

Chapter VI

Supporting mental health in the university: a shared commitment through foreign language learning

Doris Eliana Bohórquez Álvarez

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1640-6131>

Doris.bohorquez@uptc.edu.co

Introduction

Students of different levels of foreign language in the section manifested affectations related to mental well-being, mainly at the level of stress, anxiety, and depression throughout the learning process at the university, which affects their academic performance by hindering their concentration, memory, analytical capacity, generation of new ideas and other skills necessary for their performance in the academic field. Through some foreign language classes that have been offered since 2023, a problem has been identified related to the lack of knowledge of causes, consequences, symptoms, types or classes, treatments or processes to cope with these mental health conditions, disorders or diseases, and how these mental health conditions affect their performance in class, their motivation, interest, concentration, and therefore their periodic and overall results. This micro-curricular design for foreign language responds to the need to expand highly relevant knowledge for the university community, enabling the use of specialized vocabulary in a foreign language, applied to specific content.

Based on the fact that mental health is a fundamental pillar in human life, which positively or negatively affects one's holistic development, and recognizing that individuals are continuously exposed to problematic situations involving emotional, affective, and sentimental aspects, the development of activities that contribute to the awareness and understanding of mental health becomes essential within academic processes, as these provide a suitable environment for learning as a contribution of the shared commitment.

Since emotional well-being is of significant importance in the educational environment, and considering the manifestations of students on their levels of stress, anxiety and depression throughout the learning process at the university, as well as its impact on its manifestations of affectation in their academic performance, a micro-

curricular design has been proposed that addresses issues related to mental health, which is transversal, and where the foreign language serves as a medium for learning these contents.

It should be clarified that the work carried out in this field of mental health takes a purely academic approach. This is because it involves the study, analysis and interpretation of related content, the production of ideas, and individual reflections on situations in daily life and real experiences, all of which are applied through the use of a foreign language.

It responds to the identified need to create micro-curricular designs enriched with meaningful content that can be systematically integrated into instructional sessions. Furthermore, the experiences gathered during face-to-face sessions support the idea of including mental health as a central theme in the institution's academic reform framework, and of considering its relevance and impact in all educational contexts throughout students' lives.

Bruna et al. (2024), in their mental health intervention study, underscores that mental health among university students has become a topic of growing interest and concern. Their findings point to a high prevalence of stress, anxiety, and psychological disorders within this population—issues that were notably intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with these findings, Cuenca et al. (2020) observe that female students show greater vulnerability to the development of various mental health disorders compared to their male counterparts. They emphasize the need for timely monitoring and the implementation of targeted mental health promotion and prevention programs to enhance the human potential of university adolescents.

From a more structural and institutional perspective, Ortiz et al. (2023) argue that the social participation of educational agents should be central to the development of mental health strategies. They advocate

for a participatory methodology that engages the academic community and fosters consistency between discourse and practice. Their study highlights that mental well-being is directly linked to improved academic and psychosocial conditions.

Furthermore, Cova et al. (2007) have found that university students often face challenges that negatively impact their well-being and hinder a proper adaptation. Their research estimates the magnitude of these mental health issues in a representative sample of undergraduate students and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems within higher education institutions.

Taken together, these studies reveal a consistent concern across the academic world: mental health is a fundamental pillar in the well-being and success of university students. Despite differences in focus, methodology, or regional context, the literature agrees on the importance of integrating mental health as a core component of educational policy and curriculum design. This reinforces the call for academic institutions to adopt proactive approaches that go beyond reactive support, fostering a holistic and preventive culture around mental health.

In addition, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008, cited, by Yang, 2021, p.2) claim: "Language learning is known as a complex process that requires different cognitive and linguistic skills and competencies to successfully occur. When it is combined with psychology, emotions, and communication skills, this complexity is multiplied in human beings." This statement means that students can learn from any content about any knowledge by using the language. Still, their emotions, feelings, sensations, and thoughts are also immersed in this complex learning process, so they become complementary and are linked.

Likewise, Yang (2021), as part of his studies about psychology, has been working on a theory which involves CDST; he claims that "Although the theory about Complexity Dynamic System Theory (CDST) seems technical, complicated, and with logistic problems, its application to

L2 education is advantageous in that it can increase the awareness of L2 teachers, students, materials developers, and researchers" (p.5) This means that teachers can improve their CDST-related methods and achieve better results with their students, who can also consider this theory relevant to their learning process. This undoubtedly highlights the benefits for foreign language teachers in their classes.

On the other hand, Greenier et al. (2021, p.4) say: "Another variable within positive psychology that helps L2 teachers and students to function more effectively in the classroom ecology is emotion regulation." This means that the advantage of teachers considering students' emotions as part of the process is noticeable, especially when teaching and learning happen among human beings who feel and think, and where knowledge can be built within a very comfortable environment.

Wang (2021) highlights that ESL/EFL teachers' well-being should be reinforced in terms of emotions and personal nature as part of their professional performance. It means that not only students but also teachers should feel emotionally strong or motivated to work, given that mental health is an integral part of human existence.

According to Pishghadam, 2019, (as cited in Greenier et al., 2021 p.5) as cited in Yang, "Effective language teaching is not just a matter of conveying content and pedagogical knowledge and using all novel teaching methods and techniques." This statement emphasizes the importance of additional elements in the teaching process, beyond those directly related to teaching. These elements include mood, thought and emotion.

Xie and Derakhshan (2021) State that the teaching process is also endowed with emotions, and that language teachers, as human beings, must continuously communicate and interact with their students. Their moods therefore intervene in their performance and can positively or negatively affect the learning environment. This is not an exception at university level; in fact, aspects such as social interaction are included in professors' evaluations, and can be among the most positive or negative points that students mention at the end of each semester. They

claim that some professors have extensive knowledge of their subject and experience of working at the institution, but unfortunately their behavior is aggressive, defensive and rude, particularly when students question grades or ask for additional explanations.

About mental health in the university context, Herrera (2022) indicates that 'Instituciones de Educación Superior IES' are one of those contexts in which a significant number of individuals tend to move, so they must have adequate guidelines for the care of mental health, mainly in terms of informing and training their educational community about the importance of mental health.

Therefore, it is assumed that mental health is a general concern within the educational community and should be considered a fundamental issue in the comprehensive training of the entire university community. Teachers are not exempt from this reality. As direct participants in the university context, we are not immune to the worrying situation of stress, anxiety, or any other condition that students in our classes may experience at any time.

Likewise, Herrera (2022), in his applied research at universities in our country, says that "it is considered appropriate to suggest to this type of 'IES' the creation and implementation of strategies that allow for adequate dissemination of the terms researched" (p. 95). This means that there are no exclusions based on the type or nature of the university; on the contrary, there are no distinctions of social status or economic condition that interfere with emotional problems affecting members of a community. Therefore, it is the duty of teachers to be prepared to deal with situations of this nature at some point in the teaching process, as an action linked to the teaching profession, as the author Herrera (2022) himself emphasizes:

The importance of researching the topic to gain a better understanding and grasp of the associated terms, and gradually acquire tools for listening, accompanying, assisting, and helping both individuals and those who act as caregivers or are part of their interaction contexts (p. 95)

However, according to UNICEF (2022), students' academic performance is linked to contextual and situational factors that accompany their stages of life, as shown below:

The socioeconomic context and personal circumstances of students significantly influence their educational performance. Factors such as poverty, family structure, quality of teaching, and access to academic resources are key determinants that can facilitate or hinder the learning process.

On the other hand, Murcia and Restrepo (2024) state that "mental health and socio-emotional factors are critical elements that significantly influence students' learning and academic performance" (p. 3).

This is why educators must be aware to this reality, in which our students may find themselves facing emotional challenges that directly affect their attitude and, therefore, their ability to carry out the activities proposed throughout the semester as part of the academic training process that occupies most of our time. Often, these relevant aspects of human life are not even considered.

These studies, conducted by Murcia and Restrepo (2024) and based on previous research in Colombian university contexts, produced the following results:

The importance of socio-emotional factors in the acquisition of educational skills; students' ability to manage stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions is crucial to their academic success. These findings are aligned with previous studies that have shown how mental health and emotional well-being are essential for academic performance. (p. 5)

Similarly, Ruiz and Pérez (2019) discuss the impact of school stress on student performance. They indicate that academic stress is a key factor in students' learning outcomes. Their findings suggest that high levels of academic stress can hinder students' ability to learn and perform effectively. Those experiencing significant stress face considerable challenges in developing essential skills. This highlights the importance of implementing effective stress management strategies in an educational context.

Therefore, it can be concluded that if students below the university level experience stress due to their academic responsibilities, this effect is even more pronounced in our study population. These students face an overwhelming number of daily tasks that demand greater dedication and energy, resulting in increased attention and concentration requirements. As teachers, we may sometimes overlook this intensity or justify it by recalling our own undergraduate workloads.

On the other hand, Valencia and Rodríguez (2024), based on the results obtained in their research, state that

One of the main findings was the urgency of acknowledging Socio Affective Strategies in any learning process. Such is the case of the benefits of motivation in the context, the importance of being compassionate teachers, the acknowledgement from previous experiences, and the relevance of promoting positive self-talk, among others. The implementation of any strategy to assist and manage students' emotional domains should be reflected in the teacher's practices.

According to Valencia and Rodríguez (2024), teachers can adapt these strategies to their classes to motivate students to learn and be resilient. In English classes, for example, it seems to be a good option for professors who sometimes seek for tactics to guarantee students start and stay in classes from the beginning to the end of the semester, considering this subject is not mandatory at the university yet. It is worth noting that additional studies on mental health have been conducted within university communities around the world.

Considering that Sogamoso campus has various academic programs coexisting within the branch campus, and in response to a need emerging from the university academic context—where a diverse student population converges, representing different social backgrounds, personalities, communities, customs, and educational experiences—the idea arises to design a foreign language syllabus that is transversal to all areas of knowledge and contributes meaningfully to the holistic development of the participants.

Thus, beginning with levels III, IV, and V, a pilot test was launched in the first semester of 2023, marking the start of a new phase in foreign language instruction—where the language serves as a means rather than an end in itself.

Theoretical Framework

Social and Emotional Learning

Over the years, a considerable number of studies related to social and emotional learning have been successfully implemented. Although these studies have had an impact on education worldwide, they have mainly focused on the US context. In Colombia, Ministerio de Educación is beginning to recognize the importance of including emotions as part of the Colombian educational system and the school curriculum, as well as in processes, reflections, standards, and policies (Buitrago & Herrera, 2019).

In primary and secondary education, the school system is being consolidated to strengthen cross-curricular and socio-emotional skills as part of citizenship skills and educational quality (MEN, 2019), which shows that the institution responsible for regulating the education system in our country has indeed given these issues the importance they deserve, resulting in a positive impact on the acceptance and adoption of strategies that educational establishments increasingly consider with greater prominence and give significant value to, for the strengthening of healthy and positive coexistence among students, teachers and all other participants in the institution.

Currently, schools are implementing action plans to reinforce values between parents and children through parenting schools. These plans involve carrying out enjoyable and dynamic activities in an atmosphere of trust and harmony. The activities focus on managing emotions, feelings, perceptions and care, which form part of a parent's emotional responsibility towards their children. The plans also involve training parents to apply values to their interactions with their children. In the

studies conducted by Murcia and Restrepo (2024), which build on prior research in Colombian university contexts, the results highlight the following points:

Socio-emotional factors play a significant role in acquiring educational skills. Students' ability to manage stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions is crucial for their academic success. These findings align with earlier studies that demonstrate the importance of mental health and emotional well-being in enhancing academic performance. (p. 5)

It highlights the importance of managing the emotions and stressful situations that students face daily, due to work overload, exam preparation, project presentations, attendance at workshops and laboratories, and fieldwork, as well as many other academic tasks, which they often have to complete while feeling hungry, sleepy or tired, and while dealing with emotional, sentimental or family issues.

At the university, the Welfare Department is responsible for organizing integration activities that bring together students and teachers to participate in musical, sporting, and cultural events such as dances, plays, art exhibitions, singing competitions, mindfulness and suicide prevention workshops, and discussions, among others. These activities promote free expression and encourage students to engage in attractive activities as academic alternatives.

On the other hand, Herrera and Buitrago (2014) argue that personal and professional development, cultivating a love of knowledge and a passion for teaching, assertive communication, creativity and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, among others, are important in the context of teaching. This is why teaching staff are encouraged to undertake complementary training.

Finally, it is important to remember that emotions are integral to human mental health and significantly impact the learning process in terms of performance, concentration, interest and mood. These factors then modulate and regulate thoughts, thereby positively or negatively affecting students' academic performance.

Task-Based Learning as a Methodology in Mental Health Content

According to Nunan (2004, p. 10):

The active involvement of the learner is therefore central to the approach, and a rubric that conveniently captures the active, experiential nature of the process is 'learning by doing'. In this, it contrasts with a 'transmission' approach to education in which the learner acquires knowledge passively from the teacher.

Based on the previously discussed theoretical framework, this methodology is applied to curricular activities related to mental health carried out during the semesters between 2023 and 2025, with students from levels III, IV, and V of English courses, corresponding to various academic programs at the Sogamoso branch of the faculty. Students engage in their learning process through real and experiential approaches, supported by strategies that foster reflection, analysis, and critical reading. This includes the development of real case studies and the practical application of content to everyday life, in alignment with the topics suggested for these language proficiency levels. In addition, Casquero (2004) indicates that the characteristics of this type of task are as follows:

- a) They are meaning-focused rather than form-focused;
- b) they actively engage all students in both oral and written comprehension and production;
- c) they aim to replicate authentic oral and written communication processes;
- d) they have clearly defined language learning objectives, a structured format, and a sequencing designed to facilitate the learning process; and
- e) they must be assessable in terms of both their instrumental value (the communicative aspect of language) and their procedural value (as tools within the learning process).

The idea of learning a foreign language over time becomes a latent need rather than an option in a globalized world, a digital age and a changing environment. This learning has therefore become a conscious process that people can applied to diverse contents. People also use it as a means for learning, analysis and reflection. It is so closely linked to foreign language for particular purposes that teaching and learning it cannot be separated.

Socio-Affective Strategies as Relevant Foundations for Mental Health Contents in the Classroom

The socio-affective strategies that are most suitable for the context of the article involve social interactions and the management of emotions, and facilitate learning. Examples of these strategies in action include cooperation among students, anxiety management and seeking help.

In this regard, Horwitz (cited by Prada & León, 2021) states that "Anxious students may avoid studying and, in some cases, skip class entirely in an effort to alleviate their anxiety" (p. 240). Some of the students who participated in the various groups under study expressed anxiety, having experienced depression and stress of various degrees, and even attempted suicide as a result of many serious reasons that had affected their mental health. Although at the beginning they considered the study of these topics inconvenient, they finally recognized that it was pertinent and adequate to know much more about these subjects, which ultimately contributed to their personal growth and, of course, aided managing their particular situations through the clarity these topics provided in their daily lives. These strategies aim to foster group work, manage anxiety, encourage risk-taking, promote mutual support, and create study opportunities to enhance English language learning as a foreign language. Both affective and social strategies contribute indirectly to the learning process. They are fundamental to each individual's humanity, shaping their feelings, emotions, and thoughts. In the case of topics related to mental health, the involvement of these topics begins from the moment of introduction to the contents. It is emphasized that, from the outset of our training as teachers, we must

recognize that each of us is a unique individual with particular needs, concerns, afflictions and psychological conditions that can have a positive or negative impact on learning.

Some of the students expressed their conditions of anxiety, having been in depression and stress of varying levels, and even attempted suicide because of many serious reasons that had affected their mental health. Although at the beginning they considered the study of these issues as inconvenient, they finally recognized that it was pertinent and appropriate to know much more about these topics that ultimately contributed to their personal growth and of course contributed to the management of their particular situations from the clarity of these issues adopted in their daily lives.

The Learning of Values in the Context of the University

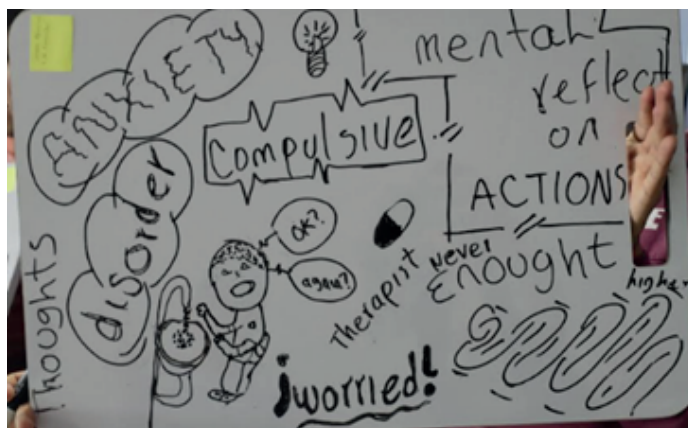
Values are a fundamental part of people's lives, as form an integral part of human development. In education, they cannot be overlooked as they influence the norms and behavioral patterns that shape students' attitudes in the classroom. That is why, when teaching a foreign language, it is considered important to involve students in the process, thus reinforcing the fundamental basis that is part of each individual's experience at university.

Molina et al. (2008, p.47) state that:

It is necessary to view the university as the generator of the human potential needed for the transformation and development of society. The great demand and diversification currently present in higher education are due to the awareness of the importance of this type of education for the development of humanity in spheres of life, which makes institutions have a strong commitment to creating programs that stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

Methodology

Figure 1. Drawing in Class



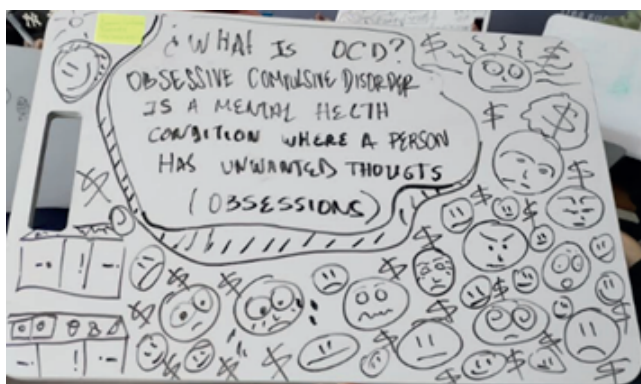
This article is the result of the implementation of pedagogical processes based on mental health content, developed as part of an initiative that aims to innovate and revitalize language teaching processes for students at the Sogamoso branch, which have been implemented between 2023 and 2025. These processes involve students from various academic programs at the Faculty who are taking English courses, in this case, those who are enrolled in levels III, IV, and V.

Therefore, this article is based on research that presents data obtained directly from social reality. In this case, the data is from the implementation of a programmatic content, which is why, according to Ríos-Saldaña et al. (2023), "Field research is essential to improving our understanding of how human impacts on biological systems can be recognized, mitigated, or avoided." Additionally, it constitutes non-experimental research, as it only observes reality as it is, and therefore it would be unethical to manipulate variables.

As mentioned by Guevara et al. (2020), descriptive research focuses on identifying the characteristics of the population being studied. The data collection method is observation, followed by a process of data analysis and interpretation.

Likewise, quantitative and qualitative observations are made with the understanding that data focusing on numbers and values are collected objectively, such as age, number of students per semester by gender, and age of participants according to the level of foreign language they were studying.

Figure 2. Drawing in Class



Similarly, characteristics of the elements to be investigated are measured as the researcher becomes an observer participant, since they are immersed in the classes, propose topics, activities, exercises, and guide the learning processes, but at the same time only identify what happened with the development of these, while the students are working on their assignments.

Finally, surveys are used as a feedback tool to improve teaching practices for the implementation of teaching strategies and as input for this article, where the importance and relevance of work on these issues is highlighted, which, according to their own statements, needs to be reinforced and given more attention within the university context.

Population Profile

The population involved in implementing this proposal consists primarily of undergraduate students enrolled in Levels III, IV, and V of the English language program at the Sogamoso branch campus. These students belong to various academic programs and represent a diverse and dynamic group in terms of age, gender, and geographical origin.

Most participants are between 18 and 25 years old, which matches the typical age range of university students in early to mid-stages of their studies.

Regarding gender, there is a fairly balanced distribution, with a slight predominance of female students, reflecting broader demographic trends observed in higher education enrollment within the region.

Regarding the place of origin, the student body includes individuals from municipalities within Boyacá as well as from neighboring departments such as Santander and Cundinamarca. This diversity contributes to a rich intercultural environment, bringing different perspectives and experiences to the discussions and activities surrounding mental health issues.

Figure 3. Participants’ Mental Health Campaign I and II Semesters 2023

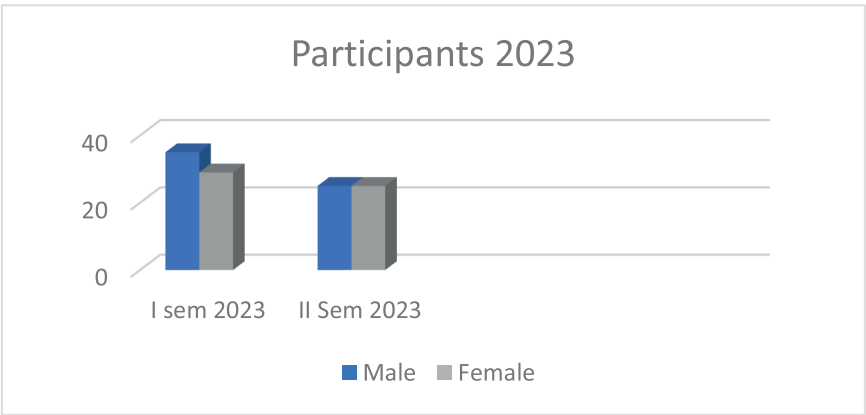
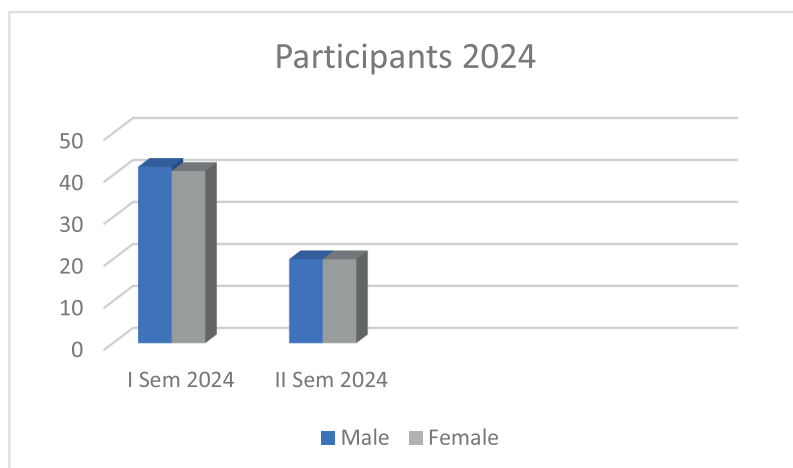
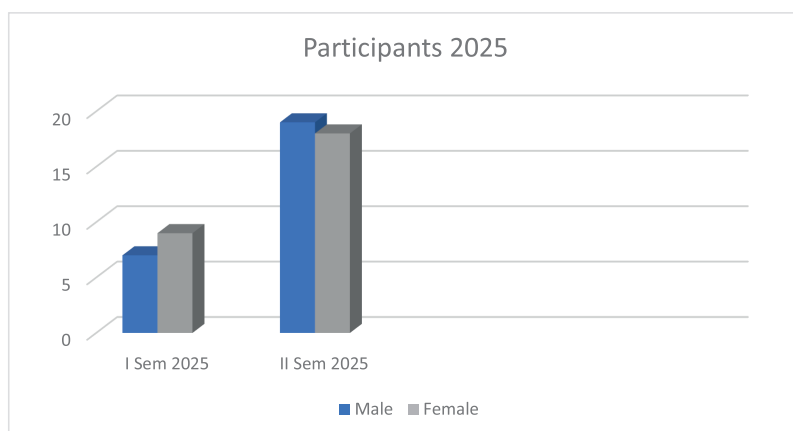
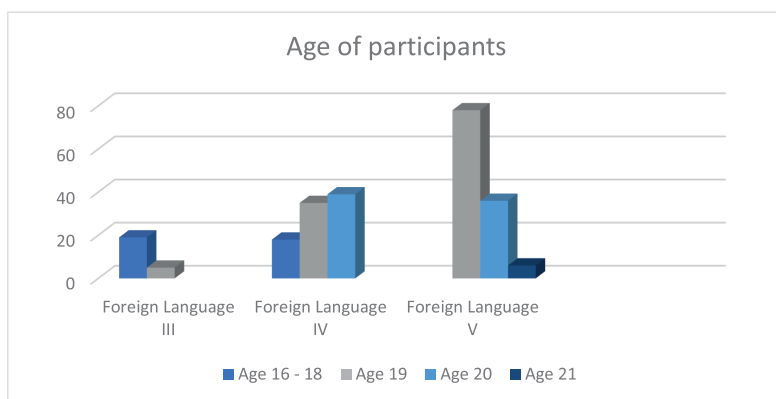


Figure 4. Participants' Mental Health Campaign I and II Semesters 2024**Figure 5.** Participants' Mental Health Campaign I and II Semesters 2025

According to Figure 6, the participants involved in this study were undergraduate students between the ages of 16 and 21, enrolled in levels III, IV, and V of the English program at the Sogamoso branch. Their age range aligns with the developmental stage in which critical engagement with mental health topics is particularly relevant.

Figure 6. Participants' age in levels III, IV, and V of English

Academic Background of the Participants

The participants belonged to various academic programs offered by the Sogamoso branch of the faculty. These included Mining Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Systems Engineering, Geological Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Public Accounting, Business Administration, and International Finance and Trade. This diversity of academic programs insight the learning process, so that these students are allowed interdisciplinary perspectives based on themes related to mental health content.

Implementation of the Proposal

During the first semester of 2023, and in accordance with the assigned academic workload, work began with Level V student groups through the implementation of topics like those listed below. At the end of the semester, a feedback process was done through a co-evaluation activity. This left a space for brainstorming that led to conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses, the relevance of the content, and the methodology used—particularly the strategies and techniques applied.

In the second semester of 2023, based on the new academic planning, the implementation expanded to include both Level V and Level IV.

The content for Level IV was designed and applied, and a continuous feedback process was done, involving activities focused on analysis, reflection, and ongoing discussion. These were framed in relation to students’ everyday life experiences, enriching the learning process.

In 2024, Levels III, IV, and V were assigned, and a pilot test with Level III was launched. Despite the class being developed at a less favorable time, the reception was highly positive, with strong student participation. At the end of the semester, students provided feedback in the form of concluding reflections. Their input was thoughtful, engaging, and positive regarding both the content and strategies used. Nonetheless, they suggested incorporating more activities outside the classroom to enrich the learning experience.

Below is Table 1, which presents the contents covered in Levels III, IV, and V, along with the associated themes.

Table 1. Designed contents for English levels III, IV, and V

LEVEL	TOPICS
Level III	Emotions Forgiveness Gratitude Communication Perfectionism Grief Anger management Relaxation
Level IV	Self-love, esteem, acceptance Acceptance and commitment Values Empathy Happiness Emotional Intelligence Procrastination

LEVEL	TOPICS
Level V	Mental Health Mindfulness Love Languages Boundaries Suicide Prevention Stress Depression Anxiety OCD

Discussion

Results Interpretation

University Well-being and Regional Partnerships for Mental Health

In response to the needs and interests expressed by students regarding mental health support at the branch campus, the University’s Student Well-being Unit established a partnership. This collaboration enabled professionals from the unit to deliver workshops and talks to students enrolled at the levels where these topics are addressed.

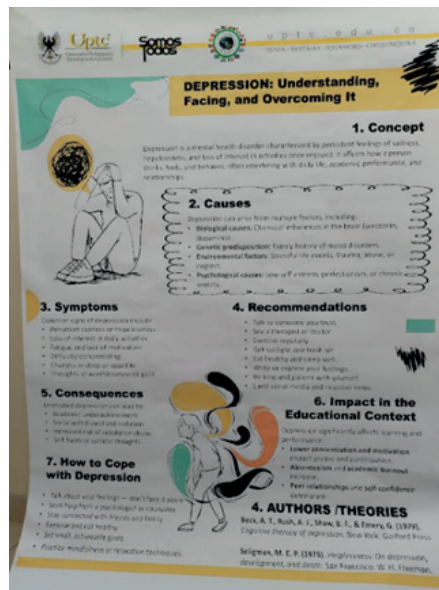
Within this framework, the unit coordinator developed a proposal in which several psychology professionals actively participated in selected sessions each semester. These experts led discussions on topics such as gender respect, abuse, and various types and degrees of violence—issues of great relevance to the student population.

Following these interventions, students expressed appreciation and empathy for the topics addressed, recognizing their practical value and direct applicability to their personal lives. Nevertheless, students also claimed the need to expand and achieve a deeper engagement with mental health. Additionally, they pointed out the shortage of qualified professionals available to meet the growing mental health needs of the entire university community at the branch campus.

Figure 7. Advert-Mental Health Campaign

Furthermore, during the second semester of 2024, the municipal government organized an event titled "Panel de Expertos Respira – Salud Mental en debate." This forum provided a platform for various mental health professionals to share insights within the educational context. The event was held at the university and was directed at both educators from different institutions and university students, further reinforcing the commitment to promoting mental health awareness within the academic environment.

Mental Health Campaign at the University and in High School

Figure 8. Mental Health Campaign Poster

Throughout the semesters 2023-I and II, and 2024-I and II, the mental health campaign was put into practice. As part of this initiative, students were required to design a poster summarizing the key information from their work; create an interactive activity to provide feedback to participants; and produce a souvenir to serve as a long-term reminder of the content presented.

In the first semester of 2025, the campaign was taken beyond the university setting, reaching a new audience. Students from ninth and tenth grade at a bilingual high school participated in the activity and interacted directly with Level IV English students, who presented their topics effectively and engaged the school community in meaningful dialogue.

In the second semester of 2025, the Mental Health Campaign was also developed at another bilingual high school from Sogamoso, where students from seventh, eighth and ninth grades participated from the activities done by the students of V level of Foreign Language, and felt satisfied, happy and curious to take part on it, by means of the assertive communication in the same English language.

At the end of the activity, a co-evaluation process was conducted to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of implementing the campaign in a non-university context. The conclusions highlighted the value of applying these topics within educational settings where the challenges addressed closely mirror the students' everyday experiences. The positive impact of the mental health campaign was acknowledged, along with the enthusiastic reception and high level of interest shown by the participants.

Figure 9. Mental Health Campaign Souvenir

Below are some of the perceptions that students express at the end of the semester, based on the question: What is your perception of the Mental Health Campaign that takes place at the end of the semester?

Student 1: "The topic of mental health should be as important as any other subject. As students, we are exposed to various social, family, and economic situations, and it would be very good to continue implementing strategies to help us deal with complex issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, self-esteem, etc."

Student 2: "I think it's a very good awareness campaign and it helps to learn and teach others about these issues that are rarely supported and neglected in Colombian society and educational institutions."

Student 3: "It would be good if these tactics were implemented more often and more intensively, because often they are left up in the air or the advice always ends up being cliché, but we bring this to reality and it doesn't always work."

Student 4: "The focus on mental health was interesting."

Student 5: "A methodology I had never seen before, very interesting and quite innovative. I liked the way English was taught, as it gave us useful tools to regulate many of the emotions I experience on a daily basis."

Student 6: "In general, the pedagogical approach is considered effective, motivating, and consistent with the needs of the training process, as it is conducive to learning by combining clear explanations, practical activities, and the use of digital tools that facilitate understanding."

Student 7: "I like it regardless of where it takes place. It's about sending

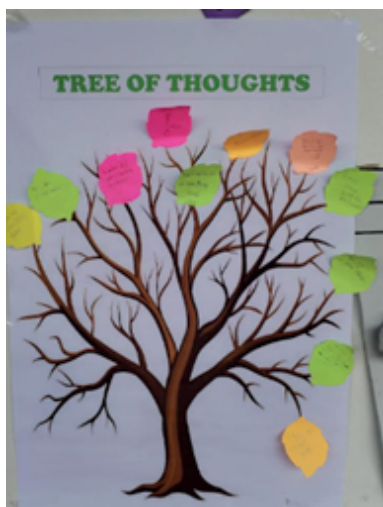
the message that mental health is a sensitive issue and that it's important to treat it and not leave it aside."

Student 8: "I feel that it is very important because it is a relevant and necessary strategy for promoting students' emotional well-being during a period of high academic demand. Its implementation raises awareness of the importance of self-care, reduces stress levels, and strengthens the early identification of emotional difficulties."

Additionally, the experience reaffirmed the importance of these activities that demand both a solid understanding of the subject matter and effective language skills. Mastery of the English language was essential to reach clear communication and ensure greater success in the development of the campaign.

Challenges and Complexities

Figure 10. Activity in the Mental Health Campaign



Students of all proficiency levels generally showed a willingness to participate in each session. However, some exercises proved particularly challenging as they covered sensitive and controversial topics. These issues often led to student resistance, with some opting not to participate or failing to complete the tasks fully. Based on this point,

it is relevant to revisit the words of Del Valle (2023): "The educational process transcends the mere transfer of knowledge and skills, focusing instead on comprehensive education and viewing the student as a subject rather than an object in their academic pursuit." This supports the significance of teaching with a humanitarian purpose, where the student becomes the focus for the teacher not only at the cognitive level, but also from an emotional perspective.

Figure 11. Souvenir - Mental Health Campaign



Although the subjects addressed during the semester were relevant and of broad social interest, a few students expressed discomfort at the end of the course, noting that the content did not align directly with the specific objectives of their academic programs. Notwithstanding the above, it is worth highlighting what Del Valle (2023) claims: "From the beginning of our biological development, we are emotional beings, which leads us to the need to understand the role of emotional education in the development of the new human being, a free being, and the urgency of its inclusion at the university level." This means that, although this topic is not directly related to the curriculum of the training programs to which students belong, it is indeed relevant to address mental health content linked to the emotional states of individuals, which are inherent to the human being.

Many of the activities required the application of critical thinking, personal reflection, and the formulation of original ideas. These demands required linguistic competence to ensure coherent grammatical construction, as well as a solid understanding of the course content. This sometimes hindered students' ability to produce meaningful responses effectively. In this regard, and echoing the words of Polanía et al. (2022), "the components of cooperative learning that strengthen critical thinking are social and humanistic in nature, leading students to recognize themselves in others through interaction," which supports the work being done within classroom to address mental health content, which serves as a reference for this article.

On multiple occasions, oral expression activities sparked controversy, leading to debates that required careful moderation to prevent interpersonal conflicts stemming from divergent viewpoints and ideologies. In this regard, the argument presented by Romero (2025, p.3) related to controversy strategies that enable students to improve their communication skills provides important foundations that are relevant to this article and are therefore taken up as support for the current argument: "Communicative self-efficacy is a crucial concept in the field of psychological science and communication, this skill is important, both on an individual level and in professional practice, because it influences the way we interact with others and express our ideas and emotions." These types of activities prepare students for the challenges they will face as citizens and professionals in various communities and work environments in the future.

A considerable number of tasks were designed around oral communication strategies, which, while pedagogically valuable, triggered varying degrees of anxiety among students. This emotional response often ran counter to the intended objective of fostering open, constructive discussions around mental health. Notwithstanding the above, there are arguments in favor of using oral expression in the classroom, considering that communicative self-efficacy influences not only interaction among students and the expression of their ideas and emotions, but also the construction of satisfying interpersonal relationships (Romero, 2025).

Jiménez and Hernández (2022) emphasize that mental health programs should be established within the university environment to help students manage their emotions and cope with stressors. This support can enhance their academic performance and overall well-being (p. 95). Based on this perspective, we advocate for the university wellness unit to expand its mental health initiatives to reduce stress within the campus community. Additionally, it is essential to raise awareness among faculty members about the importance of understanding mental health issues and equipping themselves with basic knowledge to address the challenges that affect us all.

Murcia and Restrepo (2024) emphasize that incorporating neuro-pedagogical principles into the curriculum can help tailor teaching strategies to meet individual students' needs, thereby enhancing their skill acquisition. Furthermore, implementing cross-curricular projects that focus on developing social-emotional skills can equip students with the essential tools to manage their emotions and improve their academic performance.

It is reasonable to believe that teachers trained in pedagogical principles can propose ideas similar to those outlined in this article, which focuses on mental health. This initiative has been applied periodically over several semesters and is supported by foreign professionals in the field. The work is closely linked to language teachers during class sessions, incorporating specialized readings, analysis, and careful study of relevant content. Ongoing research processes conducted each semester further explore this content from the perspective of foreign languages. Although mental health is not a traditionally covered topic in this field, it nonetheless offers significant contributions to colleagues and, most importantly, students. These contributions are directly linked to language teachers in class sessions, specialized readings, analysis, and careful study of content related to this topic. There is also ongoing research carried out each semester to address this content from the perspective of foreign languages. Although this is not a subject that directly corresponds to this field, it does generate significant contributions to colleagues and, above all, to students.

Even though mental health campaigns were generally well-received and seen as relevant within the university context, the implementation process encountered logistical challenges. The activities tended to be lengthy and monotonous, which ultimately diminished engagement and enthusiasm from both students and the instructor. Despite this situation, a positive change was noted that impacted the community of students responsible for socializing the latest campaign, where clearly the context, environment, and target population varied substantially. the attitude of the university students was such that their content was able to be socialized calmly and positively, considering that special attention was paid to their explanations by their interlocutors and the activities proposed by the presenters were willing to be carried out. It can be deduced from this that university students feel more comfortable and enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge and impacting new communities when they are able to implement this strategy in spaces other than the university and when they have interlocutors dedicated solely to paying special attention to these presentations.

Conclusions

Mental well-being cannot be separated from learning, as feelings, thoughts and emotions are an inherent part of human existence, and learning requires a connection between the mind and body. In the educational context, mental well-being must be considered a relevant subject within the curriculum.

Emotions belong to humans, and in the learning process, they can hinder, obstruct, facilitate, or enhance. Therefore, each person's mood affects their concentration and attention, which in turn is related to academic performance because it is through thought that new knowledge is constructed.

Professors who have broader knowledge and more extensive cognitive training are also positively or negatively affected emotionally by contextual circumstances. It is therefore important to consider their mental health within the university environment. The welfare department from the branch should implement more mental health workshops, allowing the whole community to benefit.

Studying these issues is insightful because it allows for the strengthening of interpersonal relationships. It involves more than a basic recognition of their abilities and skills; it includes an understanding of them as human beings who have feelings and emotions that affect positively or negatively their behavior and academic performance.

Working on these topics opens doors to explore partnerships both within the university and with external institutions that support workshops, activities, or talks to strengthen the mental health of our entire faculty community. The students have taken the first step by approaching high school students, who have appreciated this opportunity to learn about self-love, self-esteem, empathy, emotional intelligence, happiness, values and other relevant topics which enrich the human being.

Through work in this field of mental health, some of the problems, conditions, disorders, or illnesses that students have and that in many cases are unknown to others were identified. These issues affect their concentration and performance, therefore hindering their learning in subjects, which sometimes results in the subjects being disapproved at the end of the semester.

The students were mostly surprised and pleased that topics related to mental health were being addressed, to the point that they questioned why only the foreign language course was dealing with such important issues for the entire university community, given that this is a matter of great relevance to the community of this branch.

Being able to teach such an interesting and relevant topic for the participants' lives turns the foreign language into a means to an end. Addressing themes related to mental health, while challenging for students in terms of vocabulary management, also became a strength that they described as positive and relevant to learning a foreign language.

Foreign language teaching, being very flexible, facilitates learning multiple subjects, including specialized ones, which is why, in this research, it produced results that impacted the lives of the participants, what becomes satisfactory for the professor as a guide of this learning processes.

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