is. It transforms or subverts the reality and allows to think the worker as a truly free man. Dussel (1996) outlines: “Es saber pensar el mismo ser desde la exterioridad que lo juzga; cómo juzga hoy la periferia mundial al centro dominador y poseedor de la filosofía de la dominación. Hay que saber descubrir en la Exterioridad trascendental del oprimido la "presencia" vigente de la utopía como realidad actual de lo imposible, sin el auxilio del Otro, imposible para el sistema de dominación” (Dussel, 1996, 2006).

The fifth category that Dussel (1996) poses is alienation which is seen as the consequence of totalizing the exteriority or denying the unidirectionality of the Other for being distinct from the ones who belong to the system. For this author, alienation means denying, totalizing, and systematizing the otherness. “La alienación de un pueblo o individuo singular es hacerle perder su ser al incorporarlo como momento, aspecto o instrumento del ser de otro. La periferia geopolítica mundial, la mujer y el hijo son propiedad del centro, del varón y el adulto. Se aliena el ser del otro al descolocarlo de su propio centro; al hacerlo girar en torno del centro de la totalidad ajena” (Dussel, 1996).

Moreover, the author arguments that totality considers the Other as an enemy because puts at risk the authoritarian system which has been imposed to flatten society:

El proyecto del sistema imperante se impone a todos, unívocamente... Quien resiste se lo secuestra, encarcela, tortura, expulsa, mata... La conquista de América Latina, la esclavitud del África y su colonización al igual que la del Asia, es la expansión dialéctica dominadora de "lo mismo", que asesina "al otro" y lo totaliza en "lo mismo" (Dussel, 1996).

What's more, when the work produced by the Other is taken as a property by the dominant system and is normalized through history, until it becomes institutional, alienation becomes real. To illustrate this phenomenon, Dussel (1996) notes: “La propiedad, como el derecho de posesión de lo producido por otro, es la contrapartida en el dominador de la

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alienación del dominado. En la sociedad de consumo es propiedad de capital; en la sociedad burocrática es posesión de funciones que controlan el poder”. In words of the author, exercise of dominant power and alienation are the most remarkable aspects of totalized totality.

The last category that Dussel (1996) developed is liberation which criticizes the normalized system radically and, on the contrary, it reaffirms the Other in his exteriority, with view to a new and fair social order where the oppressed can be free. Besides, liberation (*anarjía*) is focused on respect and responsibility towards the Other who is far away from the capitalist system. It is important to mention that Dussel (1996) defines the word “anárjica” as something beyond the beginning. Also, this author outlined the Hebrew word *hadobad* or work; and as the Greek word *diakonia* or service that refer to become responsible of liberating the Other. Dussel (1996) summarizes it as:

Es un trabajo (*poíesis* práctica y *praxis* poiética) que se efectúa por el otro en la responsabilidad; por su liberación. Es la actividad innovadora del uso de los instrumentos que se ponen al servicio del pobre. La *praxis* de liberación es la procreación misma del nuevo orden, de su estructura inédita, al mismo tiempo que de las funciones y entes que lo componen. Es la tarea realizativa por excelencia, creadora, inventora, innovadora.

How is liberation’s ethos grasped? Dussel underpins that it is achieved when the normality imposed by the system is broken and, on the contrary, the liberator intends to innovate or create something new to serve the Other who is oppressed and belongs to the exteriority. According to Dussel (1996), the ethos is based on real and full “*commiseration*” that is described as love for the Oppressed by virtue of their dignity as part of exteriority.

...es el amor al otro como otro, como exterioridad; amor al oprimido, pero no en su situación de oprimido, sino como sujeto de la exterioridad (sólo a eso llamaríamos miseria: la traumática posición del libre, del otro, de la persona, que ha sido reducida a ser un instrumento en el sistema). Descubrir al otro como otro y ponerse-junto-a

(con-) su miseria, vivir como propia la desproporción de ser libre y sufrir su esclavitud; ser distinto y alguien, y al mismo tiempo ser sólo una parte diferente interna; dolerse con el dolor de dicha escisión es la posición primera del êthos liberador.

Lastly, Dussel concludes this category reflecting on the importance to find freedom from the capitalist system which has subjugated and alienated the Others' workforce, then, men can establish a free community where all human beings' lives indeed count.

As can be seen, the previous path about criticism has been done under the philosophical critical theory perspective which is interested in social problems not only to interpret them but also look for means for transforming the world. In this way, Wodak underpins:

Se ha señalado que el término "crítico", está asociado en particular con esta escuela filosófica de Frankfurt (Fairclough & Wodak, 2002:371), para la cual, fue muy importante desarrollar teorías en torno a los problemas sociales, como la desigualdad social; y aspiraba, más que a interpretar los fenómenos sociales, a buscar medios para transformar el mundo.

Following the social studies line, the next section will be focused on discussing the meaning of critical reading and how critical discourse analysis allows to strengthen the critical thinking skill.

### **Critical Reading and Critical Thinking from A Social Perspective**

According to McDonald (2004) critical reading stems from the poststructuralist perspective which claims that the subjectivity of the reader is combined with the text when the personal experiences of the reader are integrated with the experiences of the characters (p.17). Bearing in mind the poststructuralist standpoint, critical reading has deep roots in Halliday studies such as *Systemic Functional Grammar and Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) which see language as a system for expressing meanings and which have three main

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic functions such as ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Additionally, Halliday (cited by Okuma, 2007), also sees text as 'an interactive process and a social exchange of meanings' which are consequences of these functions.

During this inquiry, ACD is the methodology which I will use with the students to approach the social local news with the aim to know how their previous experiences in a developing country have shaped their reading and thinking experience.

Following this line, Wallace (2003) considers critical reading as a particular quality and depth of noticing. What the language in texts is doing, especially when ideological effects are relatively disguised. For this author, critical reading means a dialogue between reader and writer, mediated by text and context, and guided by reader purpose (cf. Wallace 1992b; Widdowson 1979). This account of reading, as opposed to those studies which take a cognitive psychology orientation, offers us a more sociocultural based view of the process in that it acknowledges contextual factors in the reading event, such as the role of reader identity.

As can be observed, for Wallace, critical reading demands special attention and treatment to the text that may allow to understand its language and uncover the ideology which is inside it. In this sense, critical reading is not focused on developing traditional reading strategies. On the contrary, from a sociocultural view, she is interested in getting those sociocultural resources that readers bring with them, based on their experiential knowledge.

Another paramount author is the father of popular education: Paulo Freire whose lecture *The importance of act of reading* poses the opposition between “*word-world*” to “*word-school*”. According to him, the world happens outside the school and precedes the word, and these two concepts *word-world* work together. Freire (1991) explains:

Me refiero a que la lectura del mundo precede siempre a la lectura de la palabra y la lectura de ésta implica la continuidad de la lectura de aquél. En la propuesta a que hacía referencia hace poco, este movimiento del mundo a la palabra y de la palabra



al mundo está siempre presente. Movimiento en que la palabra dicha fluye del mundo mismo a través de la lectura que de él hacemos. De alguna manera, sin embargo, podemos ir más lejos y decir que la lectura de la palabra no es sólo precedida por la lectura del mundo sino por cierta forma de “escribirlo” o de “rescribirlo”, es decir de transformarlo a través de nuestra práctica consciente.

Besides, Freire (1991) claims that learning how to read and write can happen before the child enters school, but it is inside school where this happens because the child and the adult get the tools to read and write. However, Freire (2005) considers that the: “insistence on a quantity of reading without internalization of texts proposed for understanding rather than mechanical memorization reveals a magical view of the written word”, incurring in what can be called functional illiteracy”. This traditional or bank education sees students as objects instead of subjects who cannot participate in their own learning process. For Freire (1992), literacy is a political act where schools empower learners toward participation and action by teaching them how to listen, how to identify alternatives, how to consider possibilities and how to search for multiple possible answers. From this perspective, reading is a libertarian activity and not an action of conformity (Naiditch,2010).

In this project, the English class is the space where students are invited to read their world and speak up about their personal experiences. Then, social local problem readings will be tackled to strengthen their critical stances.

### **Critical Thinking from A Social Perspective**

Critical thinking has been defined from different psychological and social fields to the point that there is a myriad of definitions which have attempted to explain it. To start, Ennis (1987) points out that critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do (Piette, 1998). According to this author, critical thinking searches the truth, through three main abilities clarification, judgment of information reliability, and evaluation, because human beings use information and previous knowledge

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic to assess current information, and lately, make decisions. From this psychological perspective, critical thinking additionally counts on metacognitive abilities which guide the students to address, control and evaluate their own thinking process.

Conversely, critical thinking from a social sciences point of view, is shaped under a Marxist glance, where human beings' values, conditions and knowledge of their social world are some of the most relevant aspects in an unfair world plagued with socioeconomic and political systems which conducted to oppression and power abuse. Under that background, critical thinking with roots in critical theory proposes to know the world and the need to build better and alternative futures (Cebotarev ,2001). Additionally, critical thinking is an instrument which teaches to appreciate reality and observe the unequal conditions that emerge from the capitalist society. In that way, critical thinking will be connected to media production and education as a transformation vehicle (Martin and Barrientos, 2009).

Following this line, Freire considers education as the *practice of freedom* understood as the capacity for the learner to 'deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world' (Freire,1996). To achieve such transformation, Freire proposed an innovative pedagogy, contrary to the traditional one where students were silently domesticated, and where the "uneducated" were allowed to speak, because without freedom they could not exist authentically. In this vein, he focused his attention on three main aspects which were the basis of his philosophy: the availability of education opportunities to the broad mass of people; the social and psychological processes that reinforce acts of educational inclusion/exclusion, both within and outside formal educational institutions; and the pedagogical strategies deployed by teachers. To make education an act of liberation, Freire advocated for a critical pedagogy where students have a voice and could be heard through a dialogical approach that enables them to problematize "the problems of human beings in their relations with the world [which] consists of acts of cognition, not transferals of information." (Freire 1996, 60-61)

According to Freire (1997), critical thinking goes further from a critical skill, it is the tool which allows a whole comprehension and reinvention of the world, Martín, and Barrientos (2009) explain that:

Freire considera su experiencia pedagógica como una transformación cultural de los oprimidos, su mensaje se dirige a la conciencia humana ya que desde ahí es posible la liberación. Distingue tres estados de la conciencia que corresponden a sociedades y culturas diferentes: la conciencia intransitiva de sociedades cerradas; la transitiva de sociedades en las que los dominados viven en inferioridad; y la conciencia crítica de sociedades con un desarrollo económico y democrático caracterizadas por el diálogo y la libertad.

Furthermore, Gabennesch (2006) sees critical thinking as the use of rational skills, worldviews, and values to get as close as possible to the truth, and when cultivating it, we develop the underpinnings of democracy (Kuhn, 2003). Gabennesch (2006) highlights that people who are careful about the truth are less likely to be fooled by the ideologies that justify illiberal practices or promise simple solutions, and they understand that the truth comes in pieces and is unlikely to be found all in one place. For this author, critical thinking has been taught at school, and social scientists, “by the way of looking at the world”, are in the best position to educate others about the importance of questioning our assumptions and challenging what we think we know”.

With the purpose of evaluating what surrounds us, Kurland (1995) underpins that critical thinking process involves reflecting on the validity of what you have read considering our prior knowledge and understanding of the world. Besides, you can think critically about a text (critical thinking), after all, only if you have understood it (critical reading). We may choose to accept or reject a presentation, but we must know why. We have a responsibility to ourselves, as well as to others, to isolate the real issues of agreement or disagreement. Only then can we understand and respect other people’s views. To recognize and understand those views, we must read critically.

To think critically after reading a text, authors from the critical perspective propose Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a means to study the language, and then discover the power and ideology patterns which are hidden inside the text. For that reason, in the next section, CDA will be covered.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis as A Tool to Understand What We Read**

According to Van Dijk, (1998), discourse is a “communicative event that is realized in society between social agents in the form of communication”. Czerwińska (2015) explains that: “This “communicative event” at least involves a number of social actors, typically in speaker/writer and hearer/reader roles [...] taking part in a communicative act, in a specific setting (time, place, circumstances) and based on other context features.”

Discourse is here presented as “the accomplished or ongoing ‘product’ of the communicative act” (Van Dijk 1998: 194) but this communicative act is seen as a multidisciplinary approach, due to the fact that it is analyzed from the linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural perspectives. The relevant interest is not only in the linguistic structures, but also in the cultural and social use of language, that is what makes discourse critical.

For authors such Wodak and Meyer (2009) Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. Besides, CDA deals primarily with discourses of power abuse, injustice, and inequality and attempts to uncover implicit or concealed power relations (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). It operates under the assumption that institutions act as gatekeepers to discursive resources; power and resource imbalances between “speakers” and “listeners” are linked to their unequal access to those resources. Pressing social issues motivate the CDA analyst, and the analyst’s goal is to bring about change through critical understanding (Van Dijk, 1993).

Critical Discourse Analysis is focused on developing critical analysis based on the consequences that different discourses bring, for instance, some discourses keep racism,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic inequality, and invisibility, in different cultures, consequently, CDA has the social responsibility to make power abuse visible, and find ways recognize and give voice to the other. Pardo (2012) states:

El compromiso ético del investigador es reconocer la multiplicidad de formas de dominación que se expresan en los discursos, teniendo en el horizonte de sus reflexiones el reconocimiento de la diversidad, las prácticas sociales que apoyan dicha diversidad y las expresiones múltiples que se imponen a las formas de interacción humana. La crítica implica el reconocimiento del otro, es decir, de quien es marginado, así como la legitimación de sus procesos de identidad y de construcción de conocimiento, como forma de retar los saberes y las prácticas sociales hegemónicas.

Furthermore, CDA focuses its attention not only on discourse, but also on the context where the interaction is produced. Context is understood as the structured set of all properties of a social situation that are possibly relevant for the production, structures, interpretation, and functions of text and talk (Van Dijk, 1998). It is the group of knowledge that people must produce and comprehend their interactions. In this sense, context is based on the subjective experience of the speaker, and it is what allows to organize discourse.

In this inquiry, I seek to examine social local problems news articles because all communication media keeps legitimizing racism, exclusion, and violence. Following Van Dijk (1988) worldwide news discourse had a canonical structure or 'news schema' that organizes news reports, the headline, and the lead, together forming the higher-level category of Summary ... followed by such categories as Recent Events, Previous Events, Context, History and Comments.

Additionally, the author found some surprising information about the news in Europe, first, the news format keeps similarity, despite different political and cultural contexts. Second, the press merely reflects what the politicians or the public are saying about minorities, they also have their own role and responsibility in ethnic affairs, especially

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic because of their immense scope and power. Unlike a biased ordinary speaker in a conversation, a biased news report or editorial may have hundreds of thousands, and --as is the case for the British tabloids-- sometimes millions of readers, and therefore have a tremendous influence. In our research on everyday conversations, we frequently were able to observe this influence of the press (Van Dijk, 1987).

Similarly, in Colombia, media has naturalized events, naming actors to exclude some people and promote others, making ethnic and black communities invisible, minimizing some events, and maximizing others, which means power hierarchy owing to subjects and position of social actors. Due to the role that media has in Colombia, like many countries around the world, this inquiry proposes analyzing the discourse and the context of some local news with students in the English class to make visible their critical skills in a second language classroom.

### **State of the Art**

Besides theory, what follows is a myriad of the foremost national research studies that provide theoretical and methodological implications for this project. The presented pieces of research were applied in high schools and universities which demonstrate how the implementation of social problems readings (news) strengthen critical reading and thinking skills on students in English and Spanish language subjects.

To begin, Graciano (2016) conducted a qualitative-descriptive and an exploratory research study with a group of 11th grade students on a private school in Bogota in order to encourage them to develop critical literacies through the reading of internet newspapers articles. The objectives of this study were, first, to identify elements which show critical elements in students' compositions in the English class, and second, to describe students' results after reading local newspapers. According to the researcher, the findings showed that students were engaged in reading local issues news, and consequently, they transcended the literal and interpretive levels of reading reaching a critical stance towards it.

Likewise, Plazas (2020) developed a qualitative research project where the author analyzed the implementation of CTS (Science, Technology and Society) strategies on reading news with first and second semesters students at a private university in Bogota. This study searched for strengthening critical and analytical reading, and thinking skills, especially on scientific news with the aim to counteract fake news and digital fragmentation which surrounds Colombian reality. Active Participation was carried out to make CTS strategies possible, for that reason group and individual activities such as problematic questions, round tables, discussions, and debates made part of this study. In the result, participation, critical stances, and acceptance of others' opinions were evident when tackling environmental, technological, and social articles.

Similarly, Vargas and Gómez (2019) discussed in their qualitative research how the implementation of a pedagogic strategy related to news reading on 10th grade students in a rural school in Tolima could promote students critical thinking in Spanish language and philosophy classes, and at the same time, how it could improve researchers- teachers own pedagogic work. According to the findings, the pedagogic strategy which was guided by Action Research (A.R) allowed students to start their critical thinking process. Besides, they reflected and discussed about the information provided by the news, and their own reality. To sum up, the strategy proposed by the researchers developed students' speaking skills where they could express their ideas coherently, and where their critical thinking was shown.

Following this line of thought, Garzón and Gómez (2017) proposed a qualitative research study which searched for the execution of strategies to strengthen the reading comprehension of news through a community classroom project in the Spanish language subject. This project was carried out during nine months in a public technical school in Cauca where one 6th grade group of students participated in a pedagogy strategy which involved three stages: a pre-reading skills phase, while reading activities (inferential) phase and post reading workshops (critical) phase. After the intervention, it was found that the students strengthened news reading comprehension, understood its structure,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic characteristics, and communicative intention. Also, they developed their reading and thinking skills during the aforementioned phases. It was concluded that reading comprehension is a problem which requires an urgent solution to improve quality education at that institution, due to that problematic it is necessary to continue implementing reading skills activities according to the needs and students' context.

Montoya and Monsalve (2008) conducted a three-month qualitative and descriptive research study called "Didactic Strategies for Encouraging Critical Thinking in the Classroom" with sixty high school students who studied in a private and virtual cyber school in Colombia. The research proposal was designed under the principles of IAP (Participatory Action Research) which allowed students to work in groups and at the same time to generate different processes that develop critical thinking skills while reading news in different formats that mass media communication presents to the audience. In order to know if the information was reliable, the researchers proposed a seven strategies plan in virtual rooms with the aim to develop critical thinking skills which permitted students to face their world in a free and autonomous way. The findings showed that the seven strategies applied permitted students to participate through the implementation of critical thinking abilities such as supporting ideas, coherence, comparison, contrast, and establishing connections with their closest reality. Besides, they communicated their ideas and generated a critical reflection based on the news that were tackled during the sessions.

Bearing in mind the importance of implementing news inside the classroom, Malaver et al., (2014) conducted a qualitative and ethnographic study called "Press Classrooms. Towards a Critical Reading of Articles of Opinion in Secondary Education" with tenth grade students in a public school of Bogota. The aim of this research study was to promote the formation of critical students in secondary education through the critical reading of opinion news in Social Studies and Spanish language classes, due to the fact that press is not usually used in the classrooms to develop critical skills. The researchers proposed the execution of a didactic sequence in the classroom where students had the possibility to



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic develop their linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural competences when reading news about our Colombian context presented by journalists with different voices and perspectives. The authors highlighted that press is a didactic resource to make students critical beings about the reality of a country.

To sum up, the use of news in the classroom has not yet been extensively studied in Colombia, however, important research studies have been implemented by teachers who have seen in this topic an opportunity to boost literacies, critical reading and thinking abilities in high school and university students, besides developing their first and second language competences. It is important to mention that the execution of reading news projects in the EFL (English Foreign Language) classroom at Colombian universities is a must considering that there were not found any evidence of such studies. This shortcoming may be an academic contribution in the field of mass media and foreign language learning.

In the following section, I will account for the decisions regarding the research design, paradigm, setting, participants, and specificities that are necessary to understand my approach towards the phenomenon from the study research design perspective.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Design**

This chapter describes the methodological aspects by which this research was designed to answer the main questions of this project: *What outcomes emerge from students when interacting with social problems readings?* The section is arranged as follows: first, the research paradigm is explained; second, the research approach is addressed; third, the setting is described; fourth, the participants are characterized; fifth, the researcher's role is clarified and finally, the data collection and instruments are depicted.

## **Research paradigm**

This research follows a qualitative approach to analysis, which is discussed by Denzin & Lincoln (2005) as:

" a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. 'These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations. Photographs, recordings, "and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural conte, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them".

Taking into consideration the previous concept, I worked with undergraduate students at PLE programme (*Programa Segunda Lengua*) who must study four mandatory English courses, to have B1 level to graduate. The purpose of this project was to foster social problems readings to strengthen critical reading and thinking inside the classroom seen as a natural setting where the participants can interpret the world surrounding them.

Furthermore, the project I stated, follow the characteristics of qualitative research that Vasilachis (2006) states. To start, these characteristics are based on who and what is studied. Focusing on the way the world is seen and understood by the participants, due to their experience and knowledge. Also, qualitative research, bearing in mind its features, it is interpretative, inductive, multimethod, and reflexive. Besides, it is focused on a real and situated practice, where the researcher and the participants interact. Finally, qualitative research aims at discovering new horizons and developing grounded theories; and it is the relation with theory, creation, expansion and overcoming, what makes it relevant.

In this way, Vasilachis (2005) summarizes two important ideas of action research. The first aspect is based on:

... social actors, their senses, perspectives, meanings, actions, productions, works, and achievements that qualitative research is focused. The person is, then, the vital nucleus of this kind of inquiry and it is those characteristics referring to the people that constitute the primary characteristics, those which are fundamental to qualitative research.

The second characteristic refers to:

... the context, to the situation in which senses are created, perspectives are defined, and meanings are constructed, which make up the secondary characteristics of qualitative research, because what matters is the person, but the person placed in a given context. Actors and their situations can hardly be separated in the studies undertaken by social sciences, but it is necessary to establish, at this point, their different ontological condition. As already stated, people cannot be known other than in their context, but they cannot be known through their context. This cognitive assumption, so dear to deterministic theories, deprives the people of action and therefore, of freedom and autonomy by means of a mechanism: ontological assimilation.

Consequently, this inquiry belongs to the qualitative paradigm since the students are seen as social actors who observe the world according to their context and knowledge. In this way, the subjects and their productions are the basis of the project. Also, keeping in mind the importance of interpretation and reflection, as qualitative research proposes, students were asked to read a variety of local social news in English in the EFL class to know their perceptions and the constructed meanings when reading critically. Considering AR as “an interactive research process involving both the researcher and the social actors” (Vasilachis, 2005) it is important to mention that I as an English professor-researcher, interacted with the participants while developing the reading workshops, because in this type of research, the quality of dialogue and communication “can be affected due to the

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic characteristics, the terms, the sense of the interaction which the researcher has motivated and for whom he is responsible (p.37)

Finally, qualitative research demands from the professor-researcher a “strict training in this methodology, creativity and flexibility to come over and over to the research field to improve and adjust the research question; also, reconsidering the design and data collection; implementing new strategies to collect and analyzing data; and if it is necessary, modifying interpretations”.(37) Thus, qualitative research not only allows me to know the subjective perspectives of students in a given context, but it also permits me to understand how and why they interpret the social situations of our country, in the way they do it.

## **Setting**

Universidad Nacional de Colombia was founded in 1867 and it is one of the most important universities in Colombia and Latin America, due to its prestige, quality, and selectivity. It has always been an important institution owing to its academic production, research focus and high academic standards. This institution has campuses in different regions of Colombia, such as Bogota, Medellin, Manizales, Palmira, Tumaco, Caribe, Orinoquía, Amazonia, and La Paz, thanks to it, the university accepts a huge number of students who come from different parts of the country.

In Bogota, Universidad Nacional de Colombia offers forty-nine undergraduate programmes and 214 postgraduates whose thirty-one are PhD programmes, ninety-five Masters, 50 Specializations and thirty-eight medical specialties.

To be accepted, each candidate should pass a demanding admission test with 600 points to be classified in the first group that has priority on the programmes they would like to choose. On the contrary, if candidates do not obtain the highest scores, they are classified in the second, third and fourth groups, therefore, they need to wait for available places that students from the first group leave.

For the academic semester 2020-2, in all the branches, 9,802 students enrolled university, considering that the 84% are undergraduate students, and the 16% are postgraduate students. Nowadays, a total number of 3113 professors with master's and PhD degrees work in the 17 faculties that this institution has.

Due to its high standards, it has been classified at different national and international rankings. For instance, keeping in mind national indicators, Universidad Nacional de Colombia has been positioned on the first place, at Sapiens Research List; it has reached the second place, based on *QS Latin American University Ranking*, and it has been positioned on the third place at ranking web of universities in 2020.

Speaking about learning languages, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, following the regulations of CEFR, requires that undergraduate students reach B1 level for graduating, as it is expressed on ACUERDO 102 DE 2013. For students who would like to enroll a Master or PhD program, each faculty has its own language requirements. Additionally, this institution offers a variety of language courses on different quarters such as the *Programa Segunda Lengua* which is the unit responsible for evaluating students based on *Oxford Online Placement Test* results. After getting results, students are classified in any basic to pre-intermediate levels that Ministerio de Educación has established, in order that students graduate.

A second important programme is *Intensive English* which offers Intermediate to advanced English courses for students who have shown academic excellence during their career and achieve a high score when taking *Oxford Online Placement Test*. Additionally, *Explora* programme offers French, Italian, German and Portuguese language courses for students who want to learn a different foreign language and participate in an exchange programme.

Finally, DRE (Dirección de Relaciones Exteriores) promotes internationalization and allows national and international cooperation programmes, to ease exchange and mobility programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students who would like to study a

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic language course, homologate subjects, or do an academic internship. Nowadays, it has 670 agreements that students and professors with a scientific, artistic, social, and cultural emphasis would take advantage to.

### **Students who participated in the research study**

Before doing this research study, a group of students were explained the characteristics of the project and they were asked if they wanted to participate, as the whole group was eager to take part in it, I proceeded to implement the didactic sequence with them. The participants of this study are undergraduate students who do not have the B1 level which the university, following the standards of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, demands for allowing graduation. Thus, they took the *Oxford Placement Test* to be classified in any of the fourth levels of the English Language course that the PLE offers. Based on their test results, these students were classified in the second group which corresponds to the international A2 level.

The students who belong to the experimental group were born and raised in Bogotá and in different regions of Colombia. After being admitted to Universidad Nacional, Bogota headquarter, they came to the capital to pursuit their undergraduate career. However, due to the current pandemic, these students were forced to return home, and nowadays, they are coursing the second semester of 2020 through virtual learning.

The participants are between 17 to 31 years old, they are one, two or three socio-economical strata, and due to their home address, they belong to PEAMA (*Programa Especial de Admisión y Movilidad Académica*) that is a programme which supports students who live in the borders such as Putumayo, Boyacá, Pamplona, Cauca, Meta, Caquetá, Yopal, Arauca, and Nariño. Additionally, some of the participants live in Bogota and others live in the municipalities of Pasca, Tocancipá and Simijaca, part of the department of Cundinamarca.

To achieve the aim of the project it is necessary to involve all students of the group in a pedagogical intervention but for the process of the data analysis I chose nonprobability

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic

quota sampling which, according to Cohen (2012) strives to represent significant characteristics (strata) of the wider population; it sets out to represent these in the proportions in which they can be found in the wider population. Bearing in mind all the collected information, it has been decided to choose four main characteristics: sex, age, careers, and place of origin which are represented as follows in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participants Control Characteristics*

<b>Control Characteristics</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	12
Male	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Age</b>	
17- 20	19
21- 24	6
25- 28	4
29- 32	1
<b>CAREERS</b>	
Public Accounting	2
Economics	1
Geography	1
Psychology	1
Mechatronics Engineering	1
Agronomic Engineering	4
Mechanical Engineering	1
Dentistry	1
Medicine	1
Industrial Design	2
Social Work	1
Architecture	3
French Philology	1
Physiotherapy	1
Occupational Therapy	2
History	1

Animal Sciences	2
Linguistics	1
Chemistry	1
Business Administration	2
<b>PLACES OF ORIGIN</b>	
Bogotá	17
Tocancipá	1
Pasca	1
Boyacá: Tunja/Chiquinquirá/Duitama	3
Simijaca	1
Neiva	1
Pamplona	1
Putumayo	2
Casanare	2
Cauca	1
Nariño	1

Lastly, this data was useful when implementing the inquiry because it showed that the information provided by the participants with different ages, study a myriad of careers, and live in different Colombian regions. This is worth since they have stances to see and understand the social problems in the country.

### **Researcher's role**

Before starting this project, I realized that students did not have the possibilities to interact with authentic readings in English class to facilitate critical thinking activities, neither discussed social problems which take place in our country. For this reason, I decided to implement a pedagogical intervention that would allow students to visualize their reading and thinking practices.

Based on the nature of this research, my role as a professor is participant-observer because it allows me to be part of the English class while doing the pedagogical intervention. Also, this setting ease to understand students' behavior in their own context; and it helps the professor-researcher to strengthen the relationship with participants,



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic providing invaluable information for the project. Therefore, bearing in mind what Cohen, Manion and Morrison state (2000) being a participant-observer "...as its name suggests, is part of the social life of participants and documents and records what is happening for research purposes" (p. 404).

Following Mack et al. (2011), participant observation may be done prior to other data collection, as well as simultaneously with other methods and during data analysis. Also, these authors underpin that "the objective should be to gather data in the least obtrusive and most efficient manner possible, in light of the specific population and context", because it would allow me to understand the cultural context of participants and see them while interacting in their natural environment. Also, video recordings and interviews help me see how students interact with the material, and work in groups during the intervention.

As a participant observer, I had to select the material and plan the different individual and group activities that permit students analyze, reflect, question, and debate the information provided by the news, and, undoubtedly, enable students to make real connections with their lives.

## **Data collection and instruments**

### **Questionnaires- Workshops**

This is a research instrument which contains many questions or prompts related to an inquiry issue. By Griffiee (2012) "... a questionnaire has a heuristic function because by showing the relationship of the definition, namely several items related to a research topic, it causes us to raise questions such as: How many items might there be? How are the items related to each other? How are the items related to the topic? What is the research topic? Where did it come from? And finally, how does the topic relate to the research purpose?".

To use this instrument, I as a professor-researcher must consider some steps at this stage. To start, Cohen (2007) underpins that the first step is to plan its sequence; then, decide the objective, and the population. After, generate the topics, constructs, concepts, and issues to be addressed, and data required in order to meet the inquiry objectives. After

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic that, select and check the measures, scales, and questions. Subsequently, pilot and administer the final questionnaires.

In this research, unstructured questionnaires take the form of question sheets which will be administered during the social local reading workshops, because they look for gathering data about how the participants read and interact with the news. Later, students work in groups of four people each, to answer the questions that aim to visualize the critical thinking that students arise when reading news about Colombia.

### **Diary journal**

This is a very common instrument which has been defined by several academic researchers in Action Research. Burns (2009) considers that it allows “to record the events and happenings in your location, your reflections, beliefs and teaching philosophies, your ideas and insights about your practice, and your personal histories as a teacher researcher”. For (Bailey 1990, cited by Lopera, 2013) a diary is an academic instrument that is used to record introspective reflection in first person about someone’s learning or teaching. Besides, a diary permits the teacher- professor or student reports issues such as affective factors, perceptions, and language learning strategies (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983, cited by Lopera, 2013). Following this line of thought, Griffiee (2012) points out that a diary journal is a document maintained by an individual writing a report to himself or herself on some topic area, such as learning a language or teaching a course (p. 204).

Bearing in mind the previous definitions, this instrument will be applied by me (professor-researcher) while gathering data because it facilitates observing and even interacting with students. Also, it helps to keep and record valuable information whereas students are taking part in the different activities proposed in the didactic sequence. According to Burns’ table (2009), there are different types of diaries which can be used based on the researcher’s aims, entry timings, and questions one would like to answer; for that reason, in this inquiry a reflective and daily diary journal is used because as Burns (2009) explains it facilitates to keep an ongoing record of daily or weekly events at the end

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic of the period of time when the events took place and after thinking and processing what has occurred.

The information obtained in the dairy journal will be complemented with the questionnaires or workshops that students will complete in individual and group work. Later, focus groups will allow to know how students worked in the pedagogical intervention. In this way, these three instruments will permit to analyze the collected material and find similar data that will lead to validation and reliability.

### **Data collection procedure**

Data collection procedures stress the importance of gathering data through the implementation of sequenced stages where the researcher designs and applies the most appropriate instruments to collect information, as well as setting the boundaries for the study. According to Creswell (2009) inquirers collect multiple forms of data and spend a considerable time in the natural setting gathering information by means of a protocol for recording information. To carry out this data collection phase, I have designed the table 2, which exemplifies the process which will be accomplished when implementing the pedagogical intervention.

**Table 2**

Pedagogical Intervention Key Dates

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Participants</b>
December- January February	Elaboration of the didactic sequence (DS)	Readings to design the didactic sequence	Researcher- professor
March 23- May 6th	Execution of the DS in the classroom	Questionnaires, focus groups, taking notes on the diary journal	students Individual and group work
June- July	Analyzing the data gathered during the pedagogical intervention		

The following section accounts for the instructional design and design decisions towards the pedagogical intervention.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Instructional Design**

This chapter aims at explaining what a pedagogical intervention is and how it is transformed in a didactic sequence to answer the research question and achieve the proposed objectives. Moreover, this chapter presents in detail the table 3 of the didactic sequence with the number of sessions, topics, objectives, and the activities which took part of the two reading workshops that were essential to develop this study for three months.

#### **Pedagogical Intervention**

A pedagogical intervention is an intentional action which teachers do in order to help students reach an academic objective through the execution of a sequenced programme. According to Touriñan (2010) in a pedagogical intervention a teacher proposes an intentional sequence to achieve a future aim which requires a certain students' competence to do it. Such competence is reached through self-education and heteroeducation where both students and teachers are seen as agents who participate in an educational change. Touriñan (2010) considers that the process of a pedagogical intervention is developed as follows:

“A” (agente educador) hace “X” (lo que el conocimiento de la educación explica y justifica) para conseguir el resultado “R” (que “B” -agente educando- efectúe las conductas “Y” -explicitadas en la intervención pedagógica de “A”- y alcance el objetivo “Z” -destreza, hábito, actitud o conocimiento educativo. (p.284).

Furthermore, the researcher applies one's theoretical, technical, and academic knowledge to make decisions based on students' needs. In this way, the teacher carries out a plan over a period that permits to follow up the students' actions to see how they are achieving the proposed goals.

Based on the previous explanation and considering that the university students who are doing the mandatory level 2 from PLE (Programa Segunda Lengua) do not have the opportunity to interact with authentic material in the English classes, and express their critical stances, I as a researcher-teacher decided to implement a didactic sequence (DS) that enable them to interact with local social news, while strengthening their critical thinking skills.

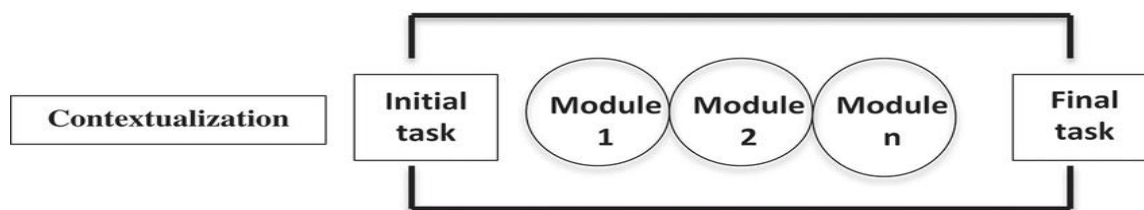
First, I identified that the readings students were doing in class were decontextualized with the Colombian reality where students live, because the student's book American English File promoted reading activities about the United States culture, however, students did not feel interested in, and they did not have any possibility to show their critical stances. As a result, I chose two pieces of news so that students could read and analyze them through the development of two reading workshops which conform the *didactic sequence* I present in this chapter. The first one was about the economic impact in Colombian in pandemic times, and the second one was about the pandemic consequences on university students.

### **What is a didactic sequence?**

Larringan and Idiazabal (2012) define a didactic sequence as a teaching unit which is built with theoretical and epistemological properties that are identified through the three stages that take part of it. To start, there is a contextualization phase where students can activate knowledge about a topic that has been proposed in class. In the first stage, students participate in the initial production of a text. In the second stage, students develop some workshops guided by questions that the teacher designed looking for constant inquiry, and in the last stage, students produce an oral or written text which allows them to put in practice the new concepts and the skills which were applied in the development of the workshops (Dolz and Schneuwly, 1998, in Garcia and Manterola, 2016). The schema of the explained didactic is shown in diagram 1.

## Diagram 1

*Didactic Sequence adapted from Dolz and Schneuwly (1998)*



In the same line, Díaz-Barriga (2013) describes a DS as a result to establish a series of learning activities which are characterized by their internal organization, where the teacher searches for recovering previous notions students have about a problematic situation, and attach them to real contexts, in this way, students can access to meaningful information and start their learning process. For Diaz-Barriga (2013), the sequence blends a diversity of learning activities for the students, and at the same time, it provides the opportunity to conduct a formative assessment of the same activities they do. As can be seen, the teacher should carefully plan the learning and evaluation activities because every element affects the structure of the sequence.

Overall, a didactic sequence starts with a problem which is identified in the classroom or with a new thematic that can engage students' interest. Then, the professor determines the objectives that students should achieve, and in order to help them succeed, the teacher plans and modifies the activities, so the expected results are obtained.

### **A didactic sequence oriented to media education**

The proposed didactic sequence emphasizes on using the press in the classroom to see the articulation between critical thinking and reading, for this reason it is essential to mention why media is crucial in the educational field. For authors such as Masterman and Morduchowicz (2003) media education can be studied from a variety of approaches.

For instance, a group of academics considers that media education must be oriented to study the negative and manipulative impact on students, so, it is mandatory to analyze violence, sex, racism, lack of values found in video games, the press, and, especially, on

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic television. Through this lens, children must be protected from the media effects Morduchowicz (2003). Another focus studies the cultural consumption of the young, so researchers are interested in knowing what young people watch on television, read on the news, listen to on the radio, how the media messages are understood, and what cultural relations they build (Morduchowicz, 2003). A third perspective examines media from a semiological view where images, cinematographic plans, letter types, and music are analyzed to know the variety of world representations. For Bustamante (2006):

No se trata, obviamente, de emplear los medios interactivos como simples instrumentos, sino de reconocerlos como otras vías que permiten el acceso a los saberes que circulan en el mundo social, para generar una lectura plural, una lectura de imágenes que supere la univocidad de códigos con que se han venido leyendo en la escuela los textos escritos. Se trata entonces, de reconocer los saberes, lo cultural y lo recreativo que se produce en el mundo audiovisual y a la vez admitir que hoy, conviven la cultura letrada, la oral y la audiovisual y que, a todas ellas, por igual, debe atender la educación.

A final standpoint searches to understand the social representations that media proposed, therefore, it is essential to scope the relationship between media and the sociopolitical and historical contexts. Thus, Morduchowicz (2003) points out that this perspective inquires: How the media consolidates or subverts existing relationships. Transcending the text into the context is the axis that proposes this critical approach. Bearing in mind the myriad of approaches presented previously, this didactic sequence seeks to address the last perspective which proposed to scrutinize the way media represents reality, and how the audience incorporates and re-signifies its messages.

Besides, Ferguson (1994 cited by Morduchowicz, 2003) media education intents to examine those representations to understand the way subjects give sense to reality, and how media makes sense to us. In this way, what media education suggests is to be critical with respect to the information and the messages which have been published, and later,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic read by the audience; it means that students need to play a challenging role when reading and watching media offers. But how can be media used in a critical way? Mordochuwicz (2003) suggests asking different questions to promote self-reflection when interacting with different media: *¿Representan los medios a personas como yo? ¿De qué manera? ¿Y a las personas que no son como yo? ¿Qué dicen y qué no dicen de mí y de ellos? ¿Cómo piensan los medios que soy? ¿Por qué?* (p.44).

Through a reflexive dialogue and ongoing inquiries, media education hopes that students find their place in this world of representations, and analyze how to transform it (Murdochowicz, 2001):

Los medios, como sistemas de representación, construyen lugares y espacios desde donde los individuos pueden ubicarse y hablar. Nos dicen qué significa ocupar y pertenecer a una posición y a una identidad particulares, y qué se siente al estar excluido de ellas. Proponen sistemas de clasificación y establecen los límites simbólicos entre lo que se incluye y lo que se excluye. Sugieren lo que es normal y definen quién pertenece y quién está fuera de esa normalidad (p. 44).

Therefore, media education searches for examining the social representations where every single individual feel identified with, and how media interferes with the construction of their identity, genre, social class, race, values, and the way we see and interact with others. In few words, media influences on private and public spheres of humans' beings transforming the way they see and understand the world. About the importance of representation in media, Masterman (2013) considers that:

. . . there is a difference between trying to master the rules of the game and recognizing the ways those rules structure our perception of reality. It may be much easier to see what is in the game than to recognize what the game leaves out". Even in an age of new media, the "traditional" media literacy issue of representation remains a core concern; it is foundational.



In conclusion, as Masterman (1993) said, media is not transparent, it always gets involved in people identities construction because it imposes on what to think, or believe, so media education proposes to transcend the literal reading of a text and analyze the media information keeping in mind the context and its effect on the subjects.

**Table 3**

*Didactic Sequence*

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>
1.	<b>News Literacy</b>	Students will know the parts of a piece of news.	<p><b>Warm-up questions to get what students know:</b> Why is news important?</p> <p>-The professor introduces the parts of a piece of news using a “Coronavirus text related to Colombia”:</p> <p><b><i><a href="https://agorapublicaffairs.com/how-was-covid-19s-economic-impact-perceived-in-colombia/">https://agorapublicaffairs.com/how-was-covid-19s-economic-impact-perceived-in-colombia/</a></i></b></p> <p>-Students match the pieces of news.</p>
2.	<b>Reading pictures</b>	Students will get some basic information to learn how to read an image that complements the pieces of news.	<p>- <b>Warm – up:</b> Students will describe what they see in the picture that complements the piece of news.</p> <p>-The professor will explain how to read a picture keeping in mind: color, position of people, objects or numbers, plans, etc.</p> <p>-Students will propose a different picture according to the piece of news’ title.</p>
3- 4	<b>Workshop 1 (Annex B)</b>	Students will read the piece of news and they will use some critical thinking strategies to identify power entities and social	<p>The professor will explain the questions to students, and she will give some tips to students to understand the different activities they need to do.</p> <p>(Each student should read the piece of news before class).</p>

		inequality in the Colombian context during the pandemic.	- Students will answer the workshop in groups and the professor will go to each group to support students with doubts and possible questions. -Students and the professor will discuss the answers.
5	<b>WRITING MY OPINION</b>	Students will describe their perceptions about virtual education keeping in mind that they are studying in a public university.	Students write individually a paragraph about their opinion related to virtual education.
6	<b>Workshop 2 (Annex C)</b>	Students will talk about the impact of Covid-19 on university students. -Students will analyze the students' accounts seen in the piece of news. - Students will identify and analyze topics related to social representations and identity in the news reading.	<b>Pre-reading activities:</b> -Students will observe the title and the image to find relationships between them: <b><i><a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html</a></i></b> -Students will use the tips to read the news that were explained in the previous workshop. -Students will do individual and group activities during this workshop.
7-8	<b>Creation time:</b>	<b>(Discuss it with the director)</b>	-Students will talk about their own stories and present them.

**My own  
story**

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To conclude, I must mention that the essence of a pedagogical intervention is observed when the teacher and students participate in the development of a variety of activities to reach a research aim. In the same way, I talk about the importance of students' involvement during the three stages which conform this proposed didactic sequence, to articulate critical reading and thinking that can be seen in table 3.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter organizes, describes, and interprets the data collected during the didactic sequence to know how students read and thought critically about the social realities in Colombia. For this reason, this chapter explains the analytical procedures which were used to analyze the collected data, bearing in mind the *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) model proposed by Norman Fairclough and Chouliaraki which consists of five stages.

The first stage is called *a problem (activity, reflexivity)* which requires from me as a researcher to contextualize the problem in social life. The second stage has 3 subsections: *analysis of the conjuncture, analysis of the particular practice, and analysis of the discourse*. However, in this research project, the last module: *analysis of the discourse* is only developed keeping in mind the gathered data of the students who read and developed the reading workshops which are presented in the table 3. Hence, in this section it is possible to see the categories and subcategories which emerged from the students' critical discourse analysis. The third stage is *function of the problem in the practice* which is intended to analyze how the problematic issue has a particular purpose in the society. The fourth stage named *possible ways pass the obstacles* is aimed at observing how the problematic aspect is and how it ought to be if the practices that are causing it are transformed. Lastly, the fifth stage is *reflection on the analysis* which explains why I as a teacher-researcher planned the

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic pedagogical intervention with the suggested material and how this discourse analysis was carried out.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis by Leslie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to a series of methodologies which study the social discourse, and, according to the analysts (Wodak, Van Dijk, Kress, Fairclough) differ from theory, methodology, and type of research to develop their studies. Commonly, the CDA examines linguistic and semiotic aspects of social problems. It does not study the language by itself, instead, it studies the linguistic character of cultural and social structures, so language is an integral element of material social process (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

The CDA model which is proposed in this study is called explanatory criticism analytical framework, which is different from the one presented by Fairclough in 1989. He explains that this current research is on process of social change in their discourse aspect. More specifically, he is concerned with recent and contemporary processes of social transformation which are variously identified by such terms as 'neo-liberalism', 'globalization', 'transition', 'information society', 'knowledge-based economy' and 'learning society' (Fairclough, 2001).

For Fairclough, this approach is transdisciplinary because it deals with other disciplines and theories which are addressing contemporary processes of social change (Fairclough, 2001). Transdisciplinary means that the theoretical and methodological development of CDA and the theories are in dialogue, it means working with the 'logic' and categories of the other theory and methodology. The critical discourse analysis that this author proposes has two objectives:

The first one is to give accounts – and more precise accounts than one tends to find in social research on change - of the ways in which an extent to which social changes are changes in discourse, and the relations between changes in discourse and changes in other,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic non-discourse, elements or 'moments' of social life (including therefore the question of the senses and ways in which discourse '(re)constructs' social life in processes of social change). The second aim is also to identify through analysis the particular linguistic, semiotic and 'interdiscursive' features of 'texts' (in a broad sense – see below) which are a part of processes of social change, but in ways which facilitate the productive integration of textual analysis into multi-disciplinary research on change (Fairclough,2001). The analytical framework which Fairclough proposes in this analysis is based on Roy Bhaskar's explanatory criticism which suggests five stages (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2001):

1. A social problem (activity and reflexivity).
2. Analysis of discourse.
3. Function of the problem in the social practice.
4. Possible ways past the obstacles
5. Reflection on the analysis.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

In order to apply the CDA model, it was necessary to gather data through two instruments a field diary and open-ended questionnaires (two reading workshops which made part of the proposed didactic sequence).

For twelve weeks I wrote my reflections and perceptions that I elicited in class when students were interacting with the newspaper's readings. Besides, the open-ended questionnaires that students answered individually and in groups were powerful instruments because they were designed based on two pieces of news related to the economic impact, and unequal education in Colombia because of Covid-19. The formulated questions facilitated to categorize, codify, and interpret the information which was analyzed in the light of the five stages that proposed Fairclough model.

### **1. Focus on a social problem (activity and reflexivity).**

In this first stage the objective is to identify a discourse-related problem in some part of social life. Problems may be in the activities of a social practice-in the social practice per se, or in the reflexive construction of a social practice (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2001). Some problems (in terms of SFL) are related to ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of discourse, whereas ideational problems may involve problems of representations and miscognition (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2001). Keeping in mind that the pieces of news mention the impact of covid-19 on Colombian economy and higher education, it was necessary to reflect on the neoliberal roots which caused the socioeconomic problems that were sharpened in Latin America.

*Neoliberalism* term was created by Alexander Rustow in 1938, but it was popularized by Margaret Thatcher from England and Milton Friedman from the United States who announced it in their discourses and in the practice.

*Neoliberalism* is a political and economic system whose base is capitalism, and it is associated with unrestrained free market global capitalism (University of Harvard, 2018). It proposes that the big and powerful markets should act freely without State intervention, it must be governed by free trade, be deregulated, and privatized. It estimates that the own markets with its own policies can optimize the production and commercialization of a country.

*Neoliberalism* is against State interference because, according to it, promotes waste, inefficiency, and stagnation, so they refuse regulation on industries, high taxation, and public services that are not subject to market competition. On the contrary, they create their own regulations to protect themselves facilitating global commerce, competence, and a strong military (Harvard video). However, neoliberalism has increased inequality, trade monopoly, and natural environment exploitation that has driven to pollution, and affects the quality of life of developing countries which cannot compete with big markets.

Chomsky (2010) considers that: The US, UK and Canada are the key plutonomies: economies in which growth is powered by - and largely consumed by - the wealthy few. In plutonomies, these rich consumers take a disproportionately large slice of the national pie. Two-thirds of the world's economic growth is driven by consumption, primarily in the plutonomies, which monopolize profits as well.

While plutonomies become stronger, inequality rises disproportionately because neoliberalism promotes its own policies and strategies causing social impact on poor population who work for big companies in vulnerable conditions without the state intervention. Consequently, it is deepening more social differences between classes. Neoliberalism gives power to a minority to control productivity, increase prices and service range, meanwhile middle and small companies broke because they do not have means to compete. However, for big companies, labour force of poor countries is necessary to maintain the productive system and unequal power relationships where salary is significantly reduced, due to the great demand of work which engenders low-cost labor force. Salazar (2019) summarizes labor conditions as follows:

Estos fenómenos de subordinación ultra-contractual responden a una transformación de las relaciones laborales cuya esencia es la degradación de las condiciones laborales y salariales que, no solamente son económicamente más rentables para el empleador, sino que sobre todo minan la posición de fuerza de la clase trabajadora frente al capital. (Salazar, 2019).

In Colombia as in many Latin American countries, working conditions for the labor class have been violated as it was aforementioned. Nevertheless, another part of the population is unemployed, and a high rate of people work in the informal sector because of unemployment and lack of incomes to survive, besides the inability of the State to generate policies which can support the poor. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) informal economy is seen as:

...todas las actividades económicas desarrolladas por los trabajadores y las unidades económicas que –en la legislación o en la práctica– están insuficientemente cubiertas por sistemas formales o no lo están en absoluto”. Por tanto, el concepto de “economía informal” amplía el de sector informal, agregando a la unidad productiva las relaciones laborales que no están reguladas o protegidas de forma legal. Con esto, la nueva definición incluye a los ocupados en el sector informal, sin considerar dónde trabajen, cuya relación de empleo no esté sujeta a los estándares establecidos por la legislación laboral” (Martínez and Infante, 2019).

Informal labor exists in Latin America for different reasons, first, there is an inability of formal sector to generate new jobs. On the contrary, when there is a booming economy, informality may be reduced because it is an alternative to fight against unemployment and become part of the formal sector (Ochoa and Ordoñez, 2004). Another reason is the lack of academic and professional formation of vulnerable people who due to the lack of opportunities, they become informal workers without support of a health system, and with low economic incomes to be able to survive. González et al (2006) consider that many people who belong to the informal sector has a considerably low level of schooling which does not reach middle school, aspect that becomes a disadvantage for these people due to the fact that it reduces job opportunities in the formal sector (Pag. 5).

As can be seen, job insecurity in Colombia is the result of the State indifference to impulse job opportunities, and to strengthen working conditions of formal laborers. Instead, the State favors big companies, and neglect the humble workers who survive by doing an informal job. In order to overcome precarious working conditions, it is important the government implements real solutions to generate new jobs regulated by good conditions that allow citizens to improve their quality of life. López (2014) foregrounds that:



Se requiere que las sociedades ofrezcan a sus ciudadanos, a todos, no solo a algunos, las oportunidades para que ellos mismos salgan adelante, y el medio para lograrlo es el empleo digno: remunerado, estable y con seguridad social. Es allí hacia donde se dirigen las verdaderas alternativas para la mejor distribución de los beneficios del desarrollo.

One real solution which can be implemented by the Colombian government is education because it allows to set up knowledge, create new companies which may contribute to the economic development of our country, and configure new competences in citizens. Vasquez et al (2014) pose that education is the key element to have access to job stability, and legalize informal activity, since people with a good schooling level is required. This goal can be achieved through state regulations implementation focused on new programs that allow new competences acquisition, coherent with abilities and functions that require new and future jobs

### **Colombian scenario to face the pandemic**

Given such a meager outlook, Colombia did not count on mechanisms to face covid-19 pandemic economic and social impact. On the contrary, the measures that the government took on April 2019 unveiled and deepened more sociocultural inequalities, unemployment, and poverty. Linked to the health emergency pandemic, for Colombia and the other Latin American countries, Covid-19 unleashed a hunger pandemic for vulnerable population such as informal workers, small business laborers, farmers, mothers head of family, young workers, among other members who have suffered devastating consequences, due to their low incomes, restriction to go out to work, and inability to do their job through teleworking. According to Medellín (2020):

El grupo con mayor vulnerabilidad en esta coyuntura está constituido por los trabajadores informales, dada su reducida protección económica frente a una incapacidad física o laboral, su bajo nivel de ingresos, así como la imposibilidad de

desempeñar su actividad a través del teletrabajo, dice el informe de este centro de investigación "La vulnerabilidad del mercado laboral colombiano al COVID-19".

As stated previously, the Latin American economies already showed significant weaknesses before the start of the health emergency. In other words, the pandemic has exacerbated the productive and social problems of Latin America, such as the region's perverse commercial specialization, the weakness of the productive fabric and the labor market, and social problems (Sánchez, 2021).

With the lockdown to avoid the contagion proposed by the government, many small companies were forced to close owing to the mandatory lockdown that each Colombian citizen had to follow strictly for more than six months, and which forbidden people going out of their homes. Undoubtedly, these businesses did not receive any income, therefore, they did not have money to pay employees' salaries, nor make ends meet.

As Sanchez (2021) points out: the pandemic is having a strong economic and social impact in Latin America. Unemployment has risen and businesses have been closed, public accounts have deteriorated, and poverty and inequality have increased. Recovery will depend on the evolution of the world economy and the dynamism of international flows in trade and finance to the region.

On the other hand, education has suffered a terrible impact during the pandemic for several reasons. To start, with the closure of companies and the government measures, a significant number of parents and young workers were unemployed. Without incomes it was not possible to continue studying or enroll university. Amid lockdowns, youth unemployment has spiked, and many students cannot pay tuition, which even at public schools can cost anywhere from one to eight times the monthly minimum wage. (Turkewitz, 2020)

Also, with the arrival of the pandemic, face to face education was prohibited and online one was established. The lockdown government imposed, affected university students who came from regions out of Bogota, forcing them to return homes where internet quality is deplorable or inexistent. Consequently, some students have dropped out

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic university, and the students who are still studying under this model, are not learning well. One of the most critical opportunity gaps is the uneven access to the devices and internet access critical to learning online. This digital divide has made it virtually impossible for some students to learn during the pandemic (Garcia and Weiss, 2020).

As can be seen, the virtual education model unveiled inequality as well. During the pandemic it was observed that few citizens had electronic devices and good internet connection in the cities. Only workers, students or consumers with the proper infrastructure and skills are benefiting from the advantages of technological tools. Although access to ICTs has significantly improved, gaps persist and new ones may emerge (OECD et al., 2020[1]). Only 34% of primary, 41% of secondary and 68% of tertiary education students have access to an Internet-connected computer at home. Studying online is particularly difficult for students from poor and vulnerable households (OECD,2020).

Meanwhile remote towns and regions do not have access to internet, and even worse these places still suffer from power cuts and lack of drinking water supply systems, making more visible the inefficiency of the government to provide basic needs for all the Colombians. With the mandatory lockdown schools and universities were obliged to close, so teachers try to use other resources to help students learn. They have also combined online platform learning with WhatsApp, mobile or social media, traditional media (television, radio) and printed materials delivered to students and parents without Internet access. Nowadays, Education leaders and teachers, in close collaboration with local authorities and the private sector, have expanded access to the Internet in specific zones and provided students with ICT tools. (OECD, 2020)

To sum up, Colombia as a Latin American country has received the hard impact of the pandemic unveiling and highlighting social inequality, hunger, and economic slowdown that have made part of poor conditions which characterize developing countries. For all aforementioned reasons, it is necessary to ensure a reopening that provides a unique

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic opportunity to conduct major reforms towards the creation of more equitable systems while also ensuring that schools are safe and effective (Summers et al, 2021).

Bearing in mind the Colombian context I have previously described, now the categories and subcategories which emerged from the pedagogical intervention are going to be presented and analyzed.

## **2. Analysis of discourse**

The data gathered during the pedagogical intervention enabled to establish five categories which be analyzed considering the criteria proposed by analysis of discourse Fairclough's model. According to Wodak and Meyer (2003), in this stage it is important to analyze the interactions, considering an interaction as a conversation, a newspaper article, a written text, or a discourse transmitted by television or email. According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) in the structural perspective examination, the first concern is to locate the discourse in its relation to the network of orders of discourse. Then, from the interactional perspective the aim is to identify how genres, voices, and orders of discourse work together and how they are articulated in the text.

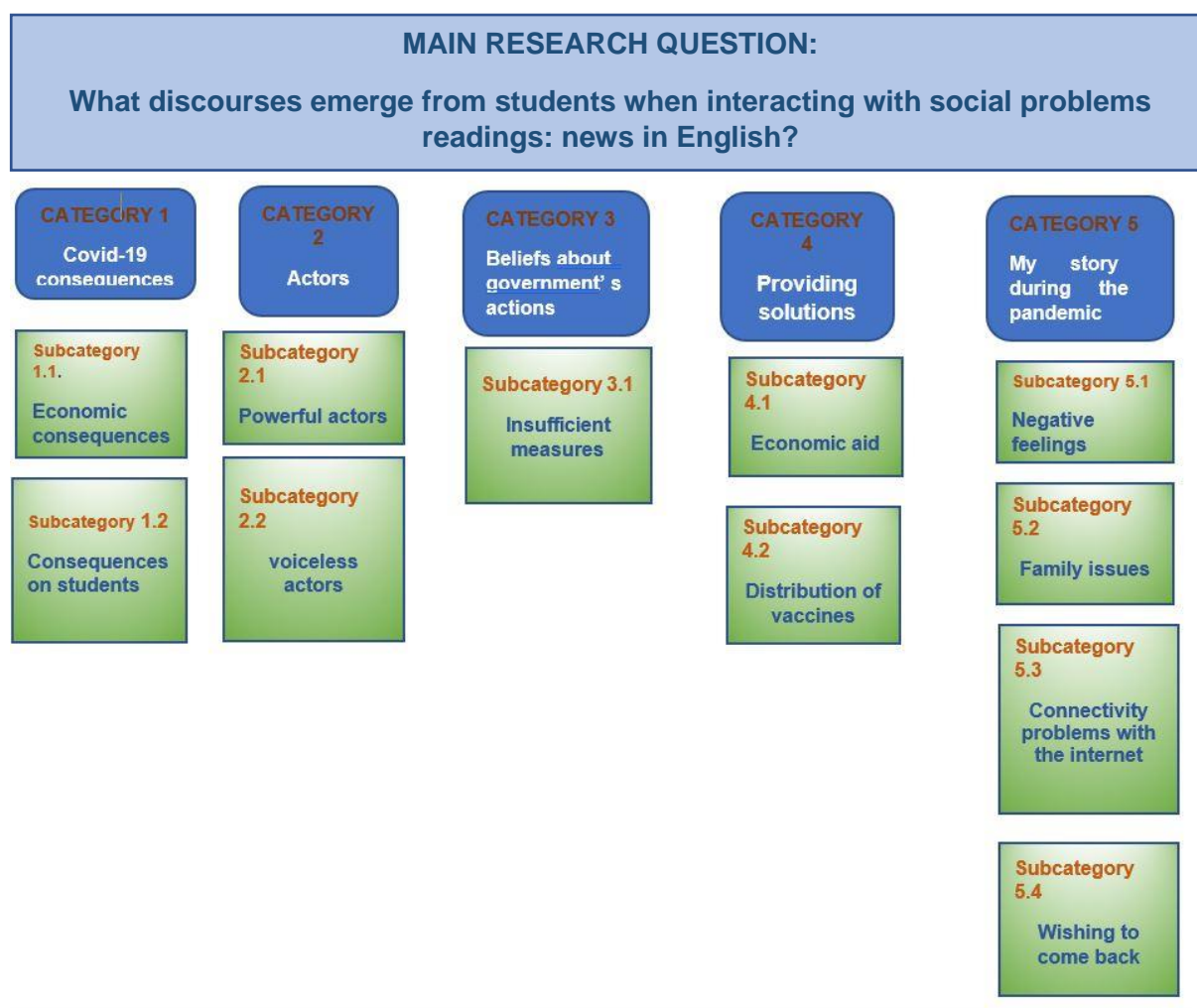
In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) a genre is considered the type of language used in the performance of a particular social practice. A voice is the sort of language used in a particular category of people, and closely linked to their identity (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2000). Here, the genre, the voices, the discourse, and other semiotic aspects identified in the text become the linguistic focus. During this analysis related to the pedagogical intervention, the form of semiotic and linguistic structures that appear in the social practice will be discussed. It means that those forms to interact, discourses, voices and identities will be kept in mind.

Considering the aspects which were previously mentioned, the following table 4 explains the five categories that emerged from the pedagogical intervention intended to answer the main research question which searched for outcomes when students interacting with social local

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic news. Once students finished the didactic sequence, it was possible to see that the characteristics of the country they live in, their life stories, and the social crisis which has hit Colombia before and during the pandemic, have influenced students' opinions, perceptions and critical reflections which have molded and configured their discourses as citizens and students.

**Table 4**

*Research question and emerging categories*



Before analyzing the written discourse, which appeared in the didactic sequence, it is important to contextualize each one of the workshops that made part of it. In the first workshop, the students were asked to read the following piece of news: *HOW WAS COVID-19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT PERCEIVED IN COLOMBIA?* Published by AGORA, which is a regional public affairs and strategic communications consultancy

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic that studies and assesses public policy issues. According to its webpage, Agora monitors decision makers at executive, legislative, technical, and regulatory levels so as to anticipate and have a role in the formation of public policy (see appendix A).

The second piece of news which was the base of the second workshop was: *Pandemic Drives Millions From Latin America's Universities* published by the traditional newspaper The New York Times on the AMERICAS section. Once students have read the first piece of news related to pandemic impact on Colombian economy, they answered the first workshop. Later, they read the second piece of news about pandemic impact on Colombian university students, and they completed the assigned workshop. Both reading activities asked for finding specific consequences, actors in the news, government's actions, beliefs about government's actions, analysis of the cuts, providing solutions, and telling their own stories as Colombian citizens and students. Based on their answers, the categories are examined.

At the beginning of the pedagogical intervention, students started reading the first piece of news: *HOW WAS COVID-19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT PERCEIVED IN COLOMBIA?* which consisted of a nameplate, a headline, a cut, a caption, and a by-line as in every newspaper. Immediately later, the journalist explained the information in three paragraphs: the introduction and the other two developing paragraphs. For Critical Discourse Analysis, this piece of news is considered part of journalistic genre which was examined by students.

### **Category 1: COVID 19 Consequences.**

This category answers the main research question because students got information about economic and university students impact in Colombia, keeping in mind the information shown in the pieces of news, but also giving their worth opinions bearing in mind the social, political, and cultural Colombian context in covid-19 pandemic times.

From the 336 words written in the three paragraphs of the first piece of news given by Agora, students focused their attention on the first and second paragraph, and besides,

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic provided their opinion in one of the consequences which called more their attention. At this point, it is important to remember that the analysis of the structural perspective as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) establish the necessity to study the different discourses stemmed in an interaction or didactic sequence in this research. On the one hand, students conserved the newspaper's discourse which is basically explanatory to list the consequences, but also, students complement them giving their opinions which are seen as their discourse as Colombian citizens and students. Both discourses make part of a social crisis discourse which is facing Colombia and the rest of the world currently. Thus, excerpt 1 represents an example of it.

Excerpt 1

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Effects</b>
<b>Economic slowdown</b>	Unemployment, poverty, reduction of interest rates in banks.
<b>Unemployment</b>	Reduction of money inflows into families. <i>Little acquisition of basic elements</i> <i>Zero budget of people towards recreation activities</i>
<b>Poverty</b>	The government <i>must</i> allocate more budget to population at risk, leaving unprotected people who have lost their jobs
<b>Violence</b>	Confinement, lack of money and opportunities during quarantine, generates stress, anxiety, and anger in people.

**Sub-category 1.1: Economic consequences**

Agora's piece of news was written in present tenses to provide the research findings of the perception of COVID-19's economic impact in Colombia (Subcategory 1.1). From the information presented by Agora, the predominant vocabulary is negative, therefore students used the proposed vocabulary to complete this exercise. The first cause: economic slowdown has the negative effects that the piece of news mentioned: Unemployment, poverty, etc. The other three causes and their consequences are complemented with

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic students' opinions. For instance, in unemployment, the two proposed effects are: little acquisition of basic elements, and zero budget of people towards recreation activities, fragments that student answered based on their priorities and experiences as citizens who make part of Colombian society. They also use negative adjectives: little, zero budget. In the same way, the effects shown on the section of violence are expressed based on their own practices, and how they perceive and live a harsh Colombian reality.

In the previous excerpt, it is possible to observe that most statements reflect the use of assertive speech acts whose function is to express what the speaker knows or believes. Additionally, the students mention as an effect of unemployment:

The government must allocate more budget to population at risk, leaving unprotected people who have lost their jobs.

The student mentions the name of "*The government*" as a way to point a powerful institution which has a huge responsibility in Colombian society. Then, the use of modal must assigns a high responsibility on the government's action to reduce poverty consequences.

This category was built with different voices. On the one hand, the voice of Agora journalist who is presenting in impersonal way the research findings about the economic impact of the pandemic, predominating impersonal sentences constructed with passive voice structures. On the other hand, a student selected specific vocabulary from this piece of news, but he added his citizen and student voice to express his feeling, it permits to think that social practice discourses are mediated by the contexts where human beings live. It means that this student feels confident about talking of its effects because he has seen and faced the economic impact of the pandemic in personal and family situations.

### **Subcategory 1.2: Consequences on students**

This subcategory describes perceptions about covid-19 consequences on university students based on the piece of news published by *The New York Times*. From the 1959 words written in the piece of news, it was possible to observe a myriad of discourses. First,





Later, a student wrote about consequences for regions learners the following paragraph:

*Colombia has been under a political spectrum for many years, it has been affected by corruption and the black hand of a politician, which year after year generates setbacks, which prevents us from developing the fields in which we would stand out internationally. But this generation wants to study, it is reported, is waking up and wants TO change but if we leave university or never enter, due to lack of resources, we will not be able to have a deep participation, only the vote, they will continue to take over Colombia, it is necessary to study for the country and for us and in the future achieve free education so that no one has to live the consequences that many of us live now.*

This paragraph is interesting because the student positions him/ her in Colombia, to contextualize how the country has been ruled by a political spectrum or group which has caused negative effects. The student uses various passive voice and active voice structures in present tense to denounce those aspects which appear configured in adjectives and nouns: corruption, setbacks, etc. Also, the use of a rhetoric figure like the metaphor “black hand” to describe and discredit government’s actions for several years in the regions, for instance, the region where this student lives and has seen what he describes in the previous fragment.

Additionally, the first conditional structure is utilized to describe a chain of real consequences that have been taking place in Colombia for years:

*if we leave university or never enter, due to lack of resources, we will not be able to have a deep participation, only the vote, they will continue to take over Colombia, it is necessary to study for the country and for us and in the future achieve free education so that no one has to live the consequences that many of us live now.*

The student also makes clear his interest for studying, but instead of using the pronoun I, uses “this generation” which refers to a group of Colombian young people who

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic have been in a national strike context (2021) where the youth is asking the government opportunities for study and move forward. "...but this generation wants to study".

The student also says: *we would stand out internationally*. Statement that includes him and the rest of the people from the region by using the pronoun "we" for describing a hypothetical situation through the modal "would" which is stand out internationally.

This paragraph shows the discourse of a public university student from a region which has been affected by the bad Colombian government decisions. In this sense, it is possible to see the discourse of inequality and lack of opportunities which at the same time takes part of another bigger discourse: Colombian social discourse which is knitted by different people from different cultures, regions, and social strata who are facing the consequences of the pandemic.

In the previous paragraph, the student recognizes the power that the government or "political spectrum" has over the region causing devastating results. Meanwhile, those people without power and participation see in education a key to see a better country, a country which provides opportunities. The following lines present this idea:

*...they will continue to take over Colombia, it is necessary to study for the country and for us and in the future achieve free education so that no one has to live the consequences that many of us live now.*

**Category 2: Actors in the news**

Based on the readings of both pieces of news, students identified powerful and powerless actors. To illustrate these subcategories, a student completed the chart as shown in excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3

QUESTIONS	ACTORS
Who is scared of unemployment?	Citizens

<b>Who has the power to decide what to do or not to do in our society?</b>	National government
<b>Who can provide effective solutions?</b>	We believe that we can all provide effective solutions, the government can support its people, people can bring ideas to the government and support each other, on the other hand, banks can agree with the government and work together to improve the economy.
<b>Who does not have a voice?</b>	Low-income families.
<b>Who can provide financial aid?</b>	Banco de la República.

According to the chart, there are two institutions which have the power to decide what to do and provide financial aid in our society: National Government and Banco de la República. This student, based on the first piece of news reading, recognizes the power and influence that these institutions have. Furthermore, media and newspapers contribute to maintain the power and hegemonic discourse in unequal societies.

Talking about powerless actors, this student selected citizens and low-income families as members who are scared of unemployment and who do not have a voice. In the previous chart, citizens are represented as the group of people who provide their workforce to maintain the economy and capital of Colombia. By contrast, low income-families are considered as the ones who do not have a voice in a society because they live in precarious conditions, cannot earn enough money to survive with a “low-income”, and some of them are beneficiaries of social aid. For the student, citizens and low-income families are in different levels, depending on jobs and income.

Finally, in the point number 3 of the chart, the student highlights a discourse of a common alliance where *he, we, all, the government*, and the *bank* work together to improve the economy. The student uses his assertive speech act to explain the following idea:

*We believe that we can all provide effective solutions, the government can support its people, people can bring ideas to the government and support each other, on the other hand, banks can agree with the government and work together to improve the economy.*

From this student's view, he believes or considers that all people and institutions can contribute for a change, but it is the government and the bank the ones who can develop ideas and support people. Instead, normal people can bring only ideas. Again, the power to give opinions and to transform or create real changes belong to high institutions.

Talking about the second piece of news, eleven of my students only recognized as actors the students who were mentioned and whose life stories appeared on the newspaper. The following excerpt depicts an example.

Excerpt 4

Saulo de Ávila	<i>In Colombia the connection not is same for every one of the students, many don't have internet or computer by connect at the classes, for example, Saulo must connect through a cellphone, and he has internet because receive donations, he thought that many people will protest after the pandemic. (He had the reason).</i>
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This fragment of a student's workshop reflects on the one hand how he got the information provided by the newspaper, but also, he added his comment agreeing with Saulo de Avila's thought: *he had the reason*.

Here we can see two discourses, Saulo's discourse talking about the difficulties he has been through during the pandemic. And the reader's discourse who is another Colombian public university student, who read Saulo's story few weeks ago in a National Strike context, supported his prediction keeping in mind the social affairs which have been taking place in Colombia since April 28 when many students, different labor groups and vulnerable communities have been on the streets rejecting the tax reform, but also, where young people have been asking for opportunities to study at university, get a government

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic income, and have job opportunities. As can be observed, the social context permeates individual discourses which come together in big net of discourses. Conversely, for other students, different stakeholders in a community institution were recognized as actors. To illustrate this idea, the following excerpt is presented.

Excerpt 5

Actors	Their thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal/chancellor</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are concerned about the cost that attending classes has on their students</li> <li>• Some of them can't pay the internet and/or the tuition</li> <li>• This situation caused by the pandemic will be a detonator to generate protest</li> <li>• as many as half of the students might leave this year, raising questions about who will teach the next generation of grade-schoolers.</li> </ul>

The information provided by this student was extracted from the piece of news without adding opinions.

**Category 3: Beliefs about government's actions**

In this category, students were asked to evaluate the government's action during the pandemic. All the students who participated in the development of this question considered that the government has not done enough to help people to overcome this social crisis. The following excerpt presents one of the student's opinions:

*According to the Minister of Education María Victoria Angulo, Duque government has made an unprecedented effort investing 260 million dollars in education, but certainly no time during the pandemic have this money been reflected. Many students could not afford tuition during the pandemic and the government did not help at all. The National University, with its own money, cost the enrollment of only 20% of the total*

*of its students. Nor has it intervened to help students who do not have the equipment or who have difficulties accessing an internet network. Other students who come from remote areas of the country are suffering for food and supplies, these students have subsisted thanks to their families since the subsidies from the government program called "solidarity income" never came.*

The student takes the first part of the information from the second piece of newspaper where it says that the president has made an unprecedented effort investing such amount of money. The adjective *unprecedented* has a positive meaning because it means that anyone in Colombian history has invested so much money. Nevertheless, the student refutes this idea using the conjunction *but* to introduce an opposite idea with the adverb *certainly no* to deny the Minister of Education statement. Besides, the last two lines of the paragraph confirms the student's opinion, explaining that the government's program: "solidarity income" never came for vulnerable populations who really need it.

Later, the student provides reasons which support his opinion. For instance, many students could not afford tuition, the use of modal *could not* show the lack of ability to get tuition, later the student says: the government didn't help at all (inability and lack of interest). Then, the student tackles the role of the National University, explaining that the percentage of support (only 20%) is not enough for helping all needy students. The rest of the paragraph continues mentioning present simple negative statements to describe the lack of university shortcoming now to provide support, and to describe the difficulties which are facing some Colombian students. The following extracts reveal this explanation:

*The National University, with its own money, cost the enrollment of **only 20% of the total** of its students. Nor has it intervened to help students who **do not have the equipment or who have difficulties accessing an internet network**. Other students who come from **remote areas of the country are suffering for food and supplies**, these students have subsisted*

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic  
*thanks to their families since the subsidies from the government program called "solidarity income" never came.*

Overall, this paragraph shows a negative view to the government's actions to face the pandemic. The student uses different negative adverbs (certainly no, never), verbs and nouns such as: *suffering for food and supplies, have difficulties accessing*, that support his way of thinking. Finally, the student only mentions one positive present simple statement to explain that families have supported the students who never got solidarity income.

On the other hand, the second excerpt I display here does not mention information taken from the piece of news, but it explains the whole student's perception:

*FOR More than one year, we are in pandemic times in Colombia, also, we are studying virtually. In this year, some private universities are studying in person, in contrast, public universities are not studying in person because there are many financial problems, the government does not invest in education of the country, but, yes in the war. Public universities need money to improve education, and university students need TO decrease their problems derived from THE pandemic. We need more opportunities to study and live, or... survive?*

The student highlights that virtual education continues in Colombia, especially in public universities where, as the student says: *there are many financial problems*. On the contrary, some private universities, where the student mentions implicitly that there is money, students can take face to face classes. This student uses the noun: *in person* to refer to the privilege that private institutions have.

Later, the student says: *the government does not invest in education of the country, but, yes in the war*. With this statement is expressed her negative perception about the government's worry about this social right, not only at university but "of the country". These



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic lines show how the sentences with the verb *invest* are completed with a negative and a positive object. The first one: the government does not invest in education of the country; it reveals a lack of interest. However, the student mentions a second object in the sentence: *yes, in the war* which means that: the government invests in war. This second statement indicates that Duque's government has a more remarkable worry instead of education, and it is war investment.

The last three statements which are expressed by the student are: *Public universities need money to improve education, and university students need TO decrease their problems derived from pandemic. We need more opportunities to study and live, or... survive?* Here she explains that different from private universities, public ones require money. It is interesting how she builds her discourse combining verbs such as need, improve, and decrease: need money, need more opportunities, improve education, decrease their problems derived from the pandemic.

This university public student's discourse reveals her feeling about a whole sense of unprotecting from the government. Besides, she points out why money is important in public institutions, and how it benefits her and the rest of students (the pronoun "WE" was used to include all students at a public university community). Finally, the student says a last sentence to reflect: *We need more opportunities to study and live, or... survive? This last sentence implies* how the student sees in education an opportunity to have a life, however, she changes the meaning of the word immediately to the negative verb survive which means to live despite hardship. In general, this second excerpt allows to see the high value of education for her, and how public universities do need money to provide ways to live or survive in an unequal country such as Colombia.

As can be observed, there are different discourses which make this net. On the one hand, the newspaper takes the previous discourse of the Minister of Education to show good governments action to support students. It means that the New York Times

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic at publishing this discourse, it is enhancing the powerful and hegemonic discourse of the Colombian government.

Nevertheless, for both students this discourse is debatable because the investment has not been seized by all the Colombian students in vulnerable conditions. At this point, the students emit their discourse as public university Colombian students who come from out of Bogota and know them and their partners' precarious conditions who do not have electronic devices, nor internet access or even worse a minimal income to survive during this time. Finally, the previous students' discourses point out how education right is not a priority for the government currently.

These students' perceptions have been created for different reasons that are worth to mention. Firstly, they belong to a public university as was said, but besides it, they come from different regions where inequality, poverty, and violence are their common characteristics. Secondly, with the arrival of the pandemic, the percentage of poverty and extreme poverty increased, so the economic efforts which the government seen as a powerful institution has established, has not been received by all needy population. Professor Rodríguez (2021) the Economics Sciences Faculty Dean from the National University reaffirms that: "aunque la eficacia de las políticas económicas es limitada ante la magnitud de la crisis, para los empresarios y trabajadores que perdieron su fuente de ingresos por la pandemia, los programas de apoyo llegaron demasiado tarde o fueron inadecuados o insuficientes."

In addition, the economic actions were promoted during the pandemic, but what about the socioeconomic crisis that was taking place before the epidemic? It is relevant to indicate that the Colombian government did not count with an economic strategy before, and now, one year later at the fourth peak of the pandemic in Colombia, measures are still insufficient. Rodríguez (2021) claims that:

*Más allá del corto plazo, se debe dotar al Estado de una mejor caja de herramientas para encarar crisis socioeconómicas y desastres naturales, en áreas como el*

*sistema de salud, la seguridad alimentaria, la protección del empleo y los estabilizadores fiscales automáticos. E incluir en ellas algún tipo de ingreso básico permanente.*

The point is that health system, food security, employment protection, and fiscal stabilizers are necessities that neither before the pandemic were solved. Now, these were intensified with an obliged lockdown that impoverished the vulnerable population who survived with informal jobs, with the promise of a food income which was not enough to cover Colombian hunger, and a weak health system that did not have any training nor equipment to face the pandemic. To worsen this situation, besides the catastrophic scenario president Duque government established a tax reform that released a national strike to protest the way the government has handled the country and the pandemic during this hard crisis.

Moreover, the information provided by Minister of Education has not been adjusted to the country reality, since current education ministry Angulo said that the Colombian government has given to education sector 47,2 billion from 2018 to 2021, providing opportunities, and forging alliances with teachers, students, and principals in all the region. Unlikely, there are many vulnerable students who have not been benefited from such money that according to the ministry, has been sent to these institutions. Therefore, public universities Welfare has supported economically a reduce number of needy students, but this support is not enough for all (Angulo, 2020).

“...llegó la pandemia e hizo de este año, el más atípico y retador que haya tenido el sistema educativo y la sociedad recientemente, ante lo cual el sector educativo ha liderado un trabajo responsable y comprometido para garantizar el derecho a la educación junto con las Secretarías de Educación, los docentes y directivos docentes, las familias y las instituciones de preescolar, básica, media y superior. Para ello, adelantamos reformas normativas para adecuar el proceso educativo en casa, desde la primera infancia hasta la educación superior; ajustamos el sistema de

evaluación; adaptamos el Programa de Alimentación Escolar para consumo en casa, se creó el Fondo Solidario para la Educación, se estructuró un Plan de Alivios de créditos educativos y se generaron apoyos financieros para las instituciones educativas”.

On the one hand, as covid-19 preventive lockdown was immediate, there was not possible to adjust face to face system to virtual system because many pre-school, middle, high school, and university students did not count with technological devices neither internet access to receive online classes, situation which caused frustration, a high dropout, and visibility of unequal conditions for students, not only in urban but also rural areas where abandonment and poverty is more notorious. In cities, many students and their parents became unemployed, so they had to move to other places where internet access was inexistent, or even worse, they abandoned their studies due to the lack of incomes to eat and pay the internet bill.

On the other hand, it was observed that teachers did not receive any training to teach online and much less any online evaluation system, causing frustration and an increment in the load of work. For students, in some cases, teachers without technology instruction caused boredom and lack of attention; consequently, many online teachers training courses appeared to learn how to teach, however, when we teach, courses are different and not all students can learn following this modality, so there is not a magic formula to teach. Nowadays, students and teachers want to return to schools and universities to learn because virtual education is not inclusive for all communities nor learning styles. Finally, education is an opportunity that many would like to have, so the government should certainly make possible.

#### **Category 4: Providing solutions**

Once students finished to read the first piece of news about the economic impact of the pandemic, it was asked to provide a solution as citizens and students

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic from a public university who are doing different careers. The most proposed opinions are presented in the following subcategories.

#### **Subcategory 4.1: Economic aid**

Subcategory 4.1 is called *economic aid* because some students considered that due to the harsh impact of the pandemic, the government must take real measures and help vulnerable people. In the excerpt bellow, I present one of the students' proposals:

*The solution for me is to redirect public resources to sustain small and medium-sized companies that are the ones that provide jobs, also subsidize those who live from day to day since they are the people most prone to contagion and change the economic structure of the country.*

This student presented an economic strategy which involves the use of the verb *redirect* or *direct* in a better way public resource (taxes that Colombian citizens and public industries pay to help maintain the country's economy). Then, the student uses some verbs to explain how to spend such redirected money by helping the population and the economic structure:

*to sustain small and medium-sized companies that are the ones that provide jobs, subsidize those who live from day to day since they are the people most prone to contagion.*

*change the economic structure of the country.*

From this student's stance, the harmful economic impact that COVID -19 has brought to Colombia, has its roots in the economic structure that needs to be changed. This student provides this solution because he is part of a Colombian society, and as a citizen he has seen that small and medium companies must be supported by the government, not only multinationals and big companies need its support. The student also sees and knows that many people are unemployed, so it has caused informal workers who are completely

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic unprotected, that is why the student suggests: *subsidize those who live from day to day since they are the people most prone to contagion.*

Once again, the social context has influenced the student's voice and identity to suggest meaningful actions which can improve the life of many vulnerable ones. Moreover, this student recognizes that the government is the powerful institution that can change or improve Colombian economy.

Talking about this economic aid that the students are proposing should have an effective management focused on applying real measures which can support vulnerable people. For instance, the government has not materialized real help to small and medium companies, what it has done is extending the time to fulfill credit payments, but the bank continues to charge interests, so what is the real economic relief for small and medium Colombian businesses that banks and the government is announcing? Why did many of them close?

Furthermore, A huge percentage of Colombian people pay taxes, so how much the government have invested in the pandemic? What prevents Colombian government to invest more money and address all the socioeconomical corrosive impact in our society?

Professor Zerda (2021) highlights that:

“la evaluación global que se puede hacer es que realmente la política económica y social de este Gobierno se ha quedado muy corta frente a las necesidades que tiene la población, al ciudadano de a pie no se le ha aliviado en nada la vida, siguen en condiciones extremas y precarias.”.

As the students who participated in the research study clarified, Colombia needs an economic aid that can be seen in a higher and more meaningful help because the invested money is a very low percentage considering those huge needs that a developing country such as Colombia has. Besides, the government should become honest and transparent with the money we pay from our taxes, and the way it has been spent to cover the sanitary

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic and economic crisis, because if it is true that the government has taken measures, these ones are far from cover all the pandemic impacts.

#### **Subcategory 4.2: Distribution of vaccines**

The second subcategory which emerged was distribution of vaccines since students consider that accelerating vaccination would allow people to return to jobs and improve their economic situation. To exemplify this idea, I present the following excerpts:

*Firstly, invest in the massive purchase of vaccines and campaigns of vaccination.*

*-we should have several strategies like more vaccines principality in the working class.*

The first statement is interesting because it starts with the connector *firstly* which means that it is the most relevant step to take before other actions. Then, the student continues with a command *invest in massive purchase of vaccines*. The full statement highlights the importance to vaccinate and promote vaccination in Colombia.

The second statement is introduced by the modal *should* and *the verb have* that can be understood as a suggestion, or as an important obligation. Then, the student mentions the sector of the population who most need the vaccines using the adverb *principality* (that is misused because the correct adverb is mainly). From that extract can be inferred that vaccination is mandatory in the group of the society which moves Colombian economy and maintain employment.

Even though vaccination looks like the perfect solution in Colombia and in the rest of Latin America, it has not been easy to vaccine a high percentage of population because of many reasons. First, developed countries bought most vaccines to European and American laboratories paying a higher price, on the contrary, developing countries were left behind because the payment was much lower and are

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic still having delay in delivery. Second, only the 0,6 of population has been immunized so far because health entities do not count on good planning strategies to vaccinate people, then, Department of health should interfere to make vaccination more effective not only in Bogota and main cities, but also in poor and difficult access places.

Finally, it is time that Latin America, especially Colombia starts having its own vaccine, so I institutions such as the government, health Department, and Ministry of Education should support financially university research groups who can elaborate and donate them. At present, having a Colombian vaccine is a dream, meanwhile, people must take care of themselves following biosecurity measures, especially now in the fourth peak of the pandemic when so many people have died and the socioeconomical impact is hitting the society with more strength.

### **Category 5: My story in pandemic times**

The last category which came out from the didactic sequence was called “my story in pandemic times”. Here, students wrote in a short paragraph how their lives have been during the pandemic, and based on their narratives, it was possible to select the subcategories I mention below.

The first subcategory is called *negative feelings* since all the research students manifested how they were feeling since the beginning of the pandemic. All of them used a variety of feelings vocabulary to describe their inner state. The following fragment exemplifies this explanation.

*My name is ... I study dentistry at national university, in the beginning of the pandemic I started feeling loneliness, I don't have much friends and my family always this busy, in the last months that feeling increases causing poor performance, problems socializing and eating disorders ...*



The word that the student mentions is loneliness to describe how he feels and how this feeling has been digging deeper to the point to cause academic and health problems.

The second fragment shows how a different student has felt during the quarantine:

*The pandemic has affected me increasing my anxiety caused by the confinement since the quarantine began, sometimes I get depressed since I feel that life is not the same as I am not enjoying this stage of my life to the fullest and I am letting some experiences go by isolation.*

Like the first example, the student who wrote this narrative, starts explaining how he feels using specific words related to mental disorders such as anxiety, depression due to a radical change in his way of life.

These students' voices are configured under a worldwide situation that is affecting every single person in a different way. The pandemic has affected the mental health of a great number of the population because the confinement limits people's freedom and unleashes a variety of negative feelings.

### **Subcategory 5.2: Family issues**

The second subcategory is *family issues* because many students talked about different problems that members of their families have lived so far. The next excerpt presents an example:

*I'm an outsider, my mom is a housewife, and my father works in the field and the informal economy, my dad lost several crops and now is recovering his losses ...*

She describes how hard it has been for her father this pandemic since he is a farmer, works in the informal economy, and besides, all these previous problems, he has lost several crops. Obviously, her dad's situation has affected her emotionally and economically. And her discourse is knitted based on inequality and the lack of protection for peasants in the countryside.

Another example about this subcategory is presented as follow:

*My family, specifically my mom, lost her job, and didn't get a new one until a couple of months ago, all of us are fine now, even though I'm looking for part time I haven't had any luck.*

In this example it can be seen how his mum lost her job and did not have an income for her family. Later, the student mentions that they are fine now (it implies that during mom unemployment they were having difficulties). At the end of the statement, the student says that anyway, he is trying to find a part time job.

This subcategory allows to see that besides the emotional problems they are feeling, at home they have family issues that are affecting them, so students' stress level is becoming higher.

### **Subcategory 5.3: Connectivity problems with the internet**

The third subcategory is *connectivity* since all students mentioned the different negative issues they have had with the internet. In the following extract, a student describes the bad quality of the internet in the region where she lives, and all the difficulties the student has had so far.

*in my home there wasn't good internet with luck the meter would read 1 or 2 Mbps and I ended up buying a data plan, due to the return of class I has to return to Bogotá as no company provided a better service and to go to a cybercafé I had to walk 1 hour and the data plan is expensive, it's not cost-effective because of the big amount of data I have to download and we have to save in my house.*

In the extract it is possible to see how a student who lives out of Bogota and near the mountains does not have a broadband access to the internet, so this student must find other ways to have access to virtual classes even tough, those alternatives are expensive and increase expenses at home. Certainly, this student's voice reflects the governments' neglect in the countryside, and the lack of development there.

Therefore, this student does not count on minimal conditions to study online. In the next fragment, a student who lives in Bogota also explains the problems he has had with connectivity:

*In the beginning of the pandemic my bad connection wouldn't allow me to study in the semester 2020-1, I had a bad computer ...*

As can be observed, the lack of a good connection precluded him to be able to access to his classes, for this reason he was forced to postpone his studies. So, this public university student's voice shows his vulnerability and lack of devices to take virtual classes

The previous excerpts allow to see how students' discourses are built under a vulnerable condition that they see and feel because of the lack of tools to study successfully. Besides, it shows the government and MEN (Ministerio de Educación Nacional) careless to provide the necessary devices to ensure that those students take their classes during the pandemic.

#### **Subcategory 5.4: Wishing to come back**

The last subcategory that emerged was *Wishing to come back* since all students mentioned in their narratives they want to return to university and have face to face classes. The following fragments present this idea:

*Virtual classes are really exhausting, because I can't enjoy my university life, my friends, and my university in general. There is a lot of hard homework, and it takes many time. I would love to come back to Bogotá, to my university... Now, pandemic is still horrible, I feel that my life is stagnant, I only wait for the day I can return.*

This excerpt is interesting because the student gives her opinion about how difficult virtual education is, the way she feels, and expresses reiteratively her desire to come back to Bogota (she comes from a remote region), she says: "I only wait for the day I can return".

This student's discourse is strongly marked with a gloomy feeling of what virtual education is for her, and how she waits for coming back to university to take classes, but

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic also for reestablishing her social life and meet friends. So, it can be observed that this student's discourse is made of different social, academic, and emotional elements which let us think that the university for her is not only the place where she is studying a career, it was a positive place for socializing before the pandemic.

Following this line of thought, the next fragment shows how meaningful is for other student to return to university:

*My dream of knowing math in a deep way is in decline, virtual education is the worst, my neighbors are demons, and the concentration is getting worse. I lost interest in that dream, and now my only hope is that face-to-face education arrives soon.*

The previous extract shows a heartfelt discourse where the pandemic put an end to the dream he had when he enrolled university: *My dream of knowing math in a deep way is in decline... I lost interest in that dream.* Additionally, he expresses his negative thoughts about this education modality, and other external factors that have prevented him to learn. He ends up his narrative reiterating with the adverb: *only* the desire to have face to face classes, it means coming back to university.

To sum up, this analysis shows that the tasks proposed in the didactic sequence allowed me to see two discourses. On the one hand, the newspapers' discourses and on the other hand, the students' discourses that crisscross. However, it is important to mention that *Agora* and *The New York Times* newspapers' discourses maintain power and inequality relationships supporting the government institutions actions and narrating the negative impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities, without examining the real causes. On the other hand, students' discourse is influenced by the social, political, and cultural contexts that surround them and which could be identified when analyzing and reflecting about the new reality that has brought the pandemic.

### **3. Function of the problem in the social practice.**

In this stage, the objective is to problematize the social practice which has been described previously through understanding how the social problem is, and how it ought to be. According to Bhaskar's account of explanatory critique, this stage marks the shift from is to "ought" the shift from explanation of what it is about a practice that leads to a problem, to evaluation of the practice in terms of its problematic result (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2000 p.65). In few words, to overcome the problem, it is necessary to change the practice. Finally, it is necessary to identify who can get any type of benefit in the way social life is organized, and who is not interested in solving the social problem (Sánchez, 2004).

As was previously discussed, neoliberalism not only affected economy but also all the sociopolitical spheres in Latin America and other developing countries around the world because oligarchies have the power to exercise their own financial regulations and decisions, minimaxing State's intervention, bringing as a consequence deregulated markets, labor force precariousness, and thereby social inequality. "La desigualdad en América Latina proviene de las formas particulares en que se han manifestado sus luchas distributivas, las distintas estrategias que han adoptado las oligarquías para hacer frente a dichas luchas y superarlas temporalmente y los nuevos desafíos distributivos creados por este proceso" (Palma, 2020).

Additionally, according to Chomsky (2018) inequality exists because there is a huge wealth concentration in hands of 1% of population: financial institution and transnational corporations. Inequality affects democracy, and in each democracy, people interfere in government's decisions, so big institutions preserve their power in a society through certain principles. For instance, In Latin American those power principles are seen through the reduction of democracy and unprotection of the poor. Also, the restructuration of economy favoring big companies, reducing workers' salaries, and weakening their labor conditions, maintaining them insecure and vulnerable. And, ignoring people's voice to promote division and individualism, are some impacts which describe the causes of neoliberalism in societies.

Considering such a Latin American overview, with the arrival of the pandemic, poverty increased 33,7% and extreme poverty reached 12,5% in 2020. It means that the amount of poor people reached 209 million at the end of 2020, 22 million more than last year, and 78 % of the population is in extreme poverty (Cepal, 2021). Moreover, poverty levels increased in rural areas, specifically, among children, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities on health, food security, and online education access. In the same way, in the cities it is evident the growth of unemployment, higher rate of informal jobs, impossibility of supplying basic needs for certain sectors of the population, and for some students, the lack of broad band internet connectivity and electronic devices have precluded them to have access to knowledge.

Bearing in mind those unsustainable effects, it is necessary to rethink which the real role of the State is, and how a real implementation of its functions in a Latin American country like Colombia can be possible and achievable. Following Brown (2002):

Un Estado socialmente comprometido debe desarrollar un amplio sistema de derechos y políticas públicas que garanticen condiciones mínimas de acceso, calidad, retención, promoción y ayuda en materia de educación, salud, vivienda, alimentación y seguridad. Si hemos de conservar al Estado en el siglo XXI debemos recuperar su fin primordial: la realización plena de las personas como el medio más eficaz para promover sociedades ordenadas, justas y libres.

Nowadays, it is urgent a socially committed State that promotes a sustainable and economical structure that protects and maximize social wellbeing on Colombian and the rest of Latin American citizens. A State where rights become as opportunities for the free deployment of the faculties and capacities of each person, regardless of considerations of class, ideology, religion, ethnicity, gender, or availability of economic resources (Brown, 2002).

Furthermore, education must be seen as an essential right that affects and transforms hard social realities such as the Colombian one where, for instance, the students

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic who participated in this research study have quality public education right, thus the possibility to exercises their professions with the aim to improve social, political, and cultural circumstances in the countryside and in the cities.

To conclude this stage, Alicia Barcena from Cepal (2021) considers that: the costs of inequality have become unsustainable, and it is necessary to build with equality and sustainability, aiming at the creation of a true welfare state that guarantees universal social protection as a central pillar of a long-overdue task in the region.

#### **4.Possible ways past the obstacles**

This stage complements the information provided in the previous stage, so the objective here is to discern possible resources for changing things in the way they currently are (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), for this reason, it is important to consider possible alternatives to overcome the social problems presented in this chapter.

If neoliberalism has affected the economy and other spheres of all societies of developing countries bringing inequality and poverty, then, it is necessary to take measures against them. According to United Nation Development Program (UNPD) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) considers that poverty must be recognized as a type of social deprivation which must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes further from earning an income. Moreover, Amartya Sen (2000) defines poverty as:

...la privación de capacidades básicas y no sólo como una renta baja”. Tal privación puede expresarse “...en una mortalidad prematura, un grado significativo de desnutrición (...), un elevado nivel de analfabetismo y otros fracasos”. Por tanto, la pobreza representa un obstáculo para que las personas sean o alcancen aquello que tienen razones para valorar.

Taking into consideration the previous concept, poverty forces the poor to lead a constricted life. Higher constriction means reduced capabilities which lead to higher levels of

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic misery (Sen, 2000). But what do basic capabilities mean? The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long a healthy life, to be knowledgeable (be educated), to have access to the resources and social services needed for a descent standard of living, and to be able to participate in the life of the community.

For the purpose to reach those basic capabilities that each person should have, Sen has proposed a capabilities approach that has been taking seriously around the world because it has two uses, on the one hand, it allows to evaluate a situation, and on the other hand, it makes a call to suggest policies to expand capabilities. For instance, to design and implement public interventions to make basic capabilities real. Second, evaluate and improve policies results. Third, favoring conditions to reduce inequality, and finally, foster deliberation (Gimenez & Valente, 2016).

Even though the capabilities approach which Sen proposes looks utopic in the most unequal continent: Latin America, it could permit solve basic needs, and linked to it, provide freedom to each subject, thereby causing a sociopolitical improvement in the regions. For Sen (1998;1999):

"Las libertades políticas (en forma de libertad de expresión y elecciones libres) contribuyen a fomentar la seguridad económica. Las oportunidades sociales (en forma de servicios educativos y sanitarios) facilitan la participación económica. Los servicios económicos (en forma de oportunidades para participar en el comercio y la producción) pueden contribuir a generar riqueza personal y general, así como recursos públicos para financiar servicios sociales" (Sen:1999b). El hecho de que existan libertades y derechos políticos, incluida la libertad de expresión, hace más fácil evitar desastres económicos como las hambrunas (Sen:1998)".

Following this line of thought, in Colombia, the access to all freedoms would permit children, women, communities, young and adults from any place to have the right to education to start reducing inequality gap and promoting learning and political opportunities



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic where they have a voice to be heard. As Sen said: "Universal education is a vital step in the development process".

In a nutshell, if inequality is not seriously addressed and public policies are not urgently established by the Colombian government, the poor who is 42.5% of the population will not continue having opportunities either freedom. Undoubtedly, with the pandemic impact it is unleashing more impoverishment and social, political, and economic setback where human beings and their capabilities will never be considered for helping to transform our country's reality.

## **5. Reflection on the analysis**

This research study was designed to know how students understood and analyzed two real pieces of news about social Colombian problems in the English class. The proposal to read news about the economic impact and the impact on university students due to the pandemic came up when the first day of virtual class students talked about how covid-19 had affected themselves and their families in different ways. Keeping in mind their responses, I found those pieces of news which described the financial and social problems that they talked to me about. Also, through these reading students could identify similar words in English and Spanish that could facilitate their understanding to develop reading and writing activities.

Once students finished to read and answered the reading workshops, I realized that students built their discourses as Colombian citizens and students who have been living the consequences of the pandemic in a developing country where an obliged lockdown exacerbated more the economic and social effects.

Students' discourses provided a worth text to analyze critically because they allow to see those complexed relations between language and society. Through this analysis it was possible to see how news' discourse behind lines promotes a hegemonic power and social control. ACD main objective is to study "ya sean éstas opacas o transparentes, las

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic relaciones de dominación, discriminación, poder y control, tal como se manifiestan a través del lenguaje (Wodak, 2003). During reading activities students had the chance to recognize actors and institutions that are powerful to act and make decisions in Colombian society.

On the other hand, students' voices unveil inequality, poverty, and unprotection due to the government insufficient measures before and at the pandemic arrival. Besides, this analysis may contribute to: "... visibilizar las prácticas y posibilidades de resistencia de los sujetos, así como por construir un conocimiento que contribuya a desnaturalizar y revertir los procesos de precarización, desregulación, desigualdad y mercantilización que son presentados por la retórica neoliberal como apolíticos, naturales e inevitables" (Fairclough, 2000a).

As was stated before, neoliberalism politics in Latin America disabled the State bringing consequently more poverty and weakening job conditions. Later with the pandemic, the situation got worse, that is why analyzing news was an important action to rethink with students' concepts such as inequality, informal economy, lack of opportunities, among other relevant words that emerged from interacting with those readings.

Bearing in mind the previous analysis, it is essential to ask how can this discourse analysis support education field? How can it contribute to identify our positions as citizens and students who take part in Colombian society? To answer these questions, we need to remember that each discourse takes part of a net of social practice where the pandemic has given us a new perspective of educational context where teachers, students, and other stakeholders interact.

This research project proposes how from the classroom students' discourse can be analyzed in a context where Colombian institutions have the power to solve socioeconomical and educational problems which affect them directly, but unfortunately solutions are insufficient. Their responses that emerged from serious analysis when reading news facilitated their self-understanding about the social context, and their roles as citizens who

have rights and functions to exercise and demand. About this reflection, Stetcher (2009) points out:

Este espíritu crítico es lo que está en la base del interés del ACD por estudiar, no sólo las formas en que el discurso contribuye a sostener las relaciones de dominación, sino también el modo en que a través del discurso se abren posibilidades de resistencia (contra discursos, discursos alternativos) ante los marcos culturales hegemónicos.

To sum up, critical discourse analysis process gains importance when social problems are studied considering all discursive and non-discursive aspects, for instance, actors involved, a place, a specific time, how and why the situation is occurring, instead of analyzing language isolated. Thus, CDA methodology studies language as a social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). It means that social problems which are immersed into social field networks are examined, and, in the same way, orders of discourse which are more exactly the linguistic/semiotic facet of such networks (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) are also explored because both aspects support the essence of this analysis.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and Implications

This final chapter presents the conclusions derived from this research study that intends to gather the most important elements found in its development process. Then, I provide the implications which emerged from this research study. Lastly, limitations and further research subsections are addressed to conduct future studies related to students' critical discourse analysis.

#### Conclusions

This qualitative research study intended to analyze the outcomes that emerged when students read Colombian social news related to COVID-19 economic and its impact on education. These readings were carried out through a pedagogical intervention in the ESL classroom, and its main question was accomplished by selecting news related to students' realities where they could identify social problems they were facing as Colombian citizens. This meaningful action helped students understand the content of the news, and subsequently analyze and provide their answers and opinions. In addition, the pedagogical intervention was developed through a didactic sequence which proposed a myriad of critical reading and thinking activities. From students' responses, it was possible to establish five categories related to covid-19 consequences in Colombia, actors who interacted in the news and in our society as well, beliefs about government's actions, providing solutions, and finally, in the last category students were encouraged to talk about their stories during the pandemic.

Students' reflections appeared on the categories where it was evident to identify a huge negative vision about the impact of the pandemic which was not only described by the pieces of news, but also, such information promoted in students more negative consequences that they realized as members of Colombian society. Besides, the number of negative words found in the texts lead them to design diagrams or semiotic aids to visualize and better understand how they have felt and have perceived the socioeconomical effects of

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic the pandemic. Also, students recognized in the news powerful institutions and voiceless actors who make part of this society. From their points of view, a powerful institution such as the Colombian government has not taken enough measures to counterattack inequality, poverty, low education investment, and lack of population opportunities which have seen before and nowadays during the pandemic. On the other hand, students identified in citizens, workers, unemployed ones, and low-income families' voiceless actors who are not listened to, and due to their vulnerable conditions, need a job, financial aids, and education to live, survive and make a difference in students' further towns and regions.

An important category which was a meaningful outcome was *providing solutions* because students as citizens and members of a vulnerable group of society, had the opportunity to propose ways to solve the economic impact that is hurting Colombia so much. It was very interesting how these students who are doing different careers at the National University found in a real and serious economic aid proposal the solution to relieve unemployment and lack of incomes in informal workers. These Colombian students who are active members of a society consider that it is mandatory to sustain small and medium enterprises to keep jobs and, in this way, help the most vulnerable workers. Moreover, students know that Colombian economy is critically weak, and there is a high percent of informal workers who need to be the first ones in being vaccinated. It was captivating to see that those proposed solutions were thought from students who know about these social problems, and in order to avoid more the impoverishing of unprotected and voiceless citizens, they came up with these ideas that can be seriously considered because the government measures are not enough and in most cases are not carefully planned to support Colombian population.

The proposed didactic sequence also invited students to write about their own stories during the pandemic. It was fascinating to read them because they opened their hearts to talk about the emotional, psychological, family, and economic issues that they have faced since the pandemic arrival because they have financial problems, and for the students who

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live in regions, besides their negative emotional states, the lack of internet access have pushed them to spend more money on buying data plans, or in the worst scenarios, they have been obliged to cancel the semester, feeling that their dreams have been snatched. After reading all students' stories, it was easy to me as a teacher and researcher to understand that they really want and need to come back to university and have in-person classes because they do not see in virtual education as a good means to learn. Also, they feel alone and need that social filter that a public university can give to students.

This qualitative research project also aimed at analyzing students' discourses which appeared on the different classroom activities. Such gather information was so robust that demanded I analyzed them rigorously. That is why I chose the Critical Discourse Analysis model proposed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) which is concerned with recent and contemporary processes of social transformation which are variously identified by such terms as '*neo-liberalism*', '*globalization*', '*transition*', '*information society*', '*knowledge-based economy*' and '*learning society*' (Fairclough, 2001). In addition, according to Fairclough view, this CDA model is transdisciplinary because it deals with other disciplines and theories which are addressing contemporary processes of social change (Fairclough, 2001).

This research study was built under the basis of a transdisciplinary approach that has five main stages where discourse analysis was only one of them because the other four phases required firstly from the teacher-researcher a previous socioeconomical analysis which allowed to explain why COVID-19 has impacted Colombia very negatively. Thus, exploring neoliberalism and its impact in Latin America gave a general background to understand the weak economic system we have, and the lack of the State capability to work with and for citizens.

Secondly, when analyzing students' discourse, it was possible to find that the social moment we are living worldwide has molded and reconfigured ways of thinking, conceptions of reality, and students' interactions with the pieces of news. It was identified thanks to linguistic, non-linguistic, interdiscursive, and semiotic elements which were found in

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic students' responses and reflections. Thus, discourse (re)constructs' social life in processes of social change (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

Thirdly, in the section related to function of the problem in the social practice, the teacher-researcher had to identify who or what institution can be benefited from the way social life is right now in Colombia, and why there is not any interest in solving the social problem. Through reading and analysis, I answered the question following Chomsky (2008) explanation: inequality exists because there is a huge wealth concentration in hands of 1% of population: financial institution and transnational corporations. Inequality affects democracy, and in each democracy, people question government's decisions and the powerful do not like that. Based on it, this research project intends to make inequality and poverty effects visible to create awareness from the ESL classroom and think about strategic ways to speak up and demand from our rights.

Fourthly, the stage related to possible ways past the obstacles invited the teacher-researcher to find resources or solutions to change the social problem that in this research study is focused on socioeconomical impact due to the pandemic and which has caused unprecedented consequences. For this reason, I brought up in this study Amartya Sen theory, which is focusing on investing in people, to enable growth and empower them to pursue many different life paths, thus developing human capabilities. It means that if our government invests in supporting vulnerable and non-vulnerable Colombian citizens helping them to be healthy, educated, facilitating them the access to resources and social services, our country will lower poverty and extreme poverty rates, and as an educated population, each member of the society can contribute to transform the destiny of Colombia. Lastly, the fifth stage gathered how this critical discourse analysis can be beneficial in the educational field.

It is important to remember that according to McDonald (2004) critical reading claims that the subjectivity of the reader is combined with the text when the personal experiences of the reader are integrated with the experiences of the characters (p.17). Such experiences

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic and interpretation of the two pieces of news studied in this research were analyzed keeping in mind Marx's tenets about reason and the theory proposed by the Frankfurt School which allow human beings to analyze reality and find the way to change the historical background. In the same way, Dussel highlights that through reasoning about our society, it is possible to see how the location of powerful and wealthy systems are in its center (ego-cogito), while peripheries are completely unprotected.

Thus, the reading workshops proposed to analyze, reflect, and write about the socioeconomical reality of our country, where students could identify how powerful institutions keep their hegemonic power, while peripheries and the poor are unprotected, and that is why Colombia as many other Latin American countries could not face covid-19 effects successfully. Finally, the information gathered in the workshops comprises a variety of discourses taken from unprotected undergraduate students who have felt the pandemic effects, and which are worth to analyze from the CDA perspective since it has the social responsibility to find ways recognize and give voice to the other.

Overall, this critical discourse analysis model proposed by Chouliaraki, and Fairclough (1999) demands an examination of different social studies disciplines to analyze the social problem, not only through the students' discourse but also, finding the roots of the social problems, asking who is involved, why it is happening, and how this issue can be solved. Thus, all these characteristics make of CDA transdisciplinary approach a real proposal which needs to be urgently applied with students in any classroom where we as teachers want to promote a social change.

## **Implications**

Concerning the implications that emerged from this study, I recognize the value of Critical Discourse Analysis method as an opportunity to study the discourse of different stakeholders who belong to an educational community where there are sociohistorical problems which undoubtedly interfere in human beings' performance, transforming discourse



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Undergraduate Public University Students about Covid-19 Pandemic and ways of thinking. These discourses allow to unveil inequality and power relationships through the examination of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects which make part of a society and a net of practices, but at the same time, it permits to know the social organization, the actors, and identify their voices in the discourse.

Initially, Critical Discourse Analysis intends to study those power and inequality relationships through discourse, but the most important aim is to awake a critical sensibility which allows to explore and question diverse ways of exploitation, alienation, suffering and control forms which characterize capitalist societies as Colombian government does (Stetcher, 2009, p.3). At the same time, such reflection contributes to visualize social problems to rethink and find ways to transform them. In this way, studying students' discourse critically permits to see from different angles how they see this social reality of the pandemic, and how all this analysis that was carried in the ESL classroom can emancipate them to keep on demanding their rights as students and citizens who find in education a way to transform their lives and their communities.

In addition, this kind of Critical Discourse Analysis research study is necessary in the educational field because in Colombia and in other countries it is usual to find discourse analysis of powerful institutions or actors, but it is not common to study the discourse of the vulnerable ones. So, the importance of this research project lies on giving the possibility to students to have a voice, speak up, criticize, and propose about a social situation which has been aggravated with the pandemic arrival. It is important to clarify that it started long time ago since neoliberal project was forged in Colombia, reducing the State intervention, having therefore unemployment, job insecurity, and inequality.

Finally, the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) provides standards to describe users' language ability. However, in the whole framework there is not any reference related to the importance to promote critical reading and thinking in the classroom. Besides, the books which are brought to the market and follow CEFR promote American culture readings that are decontextualized from our Colombian reality.

For this reason, the last important contribution of this research study was to bring local social realities to the classroom through news readings related to a worldwide topic such a covid-19 pandemic and promoting critical reading and thinking activities which spread across all classroom borders.

### **Limitations**

This research project is conceived as an important milestone in my personal and professional life since it was difficult to develop it because of a variety of reasons. To start, this research project was thought to be carried out in-person classroom. Unluckily, the pandemic arrival obliged us to change this educational model to a virtual one. Later, I realized that my ignorance in philosophy, economics, and social studies fields interfered with the creation of the theoretical framework and the data analysis. However, through constant reading, reflection, and a continuous writing process, I managed to learn and finish this study. Besides those previous constrains, I would like to mention other ones which changed this project course.

Firstly, I planned to develop this research study with a different group of students who belonged to a different second language program called Intensive English where students have B2 level according to the CEFR. But, when I was ready to start analyzing such population, I was changed to a different program where students have A2 level. This alteration made me rethink several times the way I could design the didactic sequence and orientate it to answer the main question and reach the proposed objectives.

Secondly, I could not carry out the pedagogical intervention in the second semester of 2020 since the didactic sequence I designed at first was not approved by the thesis advisor because it was superficial and needed more complex activities which permitted students to read and think more critically. This situation forced me to find different pieces of news and read several media pedagogy studies carried out in Latin America to generate new ideas and propose activities that could fulfill this demanding research project.

Thirdly, the first semester of 2021 started the first week of March and according to PLE schedule I was assigned to meet my students four hours or two times a week. It means that I had little time to teach the syllabus of the course and implement the didactic sequence. Later, once students had finished the development of the first reading workshop, and I was eager to start the second workshop, National Strike started, and this social situation delayed gathering the rest of the data. Fortunately, some months later order was restored and with the help of participants, I collected the rest of information.

Last but not least, it is important to mention that from the beginning of this study, students' constant reflection on Colombian socioeconomic issues was the main objective, and with the pandemic arrival, they had the possibility to think about its impact in a critical way. As it was said, this research was carried out with students who live in Bogota and around Colombia, so thanks to their home locations and life experiences critical reflection on our Colombian society was achieved. Also, based on the data analysis, it was found that the proposed activities in the reading workshops facilitated students to establish a critical stance about the socioeconomical conditions of Colombian people. Additionally, students increased their vocabulary related to social issues seen in the pieces of news, and at the same time, they used different grammar structures to speak their minds.

In short, developing reading workshops with EFL undergraduate students has brought plenty of advantages, for this reason, it is recommended to continue doing this type of activities which may contribute to different types of research fields.

### **Further research**

In this research it was proposed reading and thinking critically of social local news. However, students can interact with a different type of media, such as television programmes, magazine cuts, you tube videos, or films to analyze their content and speak or write about its own reflections.

Even though, this research project proposed a variety of reading, thinking, and writing activities, it is important to mention that one meaningful task was the creation of students' own stories in pandemic times. Those stories can be seen as narratives which may allow the teacher to implement a new research project where one analyzes how students interpret a social reality which is affecting them, and how they can express their own experiences through a writing process.

Considering that students' critical discourse analysis is not a topic which has been arduously worked in Colombia under the transdisciplinary model that Fairclough and Chouliariaki propose, and much less in the ESL classroom, it could be beneficial to continue analyzing students discourse when a social practice is identified in our society, and it affects students' identity, integrity, and voices as Colombian citizens and students. For instance, a curious teacher-researcher can analyze students' beliefs discourse about National Strike and deadlocks around our country. Such study can strengthen the understanding of relevant vocabulary like inequality, power relationships, poverty, and vulnerability in the classroom, and at the same time it can promote solutions from students' stances that can be considered to recognize our role as human beings, and little by little encourage real transformations in our communities.

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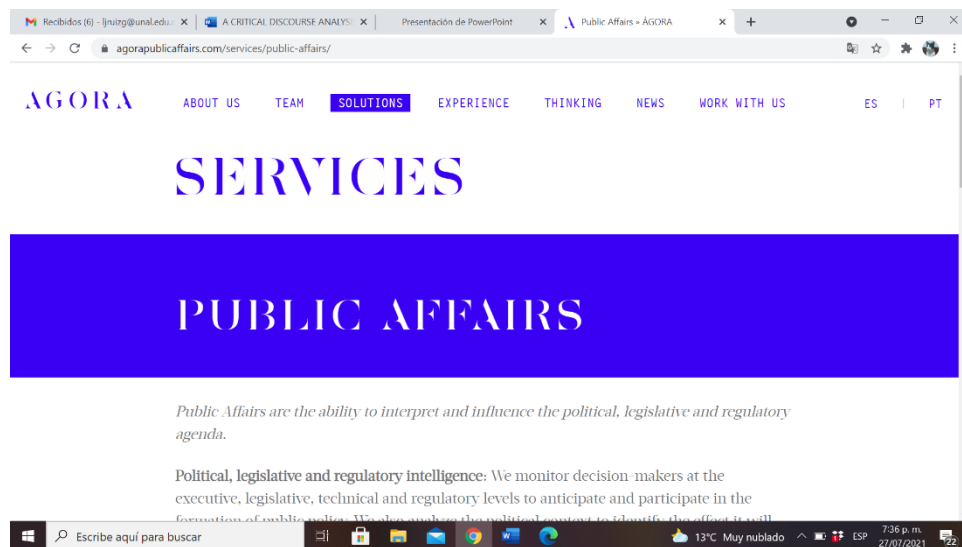
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: <https://agorapublicaffairs.com/services/public-affairs/>



### Appendix B: WORKSHOP 1

You can find the full text of the piece of news at: <https://agorapublicaffairs.com/how-was-covid-19s-economic-impact-perceived-in-colombia/>

#### PRE-READING QUESTIONS:

Before reading the piece of news, discuss with your partners the following questions:

- What economic problems do you see in Colombia during the pandemic?
- How do these problems impact your neighborhood, family, or you?




#### WHILE-READING:

1. Select *the parts of the piece of news: Masthead, headline, byline, picture, lead, caption, and quotes.*
2. What's the relationship between the headline and the picture?
3. Why is there a negative feeling about the economic impact in Colombia?
4. Complete the following chart indicating what is the cause and the effect of the economic problems during the pandemic.

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<b>causes</b>	<b>Effects</b>

5. The text mentions some problems and solutions. Please mention for each problem a solution.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>problem</b>	<b>Problem</b>
		
<b>Solution</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Solution</b>

6. What actors (people/ institutions) are mentioned in the text? Who do you feel identify with?

7. Read the following questions and answer them giving the name of the appropriate actors (government/ citizens/banks):

<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>ACTORS</b>
Who is scared of unemployment?	
Who has power to decide what to do or not to do in our society?	
Who can provide effective solutions?	
Who does not have voice?	
Who can provide financial aid?	

8. Based on the information of the text, draw a diagram where you can represent the relationship between inequality and power in the context of covid-19.

## Appendix C: WORKSHOP 2

This time we will talk about the impact of covid -19 on university students.

You can find the full text at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>

### PRE-READING:

1. Observe the pictures, what do you think is happening?
2. Now, read the headline and compare it to the pictures... what do you think?

### WHILE-READING

1. What's the negative impact of the pandemic on university students?
2. Read the article and draw a web of consequences that students have suffered during the pandemic.
3. What's the social impact on communities if students leave university?
4. What actors are mentioned in the text? What do they think?

Actors	Their thoughts

5. **How does the news represent those students?** Who has voice? Who does not have voice?
6. How can students continue studying? What do they need? Who do they depend on?
7. **Evaluate** how the government is supporting/ handling education in Colombia in pandemic times.

### CREATION TIME: MY OWN STORY

- You are a student at a public university. How does the pandemic affect you?  
Write or record a voice message of your account. How does the pandemic affect your family and your life?

**APPENDIX D**

**Workshop 1 SAMPLE**

**1. Select the parts of the piece of news: Masterhead, headline, byline, picture: cut, lead, byline, cutline, photo credit.**

- ❖ Masterhead: AGORA
- ❖ Headline: How was COVID-19's economic impact perceived in Colombia?
- ❖ Cut: two (statistics and author)
- ❖ Cutline: cut line 2: KAREM CONTRERAS
- ❖ Deck: does not exist :(
- ❖ By-line: KAREM CONTRERAS
- ❖ Lead: "the first paragraph in the new"
  - Agora Colombia's digital unit has carried out a study on the perception of COVID-19's economic impact on the country.

**Masterhead** → AGORA

**Headline** → HOW WAS COVID-19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT PERCEIVED IN COLOMBIA?

**By-line** → BY KAREM CONTRERAS

**Cut** → [Statistics chart and Photo of Karen Contreras]

**Cutline** → KAREM CONTRERAS

**Lead** → Agora Colombia's digital unit has carried out a study on the perception of COVID-19's economic impact on the country. According to the research's findings, there is a predominance of a negative feeling. Among the words most used, we should mention unemployment, enervate and violence associated to the presence of

**2. What's the relationship between the headline and the picture or cut?**

The greater the impact of the covid, the less economic reactivation there is. Eventually, violence and unemployment also increased, especially in Bogotá

The cut has different shades of blue and we know that the color blue has a symbolism with formal, sad, depress serious feelings. The title and study are formal and talk about an economic impact in Colombia. So, the cut needs to be formal, serious, and represent the trouble in Colombia, the reality is sad the pandemic's impact.

**3. Why is there a negative feeling about the economic impact in Colombia?**

In Colombia there exists a negative feeling because the words most used are unemployment, poverty, and violence. These words are present in the study and all Colombia due to the Colombians are so worried to lose their job or employment, or, they don't have money to have food, home, essential goods, or stuff like that.

**4. Complete the following chart indicating what is the cause and the effect of the economic problems during the pandemic.**

causes	effects
- The National Government need to help the economy and vulnerable populations	- <b>capitalization of loan fees</b> for different sectors - reduction of interest rates of Banco de la República - VAT refund to a million low-income families
- <b>capitalization of loan fees</b> for different sectors	- protect the employment in the small and medium-size <b>(companies)</b>
- reduction of interest rates of Banco de la República	- increase liquidity in the financial sector
- VAT refund to a million low-income families	- have the resources necessary to satisfy their basic needs or essential good.

- a. Causing lower economic growth, the closure of companies in Colombia has generated more unemployment, however, its effect has been slightly offset by teleworking.
- b. The fall in trade and tourism worsens the degree of poverty and inequality, forcing the government to announce measures to contain the virus and reactivate the economy.
- c. Initially, it was thought that the confinement would be short, and that society would return to normal, instead, the pandemic lasted and in Colombia the lack of structure in the health system was evidenced.
- d. According to DANE, in the first quarter of 2020 unemployment increased 12% as a result of mandatory confinement.

The government proposes as a solution to provide subsidies to the vulnerable population and to exonerate some public services, however, these policies were insufficient

5. **The text mentions some problems and solutions. Please mention for each problem a solution.**

<p><b>Problem</b> the protection of the country's economy</p>	<p><b>problem</b> protecting the economy and vulnerable populations</p>	<p><b>Problem</b> Not having money to satisfy the basic needs of each individual or family</p>
<p><b>Solution</b> - capitalization of loan fees for different sectors - reduction of interest rates of Banco de la República</p>	<p><b>solution</b> - VAT refund to a million low-income families</p>	<p><b>Solution</b> - Financial aid for people who belong to SISBEN and FAMILIES IN ACTION</p>

**What solutions do you propose as a group?**

- Not doing a tax reform which will raise the price of the family basket.
- Take into account the pocket of the people, when carrying out any reform or economic policy.
- Regardless of the current situation, Colombia must increase the research and education budget, diversify the economy, and create more effective surveillance systems to **control corruption**.

6. What actors (people/ institutions) are mentioned in the text? Who do you feel identify with?

- Agora Colombia's digital unit: Lina Zamora I identify with agora because I agree that there is a negative feeling of the pandemic, poverty and unemployment is something constant today
- The National Government
- Banco de la República - I identify with this because the money is scarce or doesn't enter in my wallet



- SISBEN
  - Families in Action Program
  - Tourism Sector.
  - Cultural industries - I have cultural and artistic hobbies; with the pandemic and the restrictions I can't do or enjoy my hobbies.
  - Trade sector -: I identify myself Because my family work in this sector, additionally the closure of the commerce, affects economic stability as a result to many families.
  - Sport Sector
  - Directly, I do not feel identified with any specific sector but in general, it affects me that the Colombian economy continues to decline.
7. Read the following questions and answer them giving the name of the appropriate actors (government/ citizens/banks):

QUESTIONS	ACTORS
Who is scared of unemployment?	In general terms, the people class medium, additionally the informal workers.
Who has power to decide what to do or not to do in our society?	the state, because they have most power, (monetary, governmental, etc.) them the people.
Who can provide effective solutions?	The <b>National Government</b> , research institutes, <b>universities, hospitals, groups to work in the health sector and other organizations that can have relevant information.</b>
Who does not have a voice?	In the pandemic, Colombia needed to take complicated decisions, additionally, those decisions were important to keeping food in-home or simply having a home for low-income families or keep the economy relevant. Consequently, Colombia can't have incapable people to select the future for all the country. Those are the people that shouldn't have a voice.

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**APPENDIX E  
WORKSHOP II SAMPLE**

**PRE-READING:**

1.



It seems that she is reflecting on his future and that of his daughter.

Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



Students in a laboratory practice maintaining a prudent distance between them and with other care for covid.

Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



It seems they are camping, and she is playing a beautiful tune.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



He looks concerned, and the empty egg basket reflects his concern.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



She looks thoughtful, maybe because of her studies or so it seems because of the notebook she keeps.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



A group of children having fun together with mother nature.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>



He looks lonely and seems sad.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>

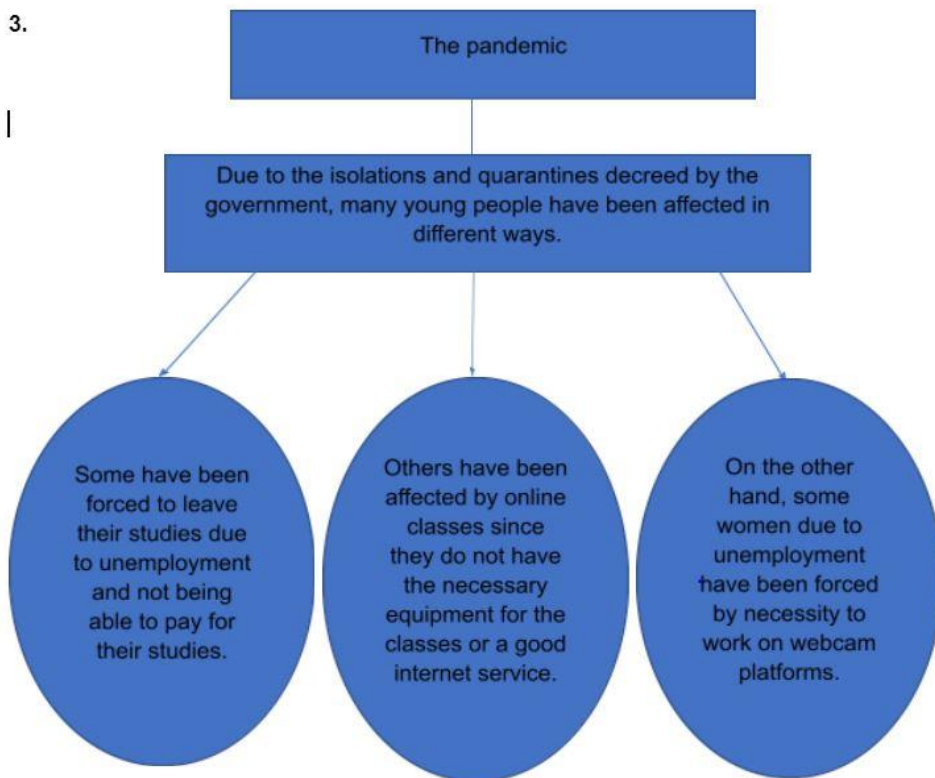


The girl looks bored perhaps from not being able to go to class due to the pandemic.  
Picture taken from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/americas/latin-america-education.html>

**WHILE-READING**

1. The images are according to the headline, in each one of them sad, depressed young people are seen, bored because the pandemic and the bad government have frustrated their dreams of continuing in the University.

2. Millions of students have had to abandon their studies due to confinement; classes are now held online and some of them do not have internet service, others have lost their jobs with which they paid for their studies and not they have enough money for tuition each semester.



4. Communities will lose the achievements that have been achieved for decades and will **fall back into poverty which will mean a great setback for the communities**. The region will once again depend on the export of raw materials, and it will not be possible to move towards a knowledge-based economy.

5.

actors	Their thoughts
Lina Prieto	This year for me was the year and everything fell apart. In my head I had already ensured my daughter's education.
Sandra García	We came from a positive trajectory; we were changing to the country.
Leonardo Fabio Martínez	

Gabriela Delgado	Up to half of the University's students could drop out this year.
Saulo de Ávila	I don't see any other options to pay for the semester.
Wendi Kuetgaje	As soon as the pandemic calms down, many people will take to the streets to protest.  I learned to be silent so as not to cause inconvenience.

6. According to the **Minister of Education María Victoria Angulo**,      Duque government has made an **unprecedented effort investing 260 million dollars in education, but certainly at no time during the pandemic have these money been reflected**. Many students **could not afford tuition during the pandemic and the government did not help at all**. The National University, with its own money, cost the enrollment of only 20% of the total of its students. Nor has it intervened to help students who **do not have the equipment or who have difficulties accessing an internet network**. Other students who come from **remote areas of the country are suffering for food and supplies**, these students have subsisted thanks to their families since the subsidies from the government program called "**solidarity income**" never came.

7. The pandemic has **affected me increasing my anxiety caused by the confinement since the quarantine began**, sometimes I get **depressed** since I feel that life is not the same as I am not enjoying this stage of my life to the fullest and I am letting some experiences go by isolation. On the other hand, I have not visited my family for more than a year and sometimes I miss those moments. **Here** in Bogotá, I live with my girlfriend, and she has been a great support, but sometimes we feel that we are missing many special moments because of the pandemic.

## APPENDIX F

### FORMATO DE AUTORIZACIÓN

#### PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN “Reading social problems news to strengthen critical Reading and thinking skills in a level II English class from PLE Programme”.

Estimados estudiantes: Actualmente curso el cuarto semestre de la Maestría en Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras, que tiene como parte fundamental el desarrollo de la investigación dentro del contexto educativo. En este momento estoy trabajando en la recolección y análisis de información dentro de la implementación de una propuesta de investigación. El título de esta propuesta es” *A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ABOUT COVID-19 PANDEMIC*”. Además, es importante mencionar que todas las contribuciones, opiniones y experiencias personales que surjan a través de la interacción con la lectura de las noticias son fundamentales para conocer su visión crítica en esta sociedad, y a la vez recuerden su rol como agentes activos en la sociedad.

Es así como solicito su permiso para que, durante algunas clases del curso de inglés, pueda recolectar información a través de toma de notas sobre discusiones, y uso de sus escritos. Su participación es de vital importancia. A todos los participantes se les garantizará:

1. Estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte.
2. Que sus aportes serán valorados y respetados.
3. Que usted no estará expuesto a ningún tipo de peligro, ni físico, ni emocional, ni psicológico.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para ser parte de este proyecto.

Cordialmente,

LINDA JOHANA RUIZ GÓMEZ

Docente – Investigador.

Estudiante:

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_