

Work in Progress: English Teaching and Teachers in Latin America

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O C T O B E R 2 0 1 9

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Preface

In 2017, the Inter-American Dialogue published a policy report on the state of English language instruction in Latin America. The report, launched in countries across the region, identified the need to improve teacher training policies, while also looking for innovative solutions to address the shortage of qualified English teachers. This report builds on that initial recommendation to provide a more complete picture of the state of English language teaching in Latin America. The report considers three main questions: Who teaches English in Latin America? And what sort of education and preparation do they receive? And what do they do in their classroom? The report seeks to provide a more complete picture of the English teaching force in Latin America and makes several recommendations about how to improve the current situation.

The report would not have been possible without the valuable collaboration of the four countries featured in this paper: Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay. We are particularly grateful to Ricardo Contreras, Ana Isabel Campos, Isabel Cubilla, Eneida Lopez and Aldo Rodríguez, all of whom not only made this report possible, but also read and provided commentary and feedback on the final document. At the Inter-American Dialogue, María Oviedo, former program assistant, and Daniela Sáez, current program assistant, and interns Ian Scholer, Sergio Cabrales and María Erives all provided additional research and editing for the report. Rosa María Cely, Rodrigo Fábrega and Claudia Brovetto also provided helpful information and feedback.

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Executive Summary

Education systems in Latin America feel an increasing pressure to ensure that students are prepared to enter the workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in a world that is increasingly shaped by unpredictable forces of globalization. Near the top of the list of 21st century skills for most countries in the region is English language proficiency. In the past decade, more than half a dozen countries from Mexico to Chile have established national English Language Learning (ELL) programs, which provide oversight and direction, and several more offer English language instruction in schools, albeit without a central coordinating body. As countries have made increasing investments in building the English language abilities of their students, the difficulty of turning these expenditures into measurable increases in student performance has revealed several key bottlenecks, chief among them the ability to recruit, train and retain high-quality, qualified teachers.

What are the challenges that countries face in their attempts to build an effective teaching force for English language instruction? How can countries more effectively prepare, hire and develop English teachers who have the language abilities and pedagogical training necessary for effective instruction? Through a study of classroom practices, training regulations and standards and administrative data drawn from four countries (Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay), this report seeks to provide a clearer picture of who these teachers are, how they are prepared and trained and offer a glance into their teaching practices in the English classroom. It is important to note that, while we often make reference to Latin America as a region, the data in this report comes, mostly, from the four countries mentioned above. We have tried to be careful in extrapolating these findings to the rest of the region (and being explicit when we mention research from other countries). In fact, based on the Inter-American Dialogue's previous report on English language learning in Latin America (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017), there are reasons to believe that these four countries are performing better than the rest of the region so, if anything, we may be optimistic in our assessment of the current situation in English teaching. Finally, the report proposes a set of recommendations directed at addressing existing challenges and bottlenecks with the goal of improving student learning through more effective support for teachers, efficient information management and clearer standards and regulations for educators and institutions.

Too many English language teachers do not have the necessary language proficiency credentials and/or academic training and degrees to be effective instructors.

Many, if not most, English teachers in Latin America lack either the necessary English skills, the necessary pedagogical skills, or both, to be effective educators in the classroom. In Chile and Costa Rica, the two countries in the region that have made a substantial effort to evaluate the English proficiency of their teachers, between 26% (Chile) and 30% (Costa Rica) of teachers meet advanced proficiency standards (at least

C1 level on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or CEFR [see Table 4]). Most fall into the intermediate band—51% in Costa Rica and 59% in Chile—and well over 1 in 10 teachers has, at best, only a basic proficiency level. Uruguay has set ambitious proficiency goals for its English teachers—C2 for all teachers by 2030—but has not conducted national-level tests of teachers' English proficiency levels. In the past couple of years, Panama has begun a piecemeal process to certify the English levels and teaching abilities of classroom instructors. In this situation, teachers must achieve at minimum a high intermediate level (B2) to enroll and at the end of the course, they receive a Certificate in English Language Teaching. To date, 361 teachers have received the certificate and another 368 are on track to do so by the end of 2019.

Many countries have put in place a language requirement for teaching English, but do not have the necessary information or systems to ensure that all English teachers meet those standards. For example, since 2018, Costa Rica requires all contracted English teachers to have at least a C1 level of English proficiency. Language evaluations show, however, that in fact most teachers do not reach this benchmark. Likewise, Chile has established the requirement that in-service teachers should have a B2 proficiency level, but the most recent national proficiency exams for English teachers show that over a third do not meet that standard. Uruguay requires all English teachers in primary schools to have a C1 certification, and secondary school teachers must have a C2 certification, with a goal for all teachers to reach C2 level proficiency by 2030 (ANEP/CODICEN, 2013). There have been no national-level assessments of English teacher proficiency, however. In other words, countries have made progress in setting standards for teachers that they then struggle to enforce or evaluate, especially as the demand for English teachers has expanded with the growth of national English programs and explicit requirements for English language instruction in public education.

For the most part, there is not a clear and well-developed strategy in place for initial teacher training that would address these credentialing and certification gaps. As a result, training institutes struggle to achieve the necessary excellence.

With a relatively small pool of proficient English speakers to select from, the challenge for most countries begins with initial teacher training. Many universities and teacher training institutes find themselves in the position of having to not only prepare future teachers to be effective educators in the classroom, but also teaching them English. As a result, students must dedicate a significant amount of their course load to learning English, and universities still report significant challenges in getting those future teachers to an adequate level of proficiency in the four or five years it takes to complete a degree. Although there are any number of ways to measure the quality of training program instructors, one indicator is the number of native English-speaking teachers. In Latin America, teaching students are unlikely to have significant exposure to native English

speakers since, at the dozens of universities surveyed for this report, only 4% of English teacher trainers were native speakers.

In many instances, this can lead to a tradeoff, where countries must choose between high admissions standards (which most applicants may be unable to meet) or accepting students regardless of their qualifications (and facing the reality that most will not build the necessary skills and knowledge within the four or five years of a degree program). Uruguay is an example of the first situation, where aspiring English teachers are required to have at least advanced intermediate proficiency (B2 level) before enrolling, but as a result has the lowest rates of instructors with teaching degrees in their English classrooms. On the other hand, Costa Rica has no nationally established minimum proficiency level to study to be an English teacher, and less than half of universities are accredited, but, because of these lower standards, essentially all English teachers have teaching degrees.

Regional weaknesses in policies to attract, prepare and support teachers are even more manifest in the case of ELL because the mismatch between supply and demand is very large.

Across Latin America, countries continue to wrestle with the questions of how to effectively recruit talented candidates to the teaching profession, adequately educate and train them for the challenges of classroom instruction and provide ongoing professional development for continuing growth and improvement. All of these challenges are relevant not only to the teaching of English, but to instruction at essentially every level and subject area. Nevertheless, the lack of adequately credentialed English teachers and the inability of existing training programs to effectively prepare teachers, coupled with the growing demand for English language instruction, only serves to exacerbate these existing challenges. It is difficult to consider the situation of the English teaching force in isolation from the broader narrative of systemic reform required to improve education quality in Latin America's classrooms. What's more, effective solutions are needed even more urgently in the case of English given the limited supply of teachers and increasing demand for English instruction.

The lack of adequate information systems (including at the classroom level) makes it extremely difficult to effectively manage the scaling up ELL programs.

At the national administrative level, beyond a basic human resources registry, few countries gather comprehensive data on their English teachers on any systematic way, and for those that do, the information is often dispersed across multiple agencies and offices. For example, in Panama, the national English program, Panama Bilingüe, manages information on the 1100 "academic instructors" contracted through the program, including their educational backgrounds, English certification and where they teach. The Ministry of Education's Statistics Department manages the database of competitively contracted teachers, but this

information is not updated and does not contain any data on the private school system. In other words, there is no central, easily accessible system with up-to-date information on all English teachers across programs, grade levels and schools.

Some countries have made a concerted effort to gain more credible data on their English teachers. Costa Rica and Chile have certified the proficiency levels of thousands of their teachers—close to 100% of all English teachers in the case of Costa Rica. Chile has also gathered robust survey data on pedagogical practices as well as teaching experience and academic background. Surveys and administrative data from all countries also suggest that around a fifth of English teachers teach at least one other subject, which can range from core subjects such as mathematics and language to arts, religion or accounting.

The lack of reliable data is also evident at the classroom level, where the learning environment and daily interactions between teachers and students often remain a “black box.” In fact, of the four countries discussed in depth in this report, only Chile has made a concerted investment in understanding classroom practices for English instruction, and even that data is self-reported. Teachers were asked what curriculum they used, how often school leadership gave feedback and supported professional development and their level of comfort in teaching and evaluating their students’ English proficiency, among other questions. Although some countries gather observational data, it is not always reviewed and analyzed in order to evaluate how English is taught, what resources teachers use and how students are learning.

The picture that emerges is one in which it would be challenging for any policymaker or official to make informed decisions, given that it is frustratingly difficult to develop a clear sense of what is working and what is not, who might need support and how to reach them. If we are to deduce any message here, it is that the first step to developing strong policies for English teachers will be gathering the necessary data at the administrative, university and classroom level to allow for informed, strategic decisions.

I: Who Is Teaching English?

Every day in Latin America, there are tens of thousands of people teaching English in classrooms across more than a dozen countries, from Mexico south to Chile. Who are these teachers? Where did they study and what kind of education did they receive? How are they working with students every day to improve their English? What skills and abilities do they have and what are the primary challenges they face? Despite the increasing amount of effort, time and resources invested in English language instruction in Latin America, these are not always easy questions to answer. This report is an effort to provide insight and information on English teachers in Latin America, focusing primarily on the more than 28000 English teachers leading classrooms in Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay (see [Table 1](#)). The report draws on a combination of administrative data, original survey data (see Note on Methodology) and existing publications to paint a fuller picture of the state of English language teaching in these four countries, as well as indicating more general trends that are true across the region.

Table 1: English Teachers in Latin America

Country	Gender		Level			Type		Total ^l
	Male	Female	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary ^{ll}	Public	Private	
Chile	2928 (25.2%)	8701 (74.8%)	92 (0.8%)	7270 (62.5%)	4267 (36.7%)	4330 (37.2%)	7299 (62.8%)	11629 (6.1%)
Costa Rica	2131 (25.4%)	6264 (74.6%)	766 (9.1%)	4269 (50.9%)	3360 (40.0%)	6221 (74.1%)	2174 (25.9%)	8395 (10.5%)
Panama ^{lll}	1351 (25.7%)	3899 (74.3%)	11 (0.2%)	3493 (66.5%)	1746 (34.2%)	5250	-	5250 (10.5%)
Uruguay ^{lv}	856 (29.5%)	2044 (70.5%)	-	550 (19.0%)	2350 (81.0%)	2900	- ^v	2900 (5.8%) ^{vi}
Total	6701 (25.5%)	21373 (74.5%)	869 (3.1%)	15582 (55.3%)	11723 (41.6%)	18701		28174

Source: Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019; Javier González, personal communication, July 24, 2019; Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019.

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The management of these teaching forces is generally led by ministries of education, and although each country has basic human resources data on teachers—including names, where they teach, when they entered the teaching force and what kind of degree or certification they have—few countries gather comprehensive data on English teachers on a regular, systematic basis. This naturally leads to a lack of critical information available for decision-making at the policy level. Despite these information gaps, the standards for contracting English teachers do tend to be higher than those for other subject areas, in particular through the addition of a language requirement. While this is a positive sign that countries recognize the importance of holding high standards, it can also lead to a shortage of English teachers, even when there may be an overall surplus of teaching staff. Despite these advances, however, perhaps the most pressing challenge that countries in Latin America continue to face in terms of their English teaching force is ensuring that teachers are proficient English speakers with the appropriate pedagogical training to effectively lead a classroom. Although many countries have established language and training requirements for their English teachers, evidence, where available, suggests that many teachers do not meet these benchmarks. Furthermore, even when teachers do meet specific language standards, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent this results in better teaching practices, since there is little evidence of what happens inside the classroom.

English teachers look like most other teachers in Latin America: they are female, teach at the primary level and in public schools.

Beginning in the 20th century, teaching has become a steadily more female profession in Latin America, so it should not be surprising that most of the region's English teachers are women as well (Elacqua et al., 2019). A surprisingly consistent three-quarters of the teaching force is female across almost every country studied here. In fact, in some countries, English teachers are more likely to be female than the general teaching force (see [Table 2](#)). For example, although about 57% of Costa Rican secondary teachers (in all subject areas) are female, the secondary English teaching force is 64% female, and across all educational levels in the country, English teachers are as or more likely to be female than other teachers. In Panama, we observe a similar pattern, where the general secondary teaching force is 59% female, but secondary English teachers are 73% female.

English teachers also make up a significant portion of the teaching force in many countries—from 5.8% in Uruguay, all the way to 10.5% in Costa Rica and Panama (see [Table 1](#)). It is notable that, apart from Uruguay, most English teachers in Latin America work at the primary level, partially due to the fact that primary education has higher enrollment levels, but likely also an indication that, rather than treating English as a “specialized” subject area to be taught at the secondary level, many students in Latin America are receiving their first exposure to English in primary school.

Table 2: Female English Teachers Relative to General Teaching Force^{vii}

	Chile		Costa Rica		Panama	
	% Female English Teachers	% Female All Teachers	% Female English Teachers	% Female All Teachers	% Female English Teachers	% Female All Teachers
PRE-PRIMARY		98.7%	97.0%	93.1%	90.9%	95.4%
PRIMARY		81.0%	78.8%	78.9%	74.7%	76.7%
SECONDARY		60.0%	64.2%	57.4%	73.3%	59.2%

Source: UIS, 2019 (General teaching force data is from UIS. Chile data from 2017. Costa Rica and Panama data from 2016.); Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019; Javier González, personal communication, July 24, 2019; Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, September 16, 2019.

This follows the general trend in Latin America to make English language instruction a universal subject, accessible to all students, and included in national curricula at all levels (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

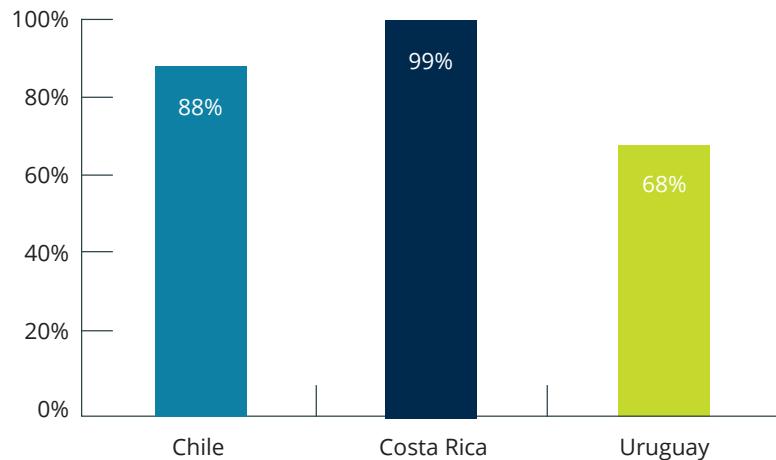
Certification continues to be a significant challenge for countries, and too many English language teachers do not have the necessary credentials and/or competencies to be effective instructors.

The extent to which English teachers have the proper pedagogical and English language skills to lead a classroom can be determined in large part by two factors: whether they have a teaching degree in English, and whether or not their language proficiency has been certified (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). In many cases, these two areas can be linked, such as when a university has a language certification requirement either to enroll or to graduate. Additionally, these two criteria are likely to be mutually reinforcing; teachers who have completed their degree in English education are also likely to have received significant instruction in English as part of their training, while those who have not completed a degree may not have had the same opportunities to build their English skills. For example, data from Chile shows that of those English teachers who do not have the proper academic credentials, almost all (96%) also do not have a command of the language (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

In terms of teachers with education degrees, among the four countries studied in this report, Costa Rica leads the way, with 99% of its teachers having the appropriate university degree (see [Graph 1](#)). At the other end of the spectrum, only 68% of English teachers in Uruguay have English teaching degrees. It is important to understand these numbers within the higher education context of each country, however—a subject that is explored further in Chapter II of this report. The lack of trained teachers can have real effects, however. For example, a 2017 study of English language instruction in Uruguay, citing a 2016 internal report, found that

Graph 1: English Teachers with Teaching Credentials

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Source: Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019; Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, July 22, 2019.

English teachers, in comparison with the general teaching force, have the lowest certification levels of all subject areas. This lack of certified teachers forced the secondary education oversight body to fill more than half of open positions with teachers who did not have the appropriate training (Achugar et al., 2016, as cited in Kaiser, 2017).

In Panama, English teachers in the public schools can be hired one of two ways: either they are contracted through open calls for teachers, in which case they go through the standard, competitive hiring process, or they are hired as “academic instructors” by the Panama Bilingüe program.^{viii} Teachers who are hired through the traditional processes account for 78% (4117) of the country’s English teachers, while the remaining 22% (1133) teachers are academic instructors. English teachers who are hired as academic instructors, rather than go through the traditional competitive processes, instead complete a written and oral English exam to determine their proficiency, along with a psychological evaluation. These steps are critical, since most of the academic instructors have not yet completed their teaching degree (see Table 3).

Table 3: Academic Instructors with Teaching Degrees in English, Panama^{ix}

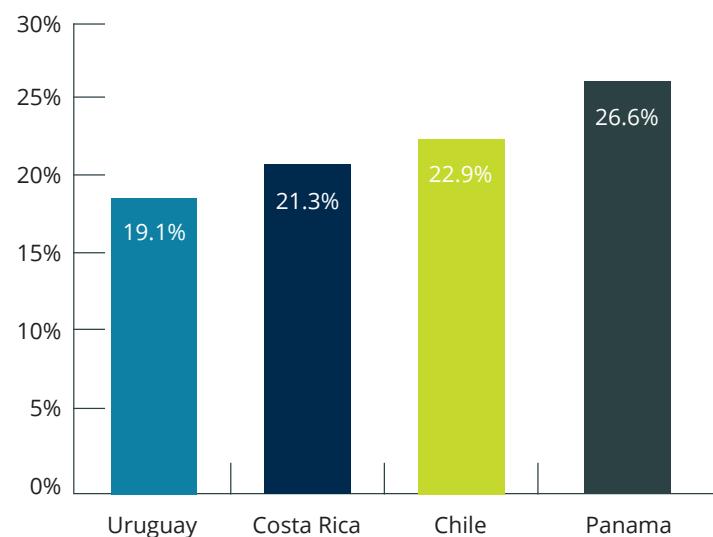
Studying to finish degree (number)	Studying to finish degree (%)	With degree (number)	With degree (%)	Total
691	61%	442	39%	1133

Source: Celeste Marín, personal communication, Aug. 1, 2019.

Just because teachers have a teaching degree, however, does not mean that they are necessarily hired at the correct level for their certification. For example, in Chile, although 62.5% of English teachers work in primary schools, the majority of public-school English teachers actually have their qualification in secondary education, indicating that at least some percentage of the primary school teachers actually have a degree to teach English at the secondary level (Rojas et al., 2013, as cited in Barahona, 2016). This finding is reinforced by a 2013 study of municipal primary schools in Chile, which found that 45.2% of English teachers did not hold the proper degree to teach at that level (Paez & Contreras, 2014, as cited in Barahona, 2016). Studies indicate that this is a common scenario in other countries as well. In Colombia, a study of primary school English teachers in the department of Antioquia found that, of the teachers who had a university degree, only 14% had a teaching degree in English. The rest of the teachers had degrees in primary education, pre-school and Spanish and literature (Paez & Contreras, 2014, as cited in Barahona, 2016).

The flip side of this phenomenon is that many English teachers are also required to teach subject areas other than English. The survey data collected for this report shows a consistent pattern across countries of about one in five English teachers teaching additional subject areas (see [Graph 2](#)). This information also aligns with administrative data, where available. For example, in Chile and Uruguay, administrative data shows that 15% of English teachers teach additional subject areas.^x Although in some cases, this may be due to the fact that teacher certifications allow for teaching general content areas, or serving as a counselor

Graph 2: % of English Teachers Who Teach Additional Subject Areas



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

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or homeroom teacher, this is clearly not always the case. Survey respondents mentioned teaching everything from all basic education subjects (often at the primary level) to more specialized topics such as religion, biology, chemistry, theater and accounting. It is hard to say for sure what the effect of these different classes may be: for example, do they inhibit teachers' abilities to become experts in their field, or are they useful in allowing teachers to broaden their capabilities across subject areas.

One positive step forward in ensuring that teachers have the appropriate skills in the classroom has been the trend towards using internationally recognized standards in English to determine teachers' language qualifications. Even when these language requirements are not always fully implemented, they represent important progress given that they establish a clear, comparable benchmark, which can be critical for making policy decisions (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). The overwhelming preference among countries in Latin America has been to use the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (see [Table 4](#)). The Framework is divided into six progressively more advanced levels (from A1 to C2), each of which is accompanied by a descriptive statement explaining the skills, abilities and tasks that mark language use at that level.

Of the countries studied for this report, all but Panama have established language proficiency requirements for teachers at the national level (see [Table 5](#)). These standards, which are separate from the educational requirements to be a teacher, and which are established by ministries of education, not training institutions, are critical for ensuring that teachers have not only the pedagogical skills but also the language abilities to be effective instructors.

To date, Uruguay has set the highest standards, with a minimum C1 requirement for primary teachers, and a C2 accreditation—the highest on the CEFR scale—required to teach secondary education. In both Chile and Costa Rica, current teachers should have either a B2 or C1 proficiency level, depending on several factors: in Costa Rica, whether a teacher has a permanent contract with the Ministry of Education or has only been hired on an interim basis.^{xi} In Chile, all recent graduates entering the teaching force are expected to speak at a C1 level, but current teachers are only required to meet B2 standards (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Although Panama does not have a language proficiency standard at the national level, through the Panama Bilingüe program, some teachers (both those hired directly by Panama Bilingüe and those contracted competitively by the Ministry of Education) have been able to certify their English skills through a piecemeal process. English teachers must first

Table 4: Common European Framework for Languages

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: Council of Europe, 2001.

Table 5: Language Proficiency Standards for Teachers

Chile		Costa Rica		Panama	Uruguay	
Graduating teachers	In-service teachers	Interim	Permanent		Primary	Secondary
C1	B2	B2	C1	NONE	C1	C2

Source: Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019; Javier González, personal communication, July 24, 2019; Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019.

pass a test certifying their abilities at a B2 level after which they enroll with the Cambridge University program to receive a Certificate in English Language Teaching (CELT) at either the primary (CELT-P) or secondary (CELT-S) level. The program, which saw its first set of graduates in 2017, has so far certified 361 English teachers, with another 368 expected to receive the certification by the end of 2019.^{xii} Although only a small percentage of English teachers in Panama have received the certification, it does have the additional benefit of focusing not just on language competencies, but teaching skills specifically. Teachers complete the course through nine online modules, face-to-face seminars following each module and portfolios. After completing the online modules, teachers take the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) to receive the final certification (Cambridge Assessment, 2015). Uruguay has also offered the certification, on a more limited scale, to interim English teachers who do not have their teaching degree (ANEP, 2019a).

Despite the challenges of hiring English teachers with the appropriate academic background and linguistic abilities, countries have recognized the special qualifications that are required for effective English instruction, and in some cases, there are in fact more regulations or standards to be an English teacher than to teach other subjects. In Panama, the Panama Bilingüe program stands out for having designed specific teaching standards for their English teachers, in a country where there are no national-level standards for teachers (Inter-American Dialogue & Unidos por la Educación, 2017). Costa Rica has a similar situation, where foreign language classes (French and English) are the only subject areas that require specific credentials to be contracted by the civil service (Inter-American Dialogue & Estado de la Nación, 2018).

Weaknesses in policies to attract, prepare and support teachers characterize education systems in the region, and are even more manifest in the case of English because the mismatch between supply and demand is very large.

Across the region, as access to educational opportunities have expanded, countries in Latin America have struggled to offer high-quality teacher training, ensure desirable working conditions and preserve the social prestige of the teaching profession (Elacqua et al., 2018). These challenges are particularly pronounced in the field of English teaching given the specific and in-demand skills that are required.

A significant challenge, beyond just ensuring that teachers who are hired meet established standards, is meeting the growing demand for English teachers. For example, in Costa Rica, data from 2014 shows that, of the primary-school teaching positions that could not be filled and were declared empty, 95% were English positions (Inter-American Dialogue & Estado de la Nación, 2017). Chile and Uruguay have also faced persistent shortages in English teachers as well (Barahona, 2016; Kaiser, 2017). In fact, in Uruguay, the innovative *Ceibal en Inglés* program was developed to leverage the country's high connectivity rates and address the lack of English teachers. The initiative, which provides English instruction, educational resources, and teacher training, connects native English-speaking teachers to Uruguayan classrooms via videoconference software (IDB, 2014). In 2019, *Ceibal en Inglés*, which has been shown to be effective at improving students' English skills, accounted for slightly less than 50% of all the primary-level English classes in the country.^{XII}

Data from other countries indicates that meeting the demand for English teachers is a challenge across the region. For example, Colombia has reported a shortage of 3200 English teachers, a situation which had led to limited English coverage in more remote areas of the country (Semana, 2017). A similar problem exists in Mexico, where half of the public schools in Mexico City have English teachers, but less than 10% of public schools in other, poorer, states, such as Tabasco and Veracruz, have English teachers. Estimates project a need for 80000 additional English teachers to offer universal instruction across the country (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). Peru and Ecuador also face growing demands for English teachers since both countries recently implemented policy changes that expand English coverage to additional hours (in Peru) and younger grades (in Ecuador) (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Evaluating English teachers' language abilities is a key first step to identifying proficiency gaps and establishing a benchmark for progress.

Across Latin America, only Costa Rica and Chile have collected substantial data on their English teachers' competency levels, and, in both countries, the evidence shows considerable gaps between established proficiency standards and teachers' actual abilities (see Box 1) (Cronquist & Fiszbein,

BOX 1: PROGRAMA INGLÉS ABRE PUERTAS IN CHILE AND GATHERING DATA ON TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

In Chile, the national English program, called Inglés Abre Puertas (PIAP by its Spanish acronym, translated as English Opens Doors) was written into law in 2004, and is the most established national English program, both in terms of longevity and comprehensive data on student achievement, teachers and teaching practices that it has collected over its fifteen years of operation. The program has a mandate to focus on English language instruction for students in 5th through 12th grades, with a specific aim of democratizing English instruction and making it accessible to all students (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d.).

PIAP offers a diverse array of programs to strengthen and support English language learning in Chilean schools, including English camps and debate and public speaking competitions for students. For teachers, PIAP leads professional development initiatives, such as online courses, research projects, teaching workshops, learning communities and study abroad grants. PIAP also works closely with pre-service teachers in their fourth or fifth year of university to offer them teaching opportunities at the English camps as well as scholarships to study abroad at English-speaking universities via the Beca semestre en el extranjero (Scholarship for a semester abroad) (Ministerio de Educación Chile, n.d.).

PIAP is only part of the Chilean Ministry of Education's policy efforts to improve English language proficiency, which also include the national English curriculum and learning assessments. Chile has invested significant resources in gathering,

analyzing and managing important data on teacher and student performance. Chile assesses a sample (representative since 2016) of upper secondary students every three years with the SIMCE Inglés exam (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). The latest results, published in 2017, show important progress since student evaluation began in 2010, with 32% of students at or above A2 level, compared to only 11% of students meeting that benchmark during the first evaluation (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017; Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, Sept. 4, 2019).

What is perhaps most impressive is the way that Chile has used these results to also determine the effect of teaching practices on student outcomes. For example, 27% of students tested reported that their teachers spoke English during most or all of the class period. Students whose teachers spoke entirely in English scored, on average, eleven points higher than those whose teachers spoke in Spanish. This type of gap is of course not surprising, but having the concrete evidence to show the extent of the effect at a national level and in publicly available format is unique and provides the Chilean Ministry of Education with crucial information for making informed policy decisions (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017).

PIAP has also collected its own data on teachers via surveys that focus on classroom practices and methodologies, student-teacher interactions and use of technology and other tools to register a clearer picture of life inside an English classroom.

2017). For example, although contracted English teachers in Costa Rica are supposed to have a C1 level of English, only 29.5% of those tested met that bar (see [Table 6](#)). In Chile, where all current teachers are supposed to be at a minimum B2 level, about 63.2% of teachers met that bar. In both countries, very few teachers are below the “independent user” levels on the CEFR, indicating that they are indeed at least somewhat proficient in English. In Uruguay, current teachers must have a B2 level to teach at the primary level and C1 level to teach in secondary schools, a requirement that was recently raised to C1 for primary and C2 for secondary.^{xiv} In order to be hired, teachers must present a certificate or test result that confirms their language proficiency level.^{xv} The goal is for all English teachers to be certified at a C2 level by 2030 (ANEP/CODICEN, 2013). Uruguay has also, in partnerships with Cambridge University, begun certifying the language abilities of some teachers, with promising results. In 2016, of forty teachers who were tested at the C2 level, 90% received the certification (ANEP, 2017).

The challenge of measuring and certifying English teachers’ language proficiency is common in other Latin American countries as well. In 2013, Colombia administered a diagnostic exam of half of its 15300 English teachers. The results showed that only 43% of the tested teachers met the established benchmark for language proficiency, a B2 level on the CEFR scale (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). Even more concerning, a 2012 study of English teachers in Ecuador found that only 2% of instructors met the B2 level proficiency standard, and a study of over 3000 English teachers in Mexico determined that a third of them had A1 level proficiency, the lowest on the CEFR scale (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Table 6: English Teacher Competency Levels

CEFR Level	Chile	Costa Rica
A1	4.0%	1.6%
A2	10.7%	17.7%
B1	22%	19.8%
B2	36.5%	31.3%
C1	21.4%	29.5%
C2	5.3%	-

Source: Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019.

I: Who Is Teaching English?

A lack of adequate information systems makes it extremely difficult to manage English language programs and teachers effectively.

At the Ministry of Education level, all countries have basic human resources data on English teachers in the public-school system, including names and identification numbers, when they entered the system, where they teach and what type of certification they have. Beyond this, however, there is a large variation in what data is available. For example, Uruguay and Panama both lack basic information on English teachers in the private education system (such as how many there are, and where they teach), let alone more comprehensive information on their abilities and qualifications.^{xvi} Even for public school teachers, Panama's Ministry of Education does not have up-to-date contact information, given that teachers often transfer from one school to another and the system is not updated.^{xvii} Uruguay and Chile, however, regularly collect thorough data on teachers—including English teachers—and publish statistical reports on key English language learning indicators.^{xviii}

English programs and education ministries will need more than just basic human resources data to improve teacher quality (although this is a necessary first step, if only to know who teachers are and where they teach). For example, as Chile (see *Box 1*) and Costa Rica have illustrated, measuring English teacher proficiency levels is critical to be able to offer effective training and track progress towards national goals. Additionally, as Chapter II of this report will discuss, the lack of regulation around initial teacher training means that often ministries do not have clear data on what teachers are learning and whether or not it is aligned to national curricula and teacher competency frameworks. Even beyond this, it can be difficult to ascertain additional information on teaching practices in the classroom that could illuminate what sort of professional development educators could benefit from and how to effectively deliver it.

If countries are serious about improving the English abilities of their students, they will need to also get serious about measuring and improving the qualifications and language proficiency of their teachers and tracking this data regularly and systematically. Only with this type of rich, detailed information can countries hope to make more strategic, informed decisions to improve the quality of their teaching force. For example, Costa Rica, after initially testing their teacher proficiency levels in 2008, offered additional training courses to those teachers who did not meet desired proficiency levels, and saw a significant improvement in teachers scoring at the B2 and C1 levels at the same time that the number of teachers with an A1, A2 or B1 proficiency level decreased (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). It was only by collecting this initial data, however, that Costa Rica was able to, first, identify which teachers needed additional support to improve their language proficiency and, then, offer supplemental training to improve their English abilities.

II: How Are English Teachers Trained?

Initial teacher training is a critical step in ensuring that educators enter the classroom with the skills, knowledge and abilities that will allow them to be successful educators. Training institutions also play an important role in determining who becomes a teacher in the first place. Through selection mechanisms and graduation requirements, they have the ability to decide who studies to be a teacher and whether or not that person has met the necessary criteria to graduate (Elacqua et al., 2018). This role, however, requires initial training institutions to set and hold clear standards, and work in close collaboration with ministries of education to determine the needs of the education system and ensure that teacher pre-service education curricula are in alignment with professional performance frameworks. Although there have been positive steps in moving nearly all pre-service teacher education in Latin America from the secondary to the tertiary level, in most situations, there is neither the high-quality instruction and rigorous requirements nor effective collaboration with ministries of education that would allow for significant improvements in education quality (Elacqua et al., 2018).

In the case of English, the good news is that most teachers in Latin America have received a teaching degree in English instruction from a university or equivalent degree-granting institution. Although in some countries, such as Uruguay, English teachers may be less likely to have a teaching degree than educators in other subject areas, and in others, such as Panama, there is a subset of English teachers (academic instructors), who are unlikely to have completed their teaching degree, most students in Latin America's English classrooms will have a teacher who has completed a tertiary degree in teaching.

Unfortunately, there is still a significant lack of regulation in almost all aspects of the teacher training process, from admissions standards and teacher trainer qualifications to curriculum and graduation requirements. This disjointedness produces large heterogeneity in the experiences of pre-service teachers, as well as their ability to lead a classroom once they graduate. Poor regulation is also often part of a mutually reinforcing relationship of poor communication between universities and ministries of education, which prevents ministries from having necessary input in what skills and knowledge they are looking for in recent graduates, and universities from being able to make the appropriate adjustments to ensure that their graduates leave with the proper skills.

There are, of course, exceptions to this general pattern—Chile being the most notable one, although Uruguay has also set high language standards for its pre-service English teachers. Nevertheless, even when there are stronger regulations or standards in place, evidence suggests that there is a wide gap between what it set down on paper and what happens in practice. Without a doubt, one important step for improving initial teacher training is ensuring that existing standards and policies are fully and faithfully followed.

As is true for the teaching profession generally, entry requirements for training programs are not selective. This is a particular problem for English, where language competencies are critical.

One of the most fundamental entry requirements to be considered for admission to study English language teaching is a student's proficiency level in the language. Of the countries surveyed for this study, Uruguay is the only country that has a national policy that establishes language proficiency standards for enrollment in English teaching degree programs (see *Box 2*). Since 2008, the country has required that all students who wish to study to be English teachers must present a qualification showing that they have achieved a First Certificate in English (equivalent to a B2 on the CEFR scale) or other certification that shows they are at a B2 level. If students do not have this certification, they must complete a written and oral exam aligned with the First Certificate certification test. The only other teaching majors that require specific accreditations to enroll are Italian and music (Instituto de Profesores – Artigas, n.d.).

BOX 2: ENGLISH ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS IN URUGUAYAN UNIVERSITIES AND MEETING EXCESS DEMAND

Uruguay's nationally set language proficiency standard to study for an English teaching degree is unique in the region and sets a precedent for other countries in terms of what language skills they expect future teachers to have at the beginning of their training. The B2 level established by Uruguay makes sense since this is the proficiency level that students are expected to meet by the time they finish their secondary schooling, as well as the level at which students should be able to study independently (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017; Council of Europe, 2001). In theory, if all high school students met established standards upon graduation, anyone could study to become an English teacher. Unfortunately, as is the case in several countries, only a few students meet these benchmarks. National

results from the 2018 Adaptive English Evaluation show that only 11% of third-year secondary students were even at a B1 level in vocabulary and reading, and 16% met that standard for listening (CEIP/CETP/CES/ANEP/Plan Ceibal/British Council, 2019).

This limited number of graduating secondary students who could meet entry requirements to study for an English language teaching degree, along with the high proficiency requirements to teach English at both the primary (C1) and secondary (C2) level-regardless of whether or not one has a teaching degree-has led to a great demand for English teachers in Uruguay-one that could not realistically be met by the current supply of Uruguayan teachers.

To address this shortage, Uruguay has pursued a creative response that has dramatically expanded student access to English instruction, while still maintaining high quality standards. Plan Ceibal, Uruguay's One Laptop per Child program, had provided computer access to all students in grades 1-6. In 2012, *Ceibal en Inglés* (*Ceibal in English*) was launched as an initiative of Plan Ceibal to leverage the high connectivity rates in the country (100% of schools have WiFi access) and expand English language instruction to all students (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

At the primary level, students in 4th-6th grades receive English class three times a week—once a week via videoconference with a proficient English teacher (some teachers are in Uruguay, but others are native speakers from the US or the UK), and the other two times a week with their classroom teacher to reinforce new concepts learned during the videoconference. The classroom teacher and remote teacher also collaborate virtually to prepare lesson plans and share materials.

At the secondary level, where there are more certified English teachers (see Table 1), students use this time for a weekly Conversation Class with a native English-speaking teacher in order to practice their oral expression skills. Once again, classroom and remote teachers coordinate the lesson plan beforehand to maximize student learning (Plan Ceibal, n.d.). Although there is some evidence that the model is not always faithfully followed—for example, remote and classroom teachers do not meet virtually outside of class time to collaborate—in general, implementation

of the program has been quite thorough (Kaiser, 2018).

Ceibal en Inglés has greatly expanded student access to English language instruction, especially at the primary level. In 2018, the program accounted for about 70% of English instruction in elementary schools (CEIP/CETP/CES/ANEP/Plan Ceibal/ British Council, 2019). Coverage, however, is not the only issue. Quality of instruction can also be a challenge, and in this regard, too, *Ceibal en Inglés* has pursued an aggressive monitoring and evaluation agenda in order to ensure that students who learn via videoconference progress at the same pace as those who have an in-person teacher. This is tracked through implementation reports as well as online adaptive assessments to measure student learning in key proficiency areas. Multiple evaluations have found that students gain key vocabulary, reading, grammar and writing skills through the program (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

In 2018, Uruguay launched a new initiative, aimed at ensuring the universalization of English in rural areas by reaching schools who do not have an on-site English teacher or access to *Ceibal en Inglés*. The program, called *Inglés Sin Límites* (English without Limits), was piloted in 64 schools across 7 departments in November, 2018. Following successful completion of the pilot, the program was rolled out in all qualifying primary schools across the northern half of the country and a select group from the southern half, starting in April, 2019. Through *Inglés Sin Límites*, primary school teachers receive additional training and resources as they learn English together with their students (ANEP, 2019b).

II: How Are English Teachers Trained?

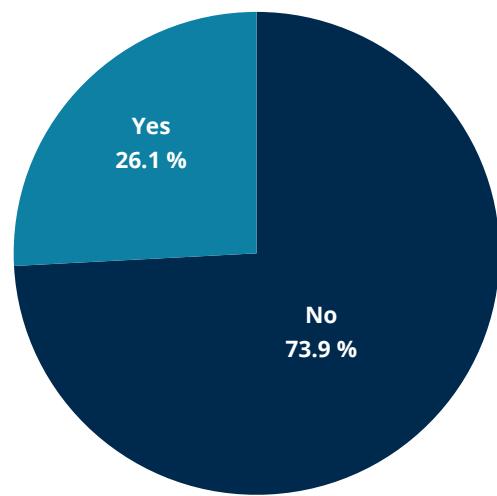
The other countries surveyed for this report do not have a national-level policy for matriculating into English-language teaching degree programs beyond the general admissions standards for all future teachers. In most cases, university admission depends on standardized test results either as a graduation requirement for secondary school, or as an entrance exam for tertiary education. In Chile, the *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* (University Selection Test, abbreviated PSU in Spanish), is administered to graduating secondary students to determine their mathematical, language and communication abilities, as well as their knowledge in other content areas relevant for the degree they hope to pursue. The test is aligned to the national secondary curriculum, and results are curved to produce an average score of 500. Students must achieve a score of at least 450 to apply to universities (DEMRE, n.d.).

Costa Rica and Panama do not have national standardized exams for university admission, although some public universities may apply an aptitude test. In Costa Rica, the minimum score to enroll in education degree programs is usually lower than for other majors, while in Panama, students at public universities must complete secondary school with a minimum grade point average (3.5 to 3.8 on a five point scale) (Coalición Latinoamericana para la Excelencia Docente, 2019). The University of Panama does apply an English admissions exam for students who are interested in studying for a Bachelors degree (*licenciatura*) in English, but results show that only 60% of students gained a passing score. In 2018, of 500 students who took the test (most of whom graduated from public high schools), only 300 passed the English test, an exam that lacks rigor and measures only basic and intermediate grammar knowledge with no reading, speaking, listening, writing, pronunciation or vocabulary components (Gonzalez, 2019).

Of the dozens of universities that responded to surveys for this report, only one in four had a language proficiency requirement to study English (see [Graph 3](#)).^{xix} In Chile, only one university mentioned a language requirement, which was the B2 level. All other universities accepted students regardless of their English proficiency levels, although most did administer some form of placement or diagnostic test to track student progress throughout their studies. A few Costa Rican universities also set proficiency requirements, but, as in the case of Chile, and Panama as well, most had no English requirement to matriculate, although many did use diagnostic assessments once students were enrolled.

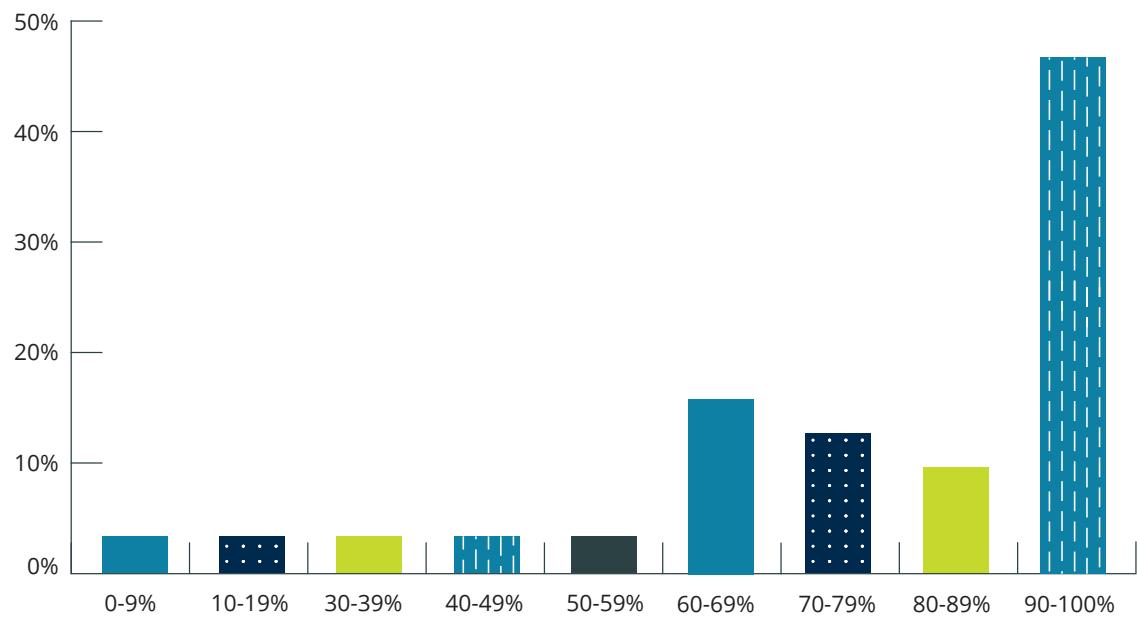
Given the lack of stringent admissions requirements—either academic or linguistic—it is unsurprising that many universities also have very high acceptance rates (see [Graph 4](#)). Of the universities surveyed for this report, almost half (47%) had an acceptance rate above 90%, meaning that as long as students met the basic requirements for admission, they could enroll. Even the ones that reported lower admissions rates still

Graph 3: Admissions Rates to English Teaching Programs



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

Graph 4: Admissions Rates to English Teaching Programs



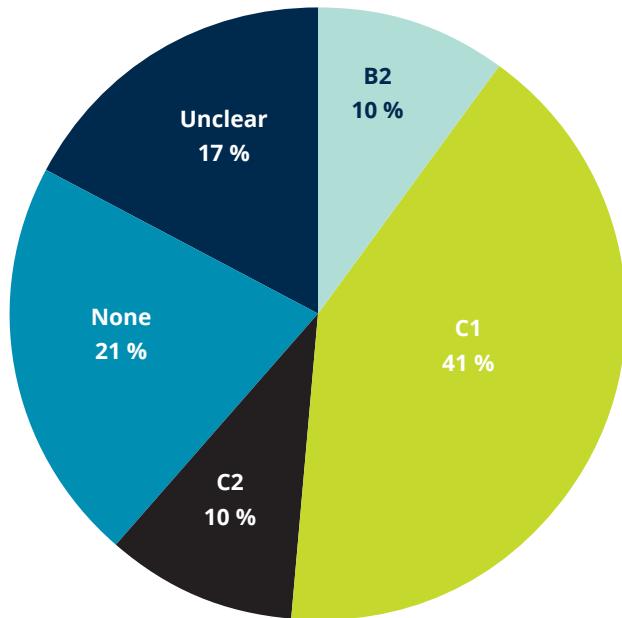
Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

accepted the vast majority of students who applied. Only a small handful of universities had acceptance rates below 60%. On average, universities reported admitting 78% of applicants. Notably, Uruguayan universities had lower acceptance rates, perhaps in part due to the more stringent language requirements. This is also important considering that Uruguay has the lowest percentage of teachers with teaching degrees. Clearly there is a significant bottleneck around recruiting and training enough qualified English teachers, albeit one that has been partially assuaged by the *Ceibal en Inglés* initiative (see Box 2).

Universities tend to set their own proficiency standards for trainers and use internal systems and processes to evaluate and supervise them.

When universities are given the freedom to set their own language proficiency standards for trainers, this results in a wide variety of English levels, and consequently training experiences, for future English teachers. Of the four dozen initial teacher training institutions in five countries that responded to surveys for this report, the preferred standard for English teacher trainer was a C1 level (see Graph 5). Close to half of all universities (42%) set this as the proficiency requirement for trainers. It is perhaps important to note that this is the same level that many national education systems set for their teachers, meaning that many English

Graph 5: Language Proficiency Requirements for English Teacher Trainers



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

teachers are trained by speakers at the standards they are expected to meet. An additional 10% of universities set a C2 standard—the highest level on the CEFR framework, and 10% more set a B2 standard. Once again, Uruguayan teacher training programs set the highest linguistic standards, consistently establishing the C2 standard for their teacher trainers. On the other hand, the fact that some training institutions in other countries require only a B2 standard for teacher educators is a bit concerning given that this is below the proficiency level that many ministries expect their teachers to meet. Finally, 38% of the responding universities either had no standards (21%) or unclear standards (17%).^{xx} Perhaps most concerning is the 21% of teacher training institutions—fully one in five—who have no English proficiency requirement for their trainers. What is clear is that the university or training program in which an aspiring English teacher chooses to enroll can have a very great effect in determining the likelihood that he or she will be exposed to proficient English speakers.

Future English teachers are also unlikely to have significant interactions with native English speakers during their pre-service training, unless they choose to participate in a study abroad program. According to the survey data collected for this paper, only 27 of the 655 teacher educators (4.1%) surveyed are native English speakers and over half of teacher training institutions (57.1%) did not report having any native English speakers on staff. Perhaps unsurprisingly, larger teacher training institutions were more likely to have native English speaking trainers. The average teaching staff of a training institution with no English speakers was 13. In comparison, the average staff size of teacher training institutions with at least one native English speaker was almost three times as large at 38. Although recruiting native English teachers as trainers can offer students valuable exposure to highly proficient speakers—especially if they are unlikely to have the opportunity to study abroad in anglophone countries as part of their pre-service education—other countries have chosen different pathways to ensuring English proficiency among teacher educators. For example, in Chile, trainers are required to have a masters degree at a minimum, with a preference for doctorates (Comisión Nacional de Acreditación, 2009). As a result, many English education professors have received post-graduate degrees from universities in English-speaking countries, indicating a highly proficient, academic knowledge of English.^{xxi} This emphasis on academic qualifications is considered more important than hiring native speakers.

When it comes to evaluating and supervising teacher trainers, universities and tertiary institutions are generally able to set their own specifications and requirements. In fact, across the entire region and all types of higher education institutions, very little information is available on the quality of higher education faculty (Ferreyra, Avitabile, Botero Álvarez, Haimovich Paz & Urzúa, 2017). No country surveyed for this report has a standardized system for evaluating teacher trainers, although most reported some form of teacher evaluation at the

II: How Are English Teachers Trained?

university level. Most frequently, training institutions reported evaluating faculty via surveys (completed either by students, supervisors or both), as well as supervision of classes. Unfortunately, there is still a frustrating lack of information regarding the effectiveness of teacher trainers which, consequently, makes it difficult to offer strong recommendations or suggestions about how to improve or support stronger policies for training faculty.

Across countries, there is large diversity in the extent to which curricular content is regulated and standardized, but in almost all situations, a large amount of teacher training requires building the English skills of future educators.

Across all of the universities and teacher training institutions studied for this report, the pre-service English teacher curriculum can generally be divided into several key thematic areas: language development (in other words, building the necessary English skills to be effective teachers); research; pedagogy (learning how to teach English); culture (which often was linked to language development, since students learned about anglophone literature, arts and culture); soft skill development; and internships, practicums or student teaching experiences. Within these larger categories, however, there is a dizzying amount of variety in terms of how much weight is given to each area. Some countries have developed strong regulatory frameworks for English teacher training, which offer an overall standard that universities must follow. In other cases, however, a lack of guidelines has lead to a hodgepodge of teacher training programs, some of which are likely of higher quality, while others are completely unregulated.

In Panama and Costa Rica, universities are free to determine the coursework and entry and graduation requirements for students studying for an English teaching degree, since there are no national level curriculum standards (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). In Costa Rica, studies have shown that there is a large degree of heterogeneity in the program of study for English teachers, in large part due to the fact that very few private universities are accredited. In fact, although there are national-level accreditation bodies for higher education institutions, of the 41 public and private universities that offer education degrees, only six were accredited, of which two were private universities. This is concerning because 77% of teachers currently in classrooms obtained their degrees from private institutions (Inter-American Dialogue & Estado de la Nación, 2018). In addition to being less likely to offer accredited degree programs, private universities also tend to offer shorter-duration degrees, meaning that potential students have little incentive to choose longer, accredited degree programs—especially when there is no penalty in the hiring process for attending a short-duration, non-accredited training program (Inter-American Dialogue & Estado de la Nación,

2018). Unsurprisingly, given the lack of oversight and regulation, English teachers from private universities also demonstrate lower levels of English proficiency, indicating a concerning correlation between teaching degrees from private universities and language abilities (Inter-American Dialogue & Estado de la Nación, 2018).

Since 2009, Uruguay has established standards for English education degree programs, which are modeled off of the Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) international teacher standards (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). These standards include intersecting domains of language, culture, instruction, assessment and professionalism, and the degree focuses on both theoretical and practical content (TESOL International Association, 2010). Uruguay also includes specific standards within each of these domains (Kuhlman, 2010).^{xxii} Although there are a variety of private and public training institutions from which Uruguayan teachers may choose, the majority receive a four-year degree from one of the public training centers or institutions. Private institutions, which are less popular, tend to be concentrated in the capital, and so are not as likely to train English teachers in the interior of the country.^{xxiii}

Chile exhibits the most highly developed and regulated standards and graduation expectations of all the countries studied here. All teacher education programs, whether at private or public universities, are expected to be accredited and renew their accreditation every three to seven years, ensuring that they remain up-to-date and in compliance with ministry requirements (Ferreyra et al., 2017). Although there are still gaps in this process—in 2013, 12 out of 43 higher education institutions offering English teaching degrees were not accredited, accounting for 15% of enrollment—the majority of future English teachers receive their degree from an accredited institution (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia, Ministerio de Educación, & Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo, 2014). The curriculum for English teaching programs must adhere to the Guiding Standards for Majors in English Pedagogy (*Estándares Orientadoras para Carreras de Pedagogía en Inglés* in Spanish), set forth in 2014 by the Ministry of Education. The standards, which are designed to align with the national English curriculum, still leave universities with the freedom to adapt them to the specific needs of their students (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2014).

Chile has also established a graduation profile for English teachers, which sets a C1 proficiency level for all graduates receiving a degree in English language instruction, although once again, there are loopholes in implementation since, as survey respondents indicated, in practice students can receive their degree even if they fail the proficiency exam. Many universities in other countries also set proficiency standards, whether or not they are a requirement at the national level. In practice, however, it is unclear to what extent these requirements are necessary

II: How Are English Teachers Trained?

for degree completion or how thoroughly they are enforced. For example, in Uruguay, graduates are expected to demonstrate C2 level proficiency on the CEFR in order to receive their degrees. As in Chile, however, there is evidence to suggest that many graduates do not meet these requirements. A study in 2017 of 52 students completing their English teaching degrees found that only 6% met the C2 requirement, while 41% received scores at the C1 level (the level they were supposed to have met upon enrollment four years previously), while the remaining 53% of graduates did not even meet the proficiency requirements for matriculation, let alone graduation (Kaiser, 2017). It is important to note, however, that despite the fact that many graduates seem to not meet language proficiency requirements, these results still indicate higher language proficiency levels among Uruguay's future English teachers than those working in Chilean or Costa Rican schools (see [Table 6](#)), perhaps unsurprising given the higher language proficiency requirements in Uruguay generally. Of course, since the sample size is quite small, it is impossible to know whether these results are representative of Uruguayan English teachers as a whole.

Given that most teacher training institutions (with the exception of Uruguayan ones) do not establish language requirements for future English teachers to enroll in pre-service education programs, a significant amount of time must be dedicated to developing the English skills of these future teachers. Among the training institutions surveyed for this report, an average of 40% of the curriculum was devoted to building English language skills. This evidence is in line with what other studies have found regarding the amount of time that future English teachers spend just learning the language. For example, a 2014 study of English language teacher education at a private Chilean university found that more than 50% of the academic load in the first two years of study corresponded to English language lessons. In the final three years, two of the five core areas of study were related to "English language acquisition and knowledge of the language" (Barahona, 2014, p. 56).

Among the universities studied for this report, the rest of the initial teacher education curriculum is largely devoted to developing teaching or pedagogical skills, although there is some variability here across majors and countries. On average, around 30% of coursework is focused on building these key instructional skills and about 7% is dedicated to student teaching and internships. These internships, in addition to providing critical classroom experience for future teachers, have also been shown to be effective at changing teacher attitudes. A 2010 study of English education students at a Chilean university found that student beliefs about education and teaching were strongly affected by their practicum experience; when students completed their student teaching experience in a school environment that was rigid or resistant

to change, they absorbed these beliefs and found it difficult to implement innovative strategies or change their practices. When student teachers were exposed to new and innovative learning environments, however, they were more likely to change their beliefs about teaching and learning (Blázquez Entonado & Tagle Ochoa, 2010).

The lack of language requirements to study for an English teaching degree in most universities has a clear impact on the rest of the initial teacher education process; training institutions must devote a significant amount of time and resources to language education, and still struggle to produce graduates who meet language proficiency requirements. Our survey results showed that over a third of training institutions identified developing adequate English skills among students as a top challenge—even when students spend almost half of their pre-serviced education on just this subject. Without established entry requirements at a national level, as Uruguay has, many initial teacher training programs are just playing catch up to ensure their graduates meet minimum standards.

Many universities report graduates working as English teachers, likely a sign of the high demand for trained instructors in this subject.

When asked about job market outcomes for their graduates, many universities reported high rates of employment and improvement in English levels as the greatest successes of their programs. The fact that so many graduates are able to find work as English teachers, despite the fact that for many other subject areas there is often an excess supply of teaching graduates, indicates the high demand for English teachers. Universities responding to the survey reported an average of around 80% of graduates employed as English teachers. The remaining 20% worked in other fields such as tourism, service industry (especially call centers) and commercial activities. Many of these positions still require English skills, indicating that—even though graduates may not go on to teach English, they are still using the linguistic skills that they developed in training to further their professional careers.

The fact that a substantial portion of English teaching graduates choose to work in other fields is not unique to the four countries studied here. A 2017 study of call centers in Nicaragua found that one in five employees with a university degree had studied English teaching (Cabralles, Ferrey, Zapata & Bonilla, 2017). There is some evidence that English teaching graduates may choose to pursue other careers because of the potential financial benefits. For example, the same Nicaraguan study found that call center workers earned more than three times as much as public school teachers (Cabralles et al., 2017). Although teacher salaries are not always so low compared to other professions, they are in many countries, which can give pre-service teachers who have worked to develop a valuable skill such as English some incentive to look for employment elsewhere (Elacqua et al., 2018).

Ministries of education are the primary source of ongoing professional development opportunities.

Once they are in the classroom, English teachers have a wide range of professional development opportunities from which to choose. Many different institutions and organizations offer in-service development for teachers, including universities, foundations, international organizations, embassies and private companies. Despite this wide array of options, the English teachers surveyed for this report overwhelmingly participated in Ministry of Education-sponsored trainings. Between half and three-quarters of teachers in each country reported having participated in continuing professional development courses offered either by the ministry of education or national English programs. Less common, but still popular, options included courses and trainings offered by universities and private foundations.

All of the national English programs studied in this report offer multiple professional development opportunities for in-service teachers, from single-day trainings, to intensive courses and multi-month study abroad opportunities (see *Box 3*). What is less well documented is the effectiveness of these initiatives, their potential benefits and to what extent they have an impact on teaching practices in the classroom. For example, Chile's PIAP has a project on exploratory action research that over 90 public secondary school English teachers have participated in, but results have not been systematized (Ministerio de Educación Chile, 2018a).^{xxiv} Teachers' self-reported survey results indicate generally positive feelings towards these training opportunities.^{xxv} Most teachers described using skills, knowledge or tools that they had gained from trainings in their own classrooms, with positive results. Of the few teachers who did report difficulties implementing tools or strategies from professional development sessions, they frequently attributed these challenges to either a lack of relevance given the realities of their classroom (for example, students with special needs, or varying levels of English), or a lack of necessary resources (for example, not having access to technology).

Professional development can also be an important tool for strengthening not just the pedagogical, but also the language skills of English teachers. After Costa Rica first tested the English levels of its teachers in 2008, it offered additional training and education to those who failed to meet the established proficiency standard. When the Ministry of Education retested teacher language abilities seven years later, in 2015, there was a marked improvement in English teachers' proficiency levels (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). Panama Bilingüe offers a similar, 240 hour intensive course for pre-service teachers in university or Normal school training programs, as well as on-site language training for mainstream elementary school teachers. Between 2014 and 2017, 6672 teachers in Panama

BOX 3: PANAMA BILINGUE AND SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

In addition to professional development opportunities offered locally to teachers, several countries have scholarship or study-abroad programs that give English teachers the chance to spend an extended period of time in an English-speaking country, strengthen their English skills and observe or attended classes focused on foreign language instruction. Panama Bilingüe's program, called Teacher's Training International, is the largest and most ambitious of the studied countries' and is offered to both pre-service (for sixteen weeks) and in-service teachers (for eight weeks). Participants are sent to 42 partnering universities in various English-speaking countries, including the US, Canada and the UK where, in addition to classes on English language development and instructional practice, they also have opportunities to participate in school and cultural visits. Between 2015 and 2019, 6234 teachers participated in the program, only a bit less than the number of teachers who participate in local trainings (in 2018, 1801 teachers received training locally and 1150 studied internationally) (Panama Bilingüe, 2019).

After teachers return to Panama, they are expected to complete an additional 200 hours of training, including a year of coaching and completing an international certification exam, such as the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) or equivalent (Vargas, 2017). Despite these stated expectations in the national decree establishing the Panama Bilingüe program, only about 720 teachers have completed or are on track to complete the certification

process (see Chapter I), despite the almost 7000 that have been able to study abroad.

A 2017 study of teacher experiences in Panama's Teacher's Training International program found that, although universities and colleges that hosted teachers were tasked with improving their English abilities and English teaching methods, they also had the freedom to propose the organization, structure and content of the study-abroad program, potentially resulting in a wide variety of experiences, depending on placement. Participating teachers identified both pros and cons to their experiences: while they had the chance to use and develop their language and teaching skills, they also found that much of what they observed or learned could not be easily translated back to their classrooms in Panama, and some felt that they needed an even longer period of study to build their English skills (Vargas, 2017).

It is precisely these environmental factors, however, that can determine the success or failure of these short-term international experiences for teachers. A 2019 meta-synthesis of language teacher study abroad experiences (including four studies of English teachers from Latin America studying in anglophone countries) found that peer circles, host communities, preparation, post-program components and guidance and supervision are all determining factors in a program's professional, linguistic and intercultural outcomes (Yasin Çiftçi & Cendel Karaman, 2019).

II: How Are English Teachers Trained?

participated in these trainings (Cubilla, Sanjur, López & Dantas-Whitney, 2018).

Despite the fact that much more research is needed to determine the most cost-efficient and effective continuing professional development strategies for English teachers in Latin America, there is some limited evidence on what might work. In 2014, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) published a paper on the effect of professional development on teacher efficiency in public secondary schools in Mexico. The training, which was offered to teachers with limited English abilities (A1+ to B1 levels), consisted of 100 hours of intensive training—80 hours of English instruction and 20 hours of pedagogical training. The pedagogical aspect focused on changing teachers' classroom practices and improving their content knowledge. The cost was 22,500 Mexican pesos per teacher (a bit more than \$1000). The report found significant positive results for both students and teachers; after seven and a half months with a trained teacher, students had improved their English abilities. Trained teachers also improved their English abilities in the short run and changed their classroom practices to allow students more opportunities to actively engage in learning (Bando & Li, 2014).

Initial teacher education is crucial because it can set English teachers up to be successful in the classroom and ensure that they have the knowledge and skills that ministries have identified as most essential. Continuing professional development is also critical because it allows teachers to continue growing and learning throughout their professional careers. In order to be as effective as possible, however, both pre-service and in-service teacher training needs to be well-regulated, clearly linked to learning and teaching standards and rigorously monitored and evaluated to identify necessary improvements. Unfortunately, although there has been some important progress, most countries are still far from achieving this goal.

III: What Is the Teaching Experience in the Classroom?

The question of who English teachers are, what sort of training they have received and how they are evaluated derive their importance from the fact that it is through these mechanisms that ministries of education can work to determine the most effective ways to ensure student learning and meet educational objectives. Therefore, it is of critical importance that education policymakers understand what is going on inside the classroom and the dynamics between teachers and students. Unfortunately, the current situation reveals that education ministries and policymakers know relatively little about what actually happens inside Latin America's English classrooms, which in many ways remain "black boxes" where teacher training, resources and curricula are input and student learning outcomes are produced. This is in large part due to the fact that there has been no systematic study of English classroom practices at the national level, and what data does exist tends to be self-reported by teachers (including much of the teaching data collected for this report).

Despite the scarcity or limited sample size of available studies about classroom teaching practices for learning English as a foreign language in Latin America, the data that does exist suggest a rather mixed picture, with many teachers embracing new technologies and pedagogies at the same time that there are still significant challenges to effectively build student proficiency. For example, survey results show that many teachers frequently use learning games and applications in their classrooms, but observational studies often find that students do not always have adequate opportunities to practice critical language acquisition skills that could lead to greater proficiency levels. Moreover, national test results of students' English language abilities show that, despite the large investments in improving English language policies and strengthening the English teaching force, outcomes are still far from targets and progress is slow at best (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Although English teachers self-report high levels of comfort in reading, speaking, listening and writing English, the reality is that the English classroom is a multilingual space for students and teachers.

When asked to self-evaluate their own confidence in English language usage, all of the teachers surveyed for this report indicated high levels of proficiency (see [Box 4](#)). Across the board, English teachers expressed the most confidence in their reading comprehension, and generally felt the least comfortable in their listening and speaking skills (see [Graph 6](#)). Although there is not a great level of difference in self-evaluation levels between countries, it is notable that Panamanian teachers reported the lowest levels of self-confidence in their abilities. This is interesting because Panama is also the only country without a formally established language proficiency requirement for English teachers.

BOX 4: IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND EDUCATION IN COSTA RICA

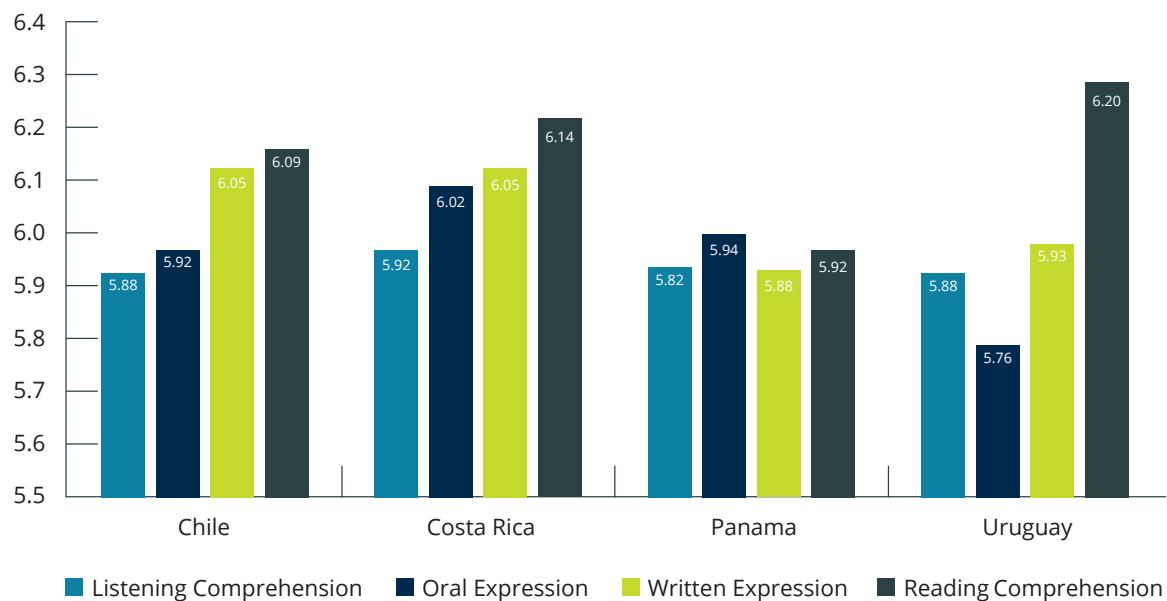
Beginning in the 1990s, English language education in Costa Rica has gone through several different iterations, including varied attempts to launch a national English program (Estado de la Nación, 2018). Costa Rica Multilingüe was started in 2008 at the same time that the National English Plan was published setting out objectives for English proficiency among the country's students. One of the most important steps that Costa Rica Multilingüe took was administering a baseline study of English proficiency abilities among teachers and students (Estado de la Educación, 2010). Although the results showed that many English teachers failed to meet even the minimum language requirements set by the government, Costa Rica used this as an opportunity to offer additional language training to low-performing teachers. When the ministry reassessed teachers seven years later, results had improved significantly, with over half of teachers meeting the official proficiency standard (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017).

Costa Rica has also led the way in expanding English access and instruction at the pre-primary level. Currently, 9% of Costa Rica's English teachers work in pre-primary schools—a higher proportion than any other country studied for this report (see [Table 1](#)). In 2018, the University of Costa Rica partnered with the Ministry of Public Education to assess the English abilities of any pre-primary teacher who wanted to participate—regardless of whether or not they taught English. Over 1900 teachers elected to

take the test. Although the majority did not meet even basic standards (only 32% scored at a B1 level or above on the CEFR), for the 613 teachers who did show intermediate proficiency, they will be able to receive additional training to increase their language abilities to a B2, with the eventual goal of adding an English accreditation to their teaching certification. The initiative generated such interest that an additional 2000-3000 teachers have signed up to participate in a second round testing, to be conducted in October 2019 (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2019).

In 2016, Costa Rica launched a new English curriculum reform which focused on building student competencies in three areas: linguistics (phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax); sociolinguistics (use of the language in sociocultural settings) and pragmatics (speaker attitude, beliefs, understanding of context and functional use of the language), and established learning standards for students and set clear language proficiency expectations for graduates (Badilla, 2016). Upon completing primary school, students are expected to show basic proficiency (A1-A2 levels) in English. Teacher proficiency levels were set at a minimum of B2, and a teacher profile was established to set clear standards and expectations for English teaching (Badilla, 2016). The curricular reform was generally received as a positive step forward, although further assessment is needed to determine whether or not it has led to the desired outcomes (Estado de la Nación, 2018).

Graph 6: Teachers' Self-Evaluation of Their English Skills (Scale of 1 to 7)



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

Across all four countries surveyed for this report, the vast majority of teachers reported using English as the primary language in the classroom. This was true not just for speaking to the class as a group, but also when talking to students individually and when students spoke amongst themselves to complete classwork and projects. For example, 77% of teachers report speaking to the entire class almost exclusively in English, and only 1% of teachers said that they used Spanish as the primary medium of instruction in their classrooms. Across countries, however, there was quite a wide variation. Most teachers in Uruguay actually reported using a combination of English and Spanish when speaking to the entire class. Teachers in Costa Rica and Panama were most likely to report using English as the medium of instruction in the classroom.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, higher levels of Spanish, Spanish-English or Spanglish usage were reported when students discussed work amongst themselves or when teachers were speaking one-on-one with students. For example, 15% of teachers reported speaking primarily Spanish when talking with students individually, and the same percentage also reported that students spoke Spanish to one another in the class. Once again, there was quite a bit of variation across countries. Teachers in Chile

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reported speaking to students individually in Spanish about half the time and that students spoke amongst themselves in Spanish over a quarter of the time. Teachers in Panama and Costa Rica once again reported the highest levels of English usage among students (79% and 76% respectively). In written survey responses, many teachers said that they would usually try to explain a concept in English first, only resorting to Spanish later if necessary and for clarity. Teachers of younger students—especially pre-primary and primary level—were also more likely to report using Spanish in the classroom, especially since at this age, students are experiencing their first exposure to English instruction.

Although self-reported levels of English usage are generally quite high, observational studies suggest that the picture may be a bit different—and that in fact Spanish may be used more frequently than teachers report. For example, a 2013 study in Chile found that “a crucial issue [...] is the fluent use of English in the classroom [...] More than 90% of teachers present a lack of an adequate use of English or misunderstand grammatical structures, mispronounce words, misuse vocabulary or are not sufficiently fluent to effectively teach” (Rojas et al, 2013, cited in Barahona, 2016, p. 18). The same study found that teachers’ English proficiency was in fact the most important variable in predicting student learning outcomes (more than other pedagogical practices, such as their interactions with students or the level of rigor in the class), indicating that extensive and fluent use of English in the classroom is a critical pre-requisite for improving student learning outcomes (Herrada, Rojas & Zapata, 2012). In a similar pattern, another study that observed English teachers in rural primary schools in Chile found that essentially no English was used in the classroom. Instead, classroom activities focused on pronunciation drills, greetings, oral presentations and reading aloud in English. Additionally, all of the classes were teacher-focused, with discourse and interaction initiated and mediated by the teacher and few opportunities for students to engage in authentic language practice (Barahona, 2016, p. 20). This apparent difference between what teachers report and classroom realities is not limited to Chile. An observational study of an English class in a public Costa Rican high school found that throughout the class period, the students spoke exclusively in Spanish—both with one another and the teacher (Fernández Abarca, 2004).

It is not entirely surprising that English classes are still taught primarily in Spanish—studies of the region show that no country has moved towards a truly bilingual model of English learning, and English-medium instruction remains the exception and not the rule (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).^{xxvi} Additionally, given that many teachers speak English at a basic or intermediate level themselves, it is not surprising that they use Spanish frequently to teach content—either because they do not have the vocabulary or familiarity with the concepts they are teaching, or because they feel more comfortable explaining ideas in their native language. A study that focused on promoting oral interactions in English among students in an eighth-grade classroom in Colombia found that

task-based learning, where students are given opportunities to speak about subjects that are relevant and important to them, improved motivation and gave students greater opportunities to practice their English in natural and useful ways (González Humanez & Arias, 2009). This is an important indication of the mutually reinforcing role between content, pedagogical practices and language use in the classroom; when students are given tasks that require them to speak English, and which they are motivated to complete, they are more likely to use English.

Uruguay's *Ceibal en Inglés*, especially at the primary level, provides an interesting example of how even teachers with limited English abilities can be powerful examples of English use in the classroom (see [Box 2](#)). An observational study of 49 different English primary classes in Uruguay that use the *Ceibal en Inglés* program found that, despite a limited English ability among many of the teachers, they still played an important role as pedagogical leaders in the classroom by modeling how to learn a foreign language, as well as conducting informal evaluations, promoting collaboration among students and generally providing classroom management and supervision to maximize student learning (Kaiser, 2018). Of course, this model only works because the remote teachers have a very high proficiency level in English (and many do not even speak Spanish, meaning that communication with both students and local teachers must be in English) and are able to model high levels of English use. Nevertheless, the model is an interesting one, and suggests a way that perhaps less proficient English teachers could "grow into" their role with adequate support and development (Kaiser, 2018).

There has been a clear embrace of technology as a tool for learning, but it is not clear how effective instructional applications and games are for language acquisition.

Given the technological revolution of recent decades, especially in the education field, it is unsurprising that English language learning has been a prime target of these innovation initiatives. What remains to be determined is whether or not these efforts have made a substantial contribution to improving student learning outcomes. Although, as in other pedagogical areas, there is still only limited evidence, it seems clear that the question of how technology is introduced and used in the classroom is just as important as what kind technology is being used.

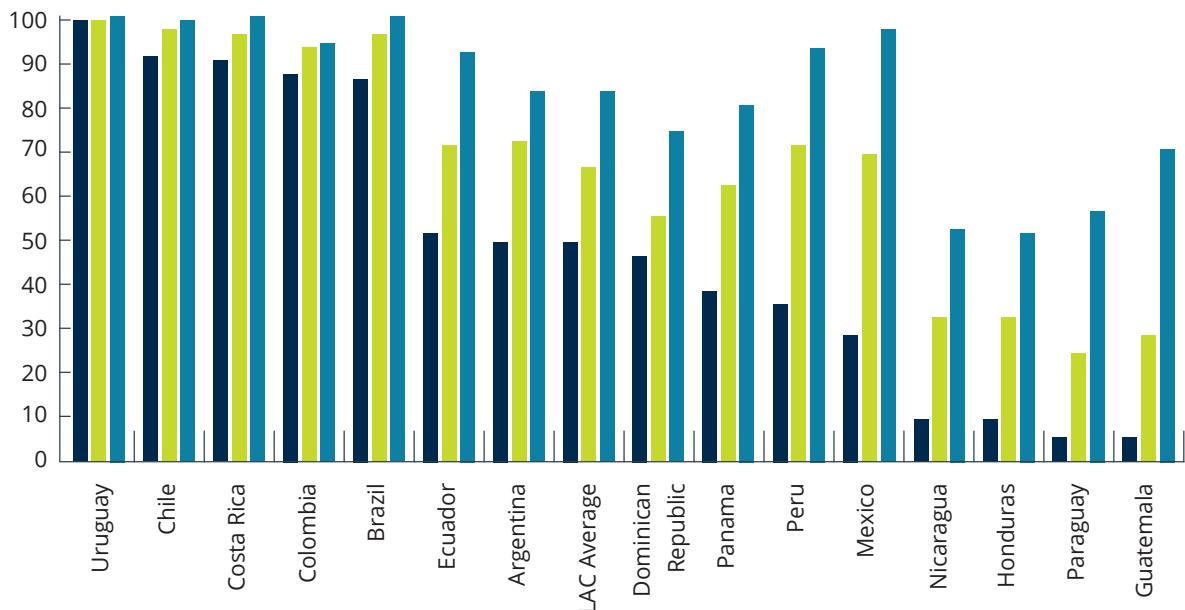
Overall digital penetration levels in Latin America are quite high—in many cases, on par with levels found in countries with much higher development indicators. Uruguay (99%), Chile (97%) and Costa Rica (96%) have the three highest rates of internet access in the region—each over 30 percentage points higher than the regional average—as well as the smallest gaps in access between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Panama is the outlier, with a coverage rate of 62%, slightly below the regional average (see [Graph 7](#)) (Arias Ortiz & Viteri, 2019). Across Latin America, seven out of every ten students have access to

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technological resources at their school. Among secondary students, 71% have access to a desktop computer and 50% a laptop computer (Arias Ortiz & Viteri, 2019). At the primary level, technology access in schools has also been growing at a rapid rate in recent decades—from 47% of schools with internet access in 2006 to 66% in 2013 (Arias Ortiz & Viteri, 2019). The countries studied in this report have, in many cases, been among the fastest and earliest adopters of new technologies for learning. For example, Costa Rica and Uruguay are second and third only to Colombia in terms of access to tablets in schools (30% and 26%, respectively) (Arias Ortiz & Viteri, 2019). These high coverage levels hold out in survey results as well, indicating that internet access in English classrooms closely parallels overall rates across the education system. Teacher responses for this report indicate that a majority of teachers in all countries except Panama have access to internet and computers at their schools.

Even where connectivity rates are high, however, technology can still present challenges. For example, a study of the *Ceibal en Inglés* program in Uruguay—the country with the highest connectivity rates in the region—found that there were still occasional issues with internet access in the classroom, a major challenge when the learning model depends

Graph 7: Internet Access Rates in Schools



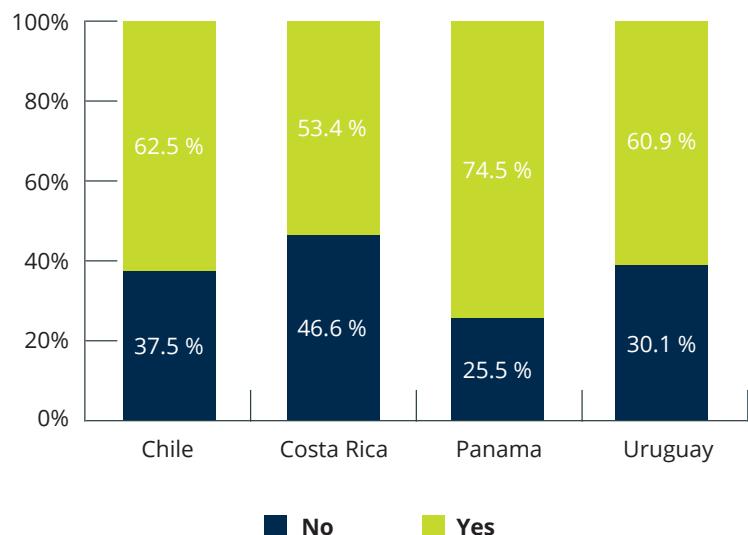
Source: Arias Ortiz & Viteri, 2019.

entirely on the remote teacher being able to connect via videoconference in order to lead the class. Additionally, the videoconferencing software was occasionally installed in a multipurpose room, rather than a classroom, which could lead to poor acoustics or other impediments to easily hearing and interacting with the foreign English teacher on the videoconference (Kaiser, 2018). Different technologies—such as loading lesson plans on USB drives, which are easily transportable and do not require internet connectivity—could help to alleviate some of these frustrations or offer an easy Plan B for when internet connectivity is not dependable.

Where internet access is available, it seems that teachers are eager to use the technological tools at their disposal. The survey results for this report show that, among teachers who do have internet access, over 95% in each country said that they used technology at least once a month, and in Chile, Costa Rica and Panama, 65-70% of teachers reported using technology in their English classes several times a week. The majority of teachers in each country also reported using learning games and applications in their classrooms. Among the most popular and frequently mentioned were learning games such as Kahoot! and Duolingo, as well as media platforms, such as YouTube (see Graph 8).

The use of technology in the classroom has become a contentious issue for many reasons, but one critical one has been the extent to which

Graph 8: % of English Teachers Who Report Using Educational Games and Applications in Their Classrooms



Source: Authors' calculations based on survey results.

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these innovations can truly help to improve student learning, as well as what other considerations, resources or support systems must be in place in order for technology to be effective. In the case of English language learning, especially in Latin America, Uruguay has been the undisputed leader, not just with the extensive English coverage through *Plan Ceibal*, but also the creation in 2015 of the Ceibal Foundation, a research institute organized under Ceibal, but with the independence and autonomy to conduct rigorous scientific studies to determine the efficacy of existing programs and how to potentially improve them (Rivera Vargas & Cobo, 2018).

In terms of the games and application that survey respondents mentioned using most frequently, there is some evidence that they have positive effects on students' learning experiences. For example, a 2017 study at a technical university in Ecuador, examined how Kahoot! can be used as a tool for learning vocabulary in a language classroom (Llerena & Rodríguez Hurtado, 2017). Kahoot! is a free and accessible online application that can be adapted for use by teachers and students of all subject areas and grade levels. Teachers can upload pre-made student-response activities, such as quizzes, surveys and discussion questions, and the application provides basic game elements, such as points, a leader board, instant feedback and rewards to increase engagement and student motivation. Kahoot! is an example of what has become known as "gamification"—or the use of game elements and game design techniques (such as points and competitions) in non-game contexts (such as the classroom) (Werback, 2015, as cited in Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). In the Ecuadorean study, students reported high levels of satisfaction with the application, and using the application improved learners' engagement and interaction, as well as improving their overall test scores on a vocabulary assessment (Llerena & Rodríguez Hurtado, 2017). A similar study conducted at a university in Krakow, Poland, found that students were highly motivated to learn English vocabulary by the game aspects of the application, in particular the instant gratification of earning points and beating other teams (Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). Unfortunately, both of these studies on Kahoot! as a tool for learning English were conducted at the university level; more research is needed to determine the potential benefits or consequences of using applications such as Kahoot! in primary and secondary classrooms.

Classroom practices tend to focus on group work, memorization and writing activities.

The results of the survey conducted for this paper show that teachers report implementing certain activities or pedagogical practices more frequently than others in their classrooms. For example, teachers report implementing group work activities "almost always or frequently" across all countries, with most frequent use in Uruguay. Teachers in Chile, Costa Rica and Panama also reported vocabulary and grammar memorization as key classroom activities more frequently than Uruguayan teachers.

Other class activities that require students to practice their oral expression skills, such as dramatizations and class discussions, were the least frequently used, with the exception of classroom discussion in Panama, where almost 70% of teachers report implementing it daily.

Although large-scale observational studies of English classrooms are very limited, what evidence does exist—even though often on a small scale—suggests that there are often important differences between what teachers self-report (as in the survey results for this paper), and what actually happens in the classroom. In this regard, Chile has the most comprehensive set of observations of English teacher practices in the classroom, due to its teacher evaluation process. As part of their evaluation portfolio, Chilean teachers in all subject areas are required to submit a 40 minute video recording of themselves teaching. Teachers are given advance notice of when they will be recorded, so they have time to prepare the class. They are evaluated based on a set of four criteria, including: (1) how they structure their class; (2) how they promote student participation and support student work; (3) how they explain content and use questions to teach material and (4) how they give feedback to support student learning (CPEIP, n.d.).

A 2012 study that looked at English teachers' results in the class observation component of the teacher evaluation found that most teachers struggled in all four of these areas with a majority of teachers failing to meet standards for good instruction in any dimension (Rojas, Herrada & Zapata, 2013). The report, which analyzed data from 3079 English teachers working in municipal schools and who were evaluated between 2008 and 2011, presents a strong argument for the importance of not relying solely on self-reported data from teachers to determine what is happening inside the classroom (Herrada, Rojas & Zapata, 2012). For example, although essentially all English teachers (97%) gave students equal opportunities to answer questions, only a third of teachers were able to promote student interactions focused on learning objectives. Only 2 in 10 teachers were able to connect content to previous learning, students' experiences or daily life. The same percentage of teachers also failed to properly model correct pronunciation of a new word or concept when introducing it for the first time (Herrada, Rojas & Zapata, 2012). Ninety percent of teachers also failed to give students opportunities to engage with higher order thinking skills, such as analyzing, interpreting or justifying their beliefs. Instead, English teachers were more likely to ask questions that prompted students to regurgitate memorized information or summarize content that the teacher had already taught. Giving student feedback was another area where teachers struggled: 85% of teachers did not give any type of quality feedback during the lesson, including correcting student errors; giving students clues or hints to help them towards the correct answer; or asking students to justify their answers, how they arrived at a particular answer or to apply their learning to another situation.

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Other, smaller-scale studies support these general observations about the need for more high-quality interactions between teachers and students and authentic opportunities for students to practice their English skills—speaking, writing, listening and reading. For example, a survey of recent public secondary school graduates in Panama found that respondents identified grammar as the most taught skill, followed by speaking and vocabulary. Listening was the least taught skill (see [Graph 9](#)) (González, 2019). Similar tendencies were observed in a public Costa Rican high school: the English teacher relied heavily on question-and-answer interactions to prompt student engagement, and called on students with stronger English abilities more frequently than those who struggled in the class (Fernández Abarca, 2004). As a result, students who needed the most practice and support to improve their English skills actually had the fewest opportunities to build their confidence and competencies in these areas.

As with other classroom practices, teachers use a wide variety of tools to evaluate student learning.

Survey responses for this report indicate that teachers use a wide variety of methods and tools to evaluate student learning. Among the most popular methods for evaluating student performance were oral presentations and writing assignments. Although the frequency of use varied quite a bit across countries, essentially all teachers included these types of evaluations at least once per semester. Traditional tests—whether multiple choice or open-ended—were also frequently used to measure student learning. Most teachers reported using these methods on at least a monthly basis. The least frequent measure of student learning was collaborative projects.

Graph 9: Student Perceptions of Teaching Priorities in Secondary English, Panama



Source: González, 2019.

Although there was much more similarity within countries than between them, a few notable patterns do stand out: teachers in Uruguay reported strong preferences for writing assignments and open-ended tests over other assignment types, perhaps indicating a particular focus on written expression among Uruguayan students. Panamanian teachers reported using all assessment methods much more frequently than English instructors in any country. Among Costa Rican teachers, oral presentations and written assignments were most popular, while over 1 in 5 teachers said they never used collaborative projects in their classroom. In general, Chilean teachers reported less frequent evaluations than instructors in other countries, and traditional tests (both open-ended and multiple-choice) were most frequent. Chile's Ministry of Education (2018b) also recently published a series of guidelines for teachers to refer to as they develop, administer and use both formative and summative assessments. Although it is important to use multiple types of assessment in the classroom to measure and track student learning, this is only the first step. Teachers must also know how to align assessments to curriculum in order to ensure that students are learning the appropriate content. Furthermore, teachers and school leaders need to be equipped to use the results of student learning assessments to make informed decisions at the classroom level. Chile's evaluation guidelines are an important step in this direction.

English teachers in Latin America show a positive enthusiasm for adopting new technologies such as learning applications and games, as well as innovative classroom models, such as the blended learning setup in Uruguay's *Ceibal en Inglés* program. They also report high levels of confidence in their own English abilities—undoubtedly positive signs of their attitude towards their professional responsibilities and experiences. At the same time however, classroom observations conducted by impartial observers—rather than teachers' self-evaluations—indicate concerning gaps between what teachers' report and what actually happens inside the classroom. Observational studies tend to suggest that teachers and students use less English and engage in more traditional learning models and structures than survey reports indicate. Unfortunately, without more and larger-scale classroom studies of teachers, it is difficult to say how universal these limited observations are, and what types of interactions and linguistic practices students and teachers engage in on a daily basis.

Recommendations

Countries in Latin America have set ambitious goals for themselves to improve the English language proficiency of their citizens. The successful realization of these ambitions will depend a great deal on the capacity of education systems to prepare students who are fluent readers, writers and speakers of English. The extent to which ministries of education can recruit, train, support and retain high-quality, certified English teachers should be seen as a strong indicator of the likelihood that they are able to meet their goals. Although, as this report shows, there are many challenges and bottlenecks that remain, there has also been important progress that countries can build upon as they work towards improving the quality of English language instruction for their students. In particular, there are six key steps that would allow for more informed, strategic decision-making at the policy level and give countries a better chance at achieving the outcomes they seek:

1. Set proficiency goals for teachers and certify their abilities.

The evidence is clear that Latin American countries need more certified English teachers. The first step in this process is determining the level of certification necessary for effective teaching. Most countries have set some standard, although it may differ based on a teacher's education level, type of contract or hiring date. Of the countries surveyed in this report, Panama still lacks national certification standards for English teachers, but it is not alone in Latin America. Argentina and Brazil similarly have not established proficiency standards for teachers. Without a benchmark against which countries can measure progress towards their goals and make decisions about who is qualified to teach and who is not, it will be difficult to address any other challenges.

Setting proficiency goals means little if countries do not know whether or not they are being met. Therefore, testing teachers' English levels is a critical step and allows governments to certify teachers' language abilities. Given the prevalence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it would make sense for other countries in the region to adopt this as an international standard of certification. As the cases of Chile and Costa Rica illustrate, even when clear standards have been set, that does not mean that they are universally implemented, and it would be unwise to assume that all, or even most, teachers meet the established target. Panama and Uruguay have not certified teacher abilities at a national level—nor, for that matter, have any countries in the region besides Chile and Costa Rica—but limited studies, and student test results, suggest that English teachers across the region do not have the requisite skills to meet certification criteria. The question of how many teachers meet standards, and how far the rest are from those benchmarks, must be answered before

countries can design any sort of professional development or training strategy.

Although initially results may reveal uncomfortable truths, they can also provide essential information on what type of support, both in terms of professional development and human resources management, may be necessary to achieve widespread teacher certification. Consistent testing over time can also provide valuable information on whether interventions to improve teachers' language abilities are actually having an effect, as Costa Rica was able to determine by retesting English teachers after offering training to those who did not initially meet certification standards.

2. Develop a policy response for teachers who do not meet certification requirements and cease hiring teachers who do not meet standards.

Many English teachers currently in the classroom do not meet minimum language proficiency requirements. Once countries have a clear picture of where their teaching force stands, they will need to develop a strategy for addressing the gaps in language capabilities. This should take two forms: remedial training to boost language skills for teachers who are close to meeting standards and dismissal for instructors whose language skills are extremely limited.

Several national English programs have already invested in professional development opportunities to strengthen teachers' language abilities. Perhaps the most ambitious of these is the one launched by Panama Bilingüe in 2015 to send pre-service and in-service teachers to study abroad in English-speaking countries for a period of eight (in-service) to sixteen (recent graduates) weeks (Flores, 2018). The program comes at considerable cost—\$5000 to \$7000 per teacher who stays for eight weeks, and up to \$12000 per teacher for those who stay for a full four months. In total, over the past five years, the government has dedicated over \$80 million dollars to the Teacher Training International program, allowing over 5000 teachers to participate (Flores, 2018). Other national English programs in Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay also offer training for in-service teachers. Unfortunately, there is little evidence available on the ability of any of these trainings to improve teachers' language proficiency, or the cost-effectiveness of any single intervention relative to any other.

Another critical question beyond how much it costs to offer any particular type of language training is the relative cost to build a teacher's English skills so that they can be certified at the next proficiency level. For example, Costa Rica has established a C1

proficiency standard for permanently contracted teachers. When national testing was last conducted, in 2015, 31.3% of English teachers tested at only one level below this, B2. It would seem to be cost-effective to invest first in this cohort of teachers, since they only need to improve their English by one level, at which point over 60% of Costa Rican teachers would be certified at appropriate language proficiency level. But what about the 19.8% of teachers who tested at B1 and would need to increase their English capabilities by two levels in order to be properly certified? How much longer would it take and how much more would it cost? Finally, for the almost 20% of Costa Rican English teachers who tested at either A1 or A2, the two lowest levels on the CEFR, does it make sense to try to raise their English abilities by three or four levels? Or would it be more effective (and more efficient) to contract recent graduates who are already certified at the correct levels? Where is the cutoff point after which it is too expensive and time consuming to retrain and certify teachers in the classroom? The answers to these questions would allow policymakers to develop professional development strategies that focus on certifying those teachers who are closest to meeting established standards while they dismiss or reassign teachers who do not meet minimum criteria.

In the case of pre-service teachers who have not yet entered the teaching force, they should be held to existing standards. The fact that there are so many English teachers currently teaching who are not proficient in English shows that, even when countries have put standards in place, they are not always administered faithfully, and many teachers are hired who do not have the necessary language qualifications. It is hard to see how countries will be able to make substantive progress towards improving English outcomes if they continue to hire new teachers who are not certified and do not meet qualifications benchmarks. Continuing on this path is only likely to recreate the existing challenges that the system faces. Instead, the focus with teachers currently receiving their certification should be ensuring that they meet existing standards before they are hired. Without enforcing these hiring requirements, countries are unlikely to see substantial gains in the quality of their English teachers or the language proficiency of their students.

3. Support English teacher training institutions to adopt and implement higher standards.

Currently many future English teachers are not required to speak the language proficiently before they begin their teacher preparation studies—either because there are no language requirements for admission, or because the language requirements are low or poorly enforced. In theory, opening English teaching degree programs to anyone who is interested in studying seems like

a democratic idea. In practice, it means that many universities and teacher training institutions devote an inordinate amount of time to building the basic language skills of pre-service teachers, instead of helping them learn how to teach the language. Our survey data suggests that one of the primary challenges facing teacher training institutions is building the language skills of their graduates. Higher—and enforced—entrance requirements would ensure that pre-service English teachers spend less time learning the language, and more time learning how to teach it to others.

Policymakers also need to both establish minimum graduation requirements in order to ensure that pre-service teachers are graduating with the required language abilities, and then see to it that they are enforced. This will eliminate loopholes that currently allow many future English teachers to graduate without having demonstrated that they are proficient in the language. In Colombia, Costa Rica and Panama, there is no policy at the national level that establishes a language requirement for teachers graduating with an English degree. Instead, each university can set its graduation requirements for language proficiency, leading to a wide spectrum of acceptable levels, from B1 at some Colombian universities all the way to C2.

Chile and Uruguay have both established language certification requirements for graduates receiving an English teaching degree at the national level, but there are still important gaps between policy and implementation. For example, in Chile, although the exit profile for English teachers says that they should have a C1 level in order to graduate, in practice they can receive a diploma even if they fail the language certification test. This creates a loophole where the Ministry of Education assumes that all teachers who have a degree can speak at the C1 level since, according to the Ministry's own accreditation requirements, they should be able to. In Uruguay, English teachers are supposed to have a C2 level of English at graduation, but there is no available data to show that this is true, and in fact limited studies have shown that most graduates do not meet this requirement (Kaiser, 2017).

Effective solutions will require more than just additional regulations imposed from the top down. Universities and teacher training institutions will need additional support—both technical and financial—in order to be able to make the necessary adjustments. In fact, of the teacher training institutions surveyed for this report, many identified adjusting to changing curricular demands as a major challenge for their program—an indication that existing regulations, where they have been implemented, have not been accompanied by the scaffolding necessary for their success. Additionally, some universities describe the ministry of education or relevant oversight body as constantly watching over (“vigilando”) them, whereas

others describe their relationship with the public sector as being centered on collaboration, facilitating workshops and other projects. Chile stands out for having clearly built strong relationships with universities—multiple Chilean institutions cited PIAP specifically as their primary or only relationship with the Ministry of Education.

4. Language proficiency is only half the story-teachers need to be effective instructors as well.

It is evident that there is much work to be done in order to ensure that English teachers have the proper language skills. But just because someone can speak English, it does not mean that he or she will be an effective instructor. Language teachers also need to be skilled educators, and for that to happen, ministries of education need to make a major effort to improve teaching practices.

The most important, and first, step that must be taken is getting into classrooms. Decisions regarding professional development—who needs it, what kind, how it should be delivered and what kind of follow-up is required—can only be made with clear data on what is happening at the classroom level and the interactions between teachers and students. Unfortunately, there is very minimal data available on what is currently going on in classrooms, and what is available is often based either on self-reported survey data or small-scale observational studies, both of which are insufficient for making large-scale policy decisions.

Self-reported survey data can be subject to all sorts of distortions, both from selection bias, as well as a likely, and natural, desire of teachers to want to present themselves and their teaching practices in the most favorable light. For example, although the overwhelming majority of the more than 1700 teachers who responded to our survey indicated that they conducted their classes almost exclusively in English, studies suggest that English is actually not the medium of instruction in most classrooms—or at least is used in heavy combination with Spanish (Rojas et al., 2013; Barahona, 2016; Fernández Abarca, 2014). There are likely other, similar, areas where the only way to get the full picture is by observing classroom practices.

Observational studies are another important source of information on what is happening inside English classrooms in Latin America, but they tend to be small in scale and limited in scope, offering only a peek into the dynamic, complex world of an English classroom in action. Moreover, these results are not always generalizable due to the small sample size and qualitative nature of the data. Because of these limitations, they cannot necessarily be taken as representative of what is going on in the “typical” English classroom, and it is hard

to determine to what extent the results or findings of one study can be extrapolated out to other classrooms, schools, education levels or countries.

Professional development is obviously a critical tool for improving teaching practices, not only because these opportunities can support teachers' instructional abilities, but also because this may be the most direct way to get into classrooms for observations. For example, evidence suggests that professional learning communities, in which teachers work in a structured, collaborative cohort to share, study and analyze experiences together, can be a key tool for improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes (Vaillant, 2018; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010). Additionally, because learning communities can be focused at the school or local level, there are multiple opportunities for follow up and reinforcement. These learning communities are already a key part of Chile's PIAP, where 2000 teachers belong to 180 English Teacher Networks, but more efforts are needed to expand this model in other countries and ensure that participation is effective at increasing learning outcomes.

Chile, as part of its teacher evaluation system, requires teachers to submit a portfolio of work, which includes a video recording of them teaching in the classroom. This data provides key information on what teachers are doing inside their classrooms, and, if analyzed in a systematic way at scale, could allow for a massive increase in the existing information on how English teachers run their classrooms and what happens in the learning environment.

5. Ministries of education will need to think outside the box and look for innovative solutions in order to tackle the challenge of English language instruction on a regional scale.

Even if all of the preceding challenges were to be adequately addressed, the reality is that it may not be enough to satisfy the demand for English teachers. Even if all English teachers currently in classrooms spoke the language proficiently, there would still be job positions that went unfilled. Even if countries were able to more effectively enforce certification requirements and hire only those teachers who met the standards currently in place, they would have to dismiss a large share of their English teaching population who would not meet those standards. The types of changes proposed above can take a long time to produce results, and even if each of these recommendations were to be implemented successfully, it may take generations before there are enough qualified English teachers to meet Latin America's growing demand. Therefore, countries will need to look to a variety of creative responses to

address the shortage of qualified English teachers—at least for the time being.

These solutions could take a variety of different formats, but there are two pathways that seem particularly promising. The first is technological responses to language learning and the second, expanding English exposure in non-formal learning spaces. In the first case, Uruguay is leading the way with its *Ceibal en Inglés* program. The innovative initiative, which allows students to connect with native English-speaking teachers in other countries via videoconferencing, has proven effective at increasing students' language abilities without needing to hire more teachers. Other, smaller-scale studies of technological interventions for language instruction, such as blended learning or interactive applications, also suggest that they may be effective tools for improving students' language abilities when teacher supply is limited.

Ministries of education should also consider how they can reach young English language learners outside of formal learning environments, and through formats that do not necessarily require trained English teachers. Expanding access to English-language media seems like a natural first step. For example, licensing agreements for educational programs such as Sesame Street could increase young peoples' exposure to English through a show that is already designed to increase children's reading, speaking and listening abilities. For older children, non-dubbed television shows could offer similar exposure benefits. This type of initiative would require working across sectors to develop licensing agreements, secure funding and ensure that information was reaching target audiences, but ministries of education should be a driving actor in all of these conversations.

6. Collect robust data on English teachers and classrooms to inform strategic policy decisions.

One clear and overarching theme that has emerged throughout the research and writing process for this paper is the need for more and better data for making informed, strategic policy decisions. This data is needed at almost every level of the education system, and includes more complete administrative data on English teachers, richer and more comprehensive information on teachers' classroom practices and a clearer picture of the cost-effectiveness of existing efforts and interventions to improve teacher quality.

The need for improved data collection and analysis can be seen as a cross-cutting theme throughout each of the recommendations discussed above, since they can only be implemented effectively if policymakers are consistent and rigorous in how they gather

evidence and use it to make deliberate and well-planned improvements to the region's English teaching policies. For example, when Costa Rica first tested English teachers' language proficiencies in 2008, they were able to use the results of that assessment to offer retraining to those teachers who did not meet national requirements and, when they retested proficiency levels seven years later, they saw a marked improvement in the English abilities of their teaching staff (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). Without the initial data collection, they would not have been able to identify which teachers needed the most support and, subsequently, see such improvement. This type of systematic data collection to inform policy decisions is necessary not only to certify teachers' English proficiency, but also to set degree requirements for future English teachers and understand their instructional practices inside the classroom. More and better data collection is the only way to know what needs to be done and whether or not it is working.

Note on Methodology

This paper would not have been possible without the dedicated collaboration and support of education authorities in four countries: Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay. The specific methodology for collecting administrative data and administering surveys to teachers and training institutes varied between the countries that participated in this investigation, but in all cases, every effort was made to gather results that were comparable and valid. This methodological variation is due in large part to the fact that, in each country, our local partners are located in distinct positions—for example, in Chile and Panama we worked with the national English program, while in Costa Rica, we had the support of the English advisor's office in the Ministry of Education and in Uruguay ANEP (National Administration for Public Education, an agency independent of the Ministry of Education) was our collaborator. Whatever the specific case in any individual country, the steps we followed and contacts we established was always done in close and open communication with our country partners. Additionally, the repository for administrative data was different in each country—in some, we had to contact the Human Resource Department, in others the Statistics Department or the Civil Service agency. In all countries, we shared the protocols and questions for the surveys with our partners, soliciting their feedback and suggestions to ensure the success of the surveys and hence the report. It is important to note that none of the survey data—of either teachers or training institutions—should be taken as representative of the situation in an entire country, given the non-representative samples and selection bias among respondents. Below is a description of the methodological process that we used in each country, including steps followed and the collaborators who supported our work.

Costa Rica

Our primary contact in Costa Rica was Ana Isabel Campos, National Advisor for English at the Ministry of Education. Following her suggestions and guidance, we contacted the Human Resources Department at the Ministry of Education, which handles the information regarding English teacher certification test results, teaching degrees and demographic data. Campos also had access to much of this information herself and shared it with us. Ana Isabel also prepared for us the list of training institutions where English teachers are educated. Once this list was shared with us, we contacted the academic coordinators at each university to send them the survey electronically. For contacting English teachers, we asked the statistics department at the Ministry of Education to prepare a representative sample (both in terms of coverage and regional distribution as well as education level). With this list of schools, we emailed the director of each school (each school administration has a Ministry of Education email) with the electronic survey link, asking them to share the survey with the English teacher(s) at their school.

Panama

In Panama, we coordinated our investigation through contacts with the national English program, Panama Bilingüe, in particular Eneida López and Isabel Cubilla. Panama Bilingüe directed us towards the appropriate contacts within the departments of human resources and statistics at the Ministry of Education to request administrative data. We also requested additional data on academic instructors and certification processes directly from the Panama Bilingüe program. López and Cubilla also provided us with a list of universities in Panama that offer English teaching degrees. For each institution, we conducted online research to determine the appropriate contact based on the relevant major before contacting that person to share the electronic survey link with them. To administer teacher surveys, the coordinators at Panama Bilingüe helped us to contact English teachers directly and send them the survey link to solicit their responses.

Uruguay

In Uruguay, our primary contact was Aldo Rodríguez, Director of Language Policy at ANEP. Claudia Brovetto, Coordinator of *Ceibal en Inglés* also provided support and feedback in designing the research methodology and ensuring the success of the investigation. Rodríguez also played a critical role in ensuring that the Central Directors' Council of the National Administration for Public Education (ANEP) approved this project in order to be able to administer the surveys to both teachers and training institutions. Rodríguez also shared administrative data with us and put us in contact with the appropriate supervisors with each education level as well as teacher training to be able to share the survey links with them, which they then distributed to respondents.

Chile

In Chile, we worked closely with the national English program, *Inglés Abre Puertas* (PIAP), at the Ministry of Education. Ricardo Contreras, Coordinator of Teacher Professional Development at PIAP, was our primary contact. Contreras sent us the relevant administrative data as well as the list of universities and appropriate contact information for English teaching major coordinators in order to administer the teacher training institution surveys. Contreras also facilitated our distribution of teaching surveys by sharing the electronic link to the survey.

Colombia

Although the research protocol was not administered completely in Colombia, we were able to conduct teacher training institution surveys in Bogota, Colombia. Rosa María Cely provided us with the names and contact information for the relevant universities and training institutions. We then contacted them directly with the survey link.

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Endnotes

- ⁱ Country numbers are shown as a percentage of the entire teaching force. Teaching force numbers from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, with the exception of Uruguay (see note 6).
- ⁱⁱ Includes both traditional and technical secondary education.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Data only available for public schools. This data also includes the 1133 academic instructors contracted by Panama Bilingüe to work in public schools. The academic instructors, although paid by the Ministry of Education, are not contracted through traditional, competitive hiring processes.
- ^{iv} Data only available for public schools.
- ^v 30-40% of public sector teachers also teach in private schools.
- ^{vi} Uruguay totals calculated from Soravilla, 2018.
- ^{vii} General teaching force data from UIS. Chile data from 2017. Costa Rica and Panama data from 2016.
- ^{viii} Isabel Cubilla, personal communication, Aug. 22, 2019.
- ^{ix} Celeste Marín, personal communication, Aug. 1, 2019.
- ^x Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, July 19, 2019.
- ^{xi} Ana Isabel Campos, personal communication, May 15, 2019.
- ^{xii} Celeste Marín, personal communication, Aug. 1, 2019.
- ^{xiii} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, Sept. 2, 2019.
- ^{xiv} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, Aug. 7, 2019.
- ^{xv} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019.
- ^{xvi} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019; Isabel Cubilla, personal communication, July 2, 2019.
- ^{xvii} Javier González, personal communication, July 24, 2019.
- ^{xviii} See, for example, Uruguay's Teacher Census (Censo Docente) and Adaptive English Test (Prueba Adaptiva de Inglés) and Chile's SIMCE (published by the Agency for Education Quality, which also has open data available for researchers).
- ^{xix} This does not include Uruguayan universities, since there is a national language requirement.

Endnotes

- ^{xx} Standards that were determined to be “unclear” were either those where proficiency was determined internally by the university (in other words not aligned to any internationally recognized proficiency scale) or where the description was not sufficiently clear to determine a specific requirement (for example, if respondents only indicated the test used, such as TOEIC or Cambridge, without specifying the minimum requirement).
- ^{xxi} Ricardo Contreras, personal communication, Aug. 26, 2019.
- ^{xxii} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019.
- ^{xxiii} Aldo Rodríguez, personal communication, July 22, 2019.
- ^{xxiv} PIAP also launched a teacher mentorship program in 2019. Results on its impact are expected to become available in early 2020.
- ^{xxv} Although it was made clear in the survey to teachers that individual answers would be unidentifiable and we would not share raw survey results with ministry officials, many teachers may still have felt a desire to respond positively to this question given that it was clear we were working with the Ministry of Education to collect data.
- ^{xxvi} There are some examples of English-medium instruction in public schools in the region, such as the Bilingual High Schools in Costa Rica, English In English in Chile and Science instruction in English in Panama. In general, however, English is treated as its own subject area, and non-language content is not generally taught in English.



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