

# Methodology to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: A Systematic Review<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Philominraj<sup>2</sup> & Ranjeeva Ranjan<sup>3</sup>, Universidad Católica del Maule, Talca, Chile  
Lucia Ubilla Rosales<sup>4</sup> & Andrea Cocio<sup>5</sup>, Universidad Católica de Temuco, Temuco, Chile  
Jose Gabriel Brauchy Castillo<sup>6</sup>, Universidad Bio-Bio, Chillan, Chile

## Abstract

English is an international language which has acquired a prominent place in the Chilean language curriculum. English as a foreign language has become a mandatory subject at schools beginning in the fifth grade (students 10 years old) following the plans of the Ministry of Education. Despite being a mandatory subject, the gap between what is taught and what is acquired has led to several questions. Therefore, it is necessary to know what teachers are doing to close this gap and identify the different strategies used to teach English as a foreign language in this context. The objective of the present study is to explore research studies on methodologies in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at schools and tertiary education in the Chilean context between 2011 and 2021. This study conducts a systematic review of methodologies to teach EFL based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analyses (PRISMA). Results showed that the method and methodology constructs have been conceptualized and perceived from various perspectives. It also highlighted trends and issues associated with ways of teaching English and didactics more effectively. The themes, which were found in this review, reveal different aspects of English language education and one among them is the intention of the researchers to improve English language teaching through the dissemination of the results of their studies. Research studies also highlight the efforts of the teachers to teach EFL and the way they try to implement the language. The study concludes that there is a lacuna on the methodologies used in Chile to the teaching of EFL followed by limitations and implications of the current research.

## Resumen

El inglés es un idioma internacional, que ha adquirido un lugar destacado en el currículo de idiomas chileno. El inglés como lengua extranjera se ha convertido en materia obligatoria en los colegios a partir del 5º grado siguiendo los planes del Ministerio de Educación. A pesar de ser una materia obligatoria, el desfase entre lo que se enseña y lo que se adquiere ha hecho que surjan varios interrogantes. Por lo tanto, es necesario saber qué están haciendo los docentes para cerrar esta brecha e identificar las diferentes estrategias utilizadas para enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera en este contexto. El objetivo del presente estudio es explorar estudios de investigación sobre metodologías en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en escuelas y educación superior en el contexto chileno entre 2011 y 2021. Este estudio realiza una revisión sistemática de metodologías para enseñar EFL basadas en los elementos de informe preferidos para revisiones sistemáticas y metanálisis (PRISMA). Los resultados mostraron que los constructos método y metodología han sido conceptualizados y percibidos desde diversas perspectivas. También destacó las tendencias y los problemas asociados con las formas de enseñar inglés y la didáctica de manera más efectiva. Los temas, que se encontraron en esta revisión, revelan diferentes aspectos de la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa y uno de ellos es la intención de los investigadores de mejorar la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa a través de la difusión de los resultados de sus estudios. Los estudios de investigación también destacan los esfuerzos de los profesores para enseñar EFL y la forma en que intentan implementar el idioma. El estudio concluye que existe una laguna sobre las metodologías utilizadas en Chile para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera seguida de las limitaciones e implicaciones de la investigación actual.

## Introduction

Over the last decades, English has been taught in Latin America to promote economic communication with the globalized world (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017; Glas, 2013). This reality also applies to Chile, a young nation among the cluster of countries in Latin America. To foster economic growth and at the same time to be on par in the international market, the use of English was encouraged (Albuja & Merino, 2017). Therefore, English has become a mandatory subject for ten to eighteen -year -old students in Chile following the plans of the Ministry of Education (Bases curriculares. Educación básica, 2012).

Based on studies carried out by the English Opens Doors program in 2004, the Ministry of Education has stated that the level of competence varies in the subject of English among primary and secondary level students from the Chilean public education (Yilorm & Lizasoain, 2012). A diagnostic test was administered

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<sup>2</sup> [andrew@ucm.cl](mailto:andrew@ucm.cl), 000-0003-2251-7150

<sup>3</sup> [ranjan@ucm.cl](mailto:ranjan@ucm.cl), 0000-0002-7667-2191, Correspondent

<sup>4</sup> [lubilla@uct.cl](mailto:lubilla@uct.cl), 0000-0001-9933-7997

<sup>5</sup> [andrea.cocio@uss.cl](mailto:andrea.cocio@uss.cl), 0000-0003-3721-8807

<sup>6</sup> [jqb214@nyu.edu](mailto:jqb214@nyu.edu), 0000-0002-9902-1447

to 11,000 elementary and middle school students from 299 public schools in different regions and socio-economic areas of the country. The results showed that only 5% of secondary school students reached the level set as basic requirements by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) by the end of twelfth grade (17 years of age) (Resultados SIMCE inglés 2010, 2011). This means that only a low percentage could understand the main ideas of familiar texts related to work, school, or leisure time, or manage in travel situations, competences classified at level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or at ALTE 2 level of the Association of European Language Testers (Yilorm & Lizasoain, 2012).

In spite of several efforts, English language teaching has not found satisfactory growth in the Chilean school setup. To date, national studies and reports on English pedagogy clearly refer to the profound crisis in the quality of English language teaching and learning (Barahona, 2015; Bellei Carvacho et al., 2018; Informe de resultados: Estudio nacional de inglés de III medio, 2017). Several factors contribute to this gap, and one of them is the lack of appropriate use of methodologies or strategies to teach the English language. In this sense, Martin and Rosas-Maldonado (2019) highlight that "instructors recognized that they often could not provide the students with enough practical application or enough depth" (p. 5) in their second language teacher education programs (SLTE) in Chile.

Through a systematic review, this present study looks into the current topic for methodologies used in teaching English as a foreign language at schools and tertiary education in the Chilean context. Exploring what is done in this field leads to better understanding and to help propose in a more constructive framework to successful teaching of English as a foreign language. In this context, the objective of the present systematic review is to explore research studies on methodologies in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Chile. The research question to be explored in the current study is related to the major areas identified in research studies on methodologies of teaching EFL in the Chilean context over the last ten years.

#### Literature Review

In this section, the text briefly runs into the techniques and methods used for the teaching of EFL in Latin America, and Chile. The methodologies used in any country are influenced by the prescribed national curriculum and syllabus.

#### *Techniques and methods for the teaching of EFL in Latin America*

Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) point out that in Latin America the desire to implement English in primary education started gaining strength in the 1990s in countries like Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. The English language has also been positioned as a result of policies based on economic strategies related to globalization processes, thus English has become mandatory from primary education, and informally from preschool education. Latin American countries have designed national strategies to create English learning programs for all and to offer real opportunities for access to learning another language (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017). Despite the significance and scale of the efforts to successfully carry out the English language teaching (ELT) programs in Latin America, the 2012 Education First report highlighted that throughout Latin America "most people do not have any appreciable English language skills" (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016, p. 2).

In the Ecuadorian context, English classes are teacher-centered and the strategies used are framed within a traditional methodology that does not motivate student interaction in the target language (Calle et al., 2015). That is, English teachers do not use strategies that promote communication in spite of the mandatory nature of a communicative curriculum imposed by the Ministry of Education. Another important finding indicates that "the observed teaching practice and the teachers' conceptions reveal specific training needs in the area of English language teaching" (Calle et al., 2012, p. 14). In the Mexican context, Cetina (2009) reported in her study that a considerable percentage of the participant sample did not recognize or admit knowing the principles laying the foundations of theoretical and methodological aspects of EFL teaching. In her view, she found that most of the participant teachers in the study reported not knowing nor being familiar with the basic notions of EFL teaching methods or pedagogy.

English in Colombia is obligatory in high school and, since a few years ago, in elementary schools. Even though there are several efforts to reform ELT, Valencia Giraldo, (2006) concludes that these policies "have not produced the changes expected" (p. 13). Chaves and Hernández (2012) in their study in Colombia concluded that teachers' understanding of methodology is based on institutional conditions rather than

theoretical or conceptual grounds they do not have full knowledge. Their English classes are based on grammar-translation, pre-communicative views, and empiricist actions.

In Brazil, the audiolingual method, based on behaviorist and structuralist assumptions, appears to have been the scientifically approved tool for teaching a foreign language during the 1970s (Almeida, 2012). It was also implemented in regular schools during that period. In the 1980s, ELT was re-examined in the light of the communicative approach related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The Brazilian National Curricular Parameters (PCN) for teaching of foreign languages proposed the language to be considered for the purpose of communication by the end of the 1990s. The idea of social interactionist view of language presented on the teaching of foreign language in the classroom both by PCN-EF (Parâmetros curriculares nacionais: ensino fundamental) (Pires & Soares, 1998) and PCN-EM (Parâmetros curriculares nacionais: ensino médio: Línguas, códigos e suas tecnologia, 2000) documents are in line with the current research in second language teaching. According to Batista (2020), this is seen as a paradigm shift from the traditional grammar-translation method mainly implemented at Brazilian schools.

In Argentina, English occupies an international status and is taught as an additional language (Porto, 2014). Classes are given two to three hours per week and teachers are encouraged to follow a communicative approach to ELT. However, teachers favor teaching grammar focused on the development of language functions and skills along with vocabulary (Porto et al., 2021). In a research study Soto (2014) mentioned that participants preferred a prescriptivist approach to grammar teaching based on local and context responsive pedagogies through self-made materials. Foreign language curricula were product-oriented and in these days intercultural dimensions are considered pedagogically and educationally.

#### *Methodologies in the teaching of EFL in Chile*

The terms, methodology, didactic and strategies in the process of teaching learning are meant to introduce curricular aspects, which favor educational practice and content organization. According to Ginting (2017), the interaction between teacher and student has been considered as a key factor in enhancing learning outcomes, which forms the base of any method. It is precisely the method, which brings the dynamics to the process. To be consistent with the teaching didactic idea that is used, according to Philominraj et al. (2021) the methods must be characterized by

- Being essentially productive performed with expository methods.
- Guaranteeing active and interactive participation of students in their search for knowledge, questioning, approach and solution to problems, application and assessment of solutions, to enhance their impact on activities based on cognitive, practical, and values.
- Encouraging collaborative work
- Training students to use skills such as management, program scheduling, and assessment.

Demirzen (2011) provides a list of methods, which are used in the teaching of second language ranging from grammar translation method to communicative approach. The Chilean curriculum is focused on the Communicative Approach for developing communicative competencies among learners (Barahona, 2016a). It is expected to enhance the use of English for communication in a contextualized and meaningful way through the development of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) (Barahona, 2016a). The class objectives address all language components (vocabulary, topics, grammar, strategies, functions), and aim to help students use the language to interact and communicate relevant messages (Renandya et al., 2018). Considering the ideas mentioned above the new National Curriculum Framework emphasizes the following in the English curriculum: a) development of critical and creative thinking, b) teaching of learning strategies; c) language learning through communicative tasks; d) connections; e) culture and cultural competence; f) writing process; g) use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and multimodal texts (MINEDUC, 2015).

Based on the communicative approach, the class activities no longer involve memorizing rules and repetition of structures (Demirzen, 2011). On the contrary, work activities are developed in pairs, role play, problem-solving, and development collaborative group projects in which students need to use the language to communicate, interact, negotiate meanings, and exchange information in situations of interest and close to reality. Besides following the guidelines of the Communicative Approach, the programs from the Chilean National Curriculum incorporate other approaches that promote communication. The main contributions come from: a) Natural Approach; b) Cooperative Learning; c) Content-Based Instruction and d) Task-Based Language teaching (Cobertura curricular en educación media, 2013).

Firstly, the Natural Approach emphasizes understanding and communicating meaningfully, highlighting the importance of vocabulary and the use of material such as images or concrete material that supports understanding. Therefore, it is crucial that the student be presented with a significant amount of understandable and meaningful information, mainly through reading and listening, on interesting topics and situations that contribute to developing a motivating atmosphere for learning and promoting participation in communicative activities with other students (Figueiredo, 2010).

Secondly, Cooperative Language Learning promotes student participation in various interactive situations in which communication is the main objective. The interaction permits students to support each other and creates an atmosphere suitable for learning a language promoting intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and reducing anxiety (Hernández, 2010).

Thirdly, the Content-Based Approach emphasizes that the language will be successfully learned to the extent that is presented in a meaningful and contextualized way and be a means for learning content and/or motivating topics, which are connected with the student's experiences and interests and with other subjects (Bases curriculares. Educación básica, 2012). Finally, Task-Based Language Teaching postulates the use of meaningful tasks with a clear objective and is defined as a basic unit for teaching language (Yildiz, 2020). The communicative task corresponds to the work done in the class that involves students in understanding and interacting. Therefore, teaching will emphasize comprehension skills for the incorporation of the language and provide opportunities for students to use English to communicate ideas and negotiate meaning.

#### *Major EFL research areas in Chile*

In Chile, research has been conducted in the field of EFL encompassing various topics such as perception-belief, teaching practices, ICT, and motivation. Topics can be categorized by themes.

The first theme is research on perception and belief. Donoso and Gómez (2021) in their quantitative study investigated the beliefs of the Chilean EFL teacher trainees about their professional development competences. They emphasized that the participants highlighted professional attitude as being the most important competence domain. Alvarado Gutiérrez et al. (2021) in their mixed-method study on students' perception of oral corrective feedback found that the participating students viewed feedback as a contribution to their learning process and towards the betterment of their language skills. Language background and second language (L2) training, referring to Spanish and English, seem to contribute to L2 lexical stress perception (Gibson & Bernales, 2020) and were found beneficial as their stress patterns are the same for disyllabic words. Donoso (2020) in his research on the usage of Spanish as L1 in English lessons found that the Chilean future teachers of English used Spanish mainly for pedagogical didactic purposes and to maintain the student-teacher relationship. Martin and Rosas-Maldonado (2019) in their study on EFL teacher education programs in Chile and the methodological preparation discovered that there was a positive evaluation on the programs offered but important issues were absent and in-depth preparation on methodological formation. The study further proposes the recognition of the needs of the EFL teachers while deciding on issues concerning teacher education. Cautín et al. (2020), in their study described the theoretical underpinnings on teachers' beliefs to the different approaches in the teaching of literacy skills to students using designed an inter-university study. Alvarado Gutiérrez et al. (2019) in their action research found the problem-solving abilities, collaborative work, and awareness to change favoring to strengthen teacher professional identities. Concerning the perception of preservice teachers, Saavedra-Jeldres and Campos-Espinoza (2019) found out that the participants valued portfolio writing as an effective strategy to improve their writing and reflection skills in EFL.

The second theme is related to teaching practices., Barahona (2020) in her study identifying potential core practices for teaching English more effectively in a Chilean EFL context suggested translanguaging and effective integration of L1 in the classroom as effective teaching practices. Ortiz López et al. (2020) in their study on several issues related to ELT such as classroom management, teaching strategies, feedback, etc. found statistically significant differences in the relationship between gender and the above-mentioned topics.

The third theme that emerged was associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and ICT. Charbonneau-Gowdy and Cechova (2020) reflected upon the lack of teachers' preparation in ICT during pandemic times. For this, they blamed teacher education (TE) programs and as a proposal, mentioned the need to integrate virtual learning in the education system at all levels and proposed TE practicums and programs to reflect this reality. In their interpretative case study on virtual teaching experience, Sepulveda and Morrison (2020) found two highly affecting factors on participants' learning process: a lack of direct interaction and sudden

change of setting. However, they concluded that these challenges were expected to positively favor teacher education and their future careers. Moreover, Lasekan and Godoy (2020) in their research assessed the impact of the videos on learners' English language skills achievement and individual difference factors. The findings revealed that videos not only enhanced learners' English language skills but also motivated them to learn the language. Furthermore, it also contributed to developing positive attitudes toward integration and local cultural awareness. The study was designed to provide empirical evidence on videos as a tool with great and sustainable impact on students' learning outcomes.

The fourth category was motivation. Véliz-Campos et al. (2020) in their study examined the relationship between Second Language Motivational Self System (L2MSS) components, international posture, and socioeconomic status among university students. The authors concluded that ideal L2 and L2 learning are related, and also the learning experience of L2 is a positive indicator of students' behavior.

The last theme was linked with the assessment. A study by Contreras-Soto et al. (2019) considered writing portfolios as another tool to evaluate EFL, and at the same time to reduce learners' test-anxiety levels. Portfolio were reported to keep learners engaged, reducing anxiety and increasing confidence.

In summary, the research studies carried out in Chile were varied, not all catering directly to the needs of teaching and learning EFL. This has led to the necessity of identifying the major areas in methodology contributing to the objective of this study. Hence, the research question that guides this systematic review is the following:

*What are the major areas identified in research studies on methodologies of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Chilean context carried out during 2011-2021?*

### Methodology

Using a systematic review, the current study examines significant studies on methodology in the teaching of EFL. These studies were carried out and published from 2011 to 2021 and reveal current trends and explain best research practices. For this purpose, 40 research studies from the Chilean EFL contexts were retrieved and analyzed from the Web of Science, SCOPUS, and SCIELO databases. Guidelines from Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) was used (Urrútia & Bonfill, 2010) and the analysis of the data was carried out thematically (Beltrán, 2005; Sánchez-Meca, 2010). Besides, a reference chain or snowball sampling was carried out to strengthen the theoretical framework (Mendieta Izquierdo, 2015).

### Selection of articles

A PRISMA flow diagram for the search and inclusion/exclusion process is presented in Figure 1. A total of 80 titles (Web of Science=11, SCOPUS = 46, SCIELO= 23) and/or abstracts assembled from the databases were reviewed by the researchers.

The articles were checked for duplicity resulting in 73 useable articles. Applying the different inclusion criteria (IC) such as methodology, approach, strategies, EFL, Chile, teaching, and articles written in the English language. In terms of exclusion criteria (EC) students' perspective, teacher-centered, other subjects, and other languages were considered, and finally, 40 articles (Web of Science=05, SCOPUS = 16, SCIELO= 19) met the criteria for this systematic review.

### Results and Discussion

In reference to the research question, Table 1 presents the major areas of research topics related to the teaching of EFL in a Chilean context from 2011 to 2021. In the selected articles, several recurrent topics such as ICT, practice-based approach, learning strategies, perceptions, beliefs, corrective feedback, and didactics can be found. However, equally

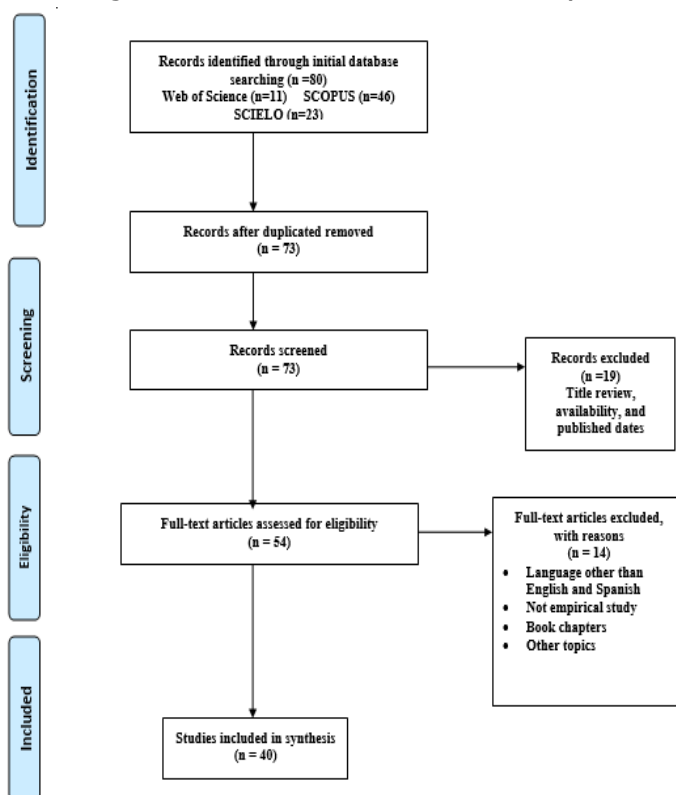


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow-Chart

important, the findings identified major topic areas research studies addressed such as perceptions and beliefs about teaching methodologies, core practices for teaching English more effectively, e-learning methodology during the COVID-19 pandemic, motivation, and assessment.

N°	Topics	Database
1	ICT	Scielo
2	Perception studies on Didactics / EFL learners / in service teachers / writing portfolios / autonomous work	Scopus / Scielo
3	Comparing bilingual methods to teach languages	Scopus
4	Corpus linguistics	Scielo
5	Interactive oral communication	Scopus
6	Practice based approach	Scopus / Scielo
7	Translanguage	WoS
8	Communicative competence through Focal Skills	Scopus
9	Corrective feedback of written errors	Scielo
10	Conversation analysis	Scopus
11	Reading comprehension	Scopus
12	Beliefs on Linguistic pedagogy / Grammar teaching /	Scielo / WoS
13	Cooperative learning through literature	Scopus
14	Oral communication	Scielo
15	Learning strategies	Scielo / Scopus /
16	Assessment Instruments / Strategies	Scielo /
17	Service-learning project	Scopus
18	Project based learning	Scielo
19	Flipped classroom	Scielo
20	Didactics / Didactics on oral communication fluency & Accuracy / English Vocabulary	Scielo / WoS
21	Methodology, didactics, and strategies	Scopus
22	Critical thinking in English language pedagogy	WoS

Table 1: Major areas of research topics identified in this systematic review

In general, EFL research from various disciplines and perspectives can be grouped under various areas of knowledge that go from social sciences (economics and sociology) to education (curriculum, didactics, and methodology) and humanities (linguistics and applied linguistics) as well. These topics are organized into four groups:

- a. studies about English in Chile grounded on social sciences to investigate the impact of socio-economic factors on various components of motivation, and self-regulation strategies in Chile (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013; Yilorm & Acosta, 2016).
- b. works addressing the Chilean ELT and the Chilean English curriculum by examining initial teacher education programs (Barahona, 2016a, 2016b; *English in Chile. An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factor*, 2015; Martin & Rosas-Maldonado, 2019).
- c. research studies highlighting the factors of English in Chile that ultimately, impact the communities' attitudes toward learning (Díaz Larenas et al., 2015, Díaz Larenas & Morales Campos, 2015; *English in Chile. An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factor*, 2015; Epperson & Rossman, 2014).
- d. research carried out with an emphasis on linguistic rationale but showing concerns about national language policy (Lizasoain, 2017, 2021).

The systematic review also provided insights into research contexts, and research methodologies. In this regard, several settings were identified that ranged from primary and secondary education classrooms to university or teacher education programs. Similarly, the research methodologies employed in the selected articles of this systematic review were found to be quantitative, qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive case, action research, mixed-method design, non- and quasi-experimental, and grounded theory approach studies.

## Conclusion

The results of this systematic review showed the method and methodology constructs have been conceptualized and perceived from various perspectives in Chile. This is in line with the discussion, and arguments developed in the literature review regarding the EFL teaching methodology in the Latin American context in general and Chilean context in particular. It also highlighted trends and issues associated with ways of teaching English and didactics more effectively. Almost all the topics revealed some aspect of English language education and the desire of the researchers to disseminate the results with the idea to better the field itself. Research studies also underline the efforts of teachers to teach EFL and the way they try to implement the language. Yet, there is no consensus in terms of strategies, approaches, and perspectives used under the concept of methodology to teach EFL.

EFL programs in Latin America including Chile refer to the communicative and traditional methodologies and the distinction between these seems increasingly to be a false dichotomy. This dichotomy has been challenged by Beaumont and Chang (2011) who consider communicative and traditional methodologies on a continuum wherein teachers pick up elements from these methods to their teaching practices. Additionally, the studies revealed training programs that involved approaches emphasizing collaboration among teachers of the local network to explore local methodologies. This result is again in line with the views of Beaumont and Chang who argue that traditional and communicative methodology is no longer a functional perspective and is suggestive of Kumaravadivelu's (1994, 2006) post-method theory.

In addition, understanding the diversity of major areas through this systematic review clearly show that there is a lacuna on the methodology used in Chile to the teaching EFL. In this sense, findings contribute to offering a more constructive framework of the concept of the methodology used in teaching EFL, and its evolution in understanding the term to its successful teaching nationwide.

### Limitations

The sources used to collect empirical studies on methodology in the Chilean EFL contexts were from the Web of Sciences, SCOPUS, and SCIELO databases, which limited the search to published studies only. Furthermore, the decision to limit the review of those databases excluded data from unpublished studies such as doctoral dissertations and master's theses, which could potentially add new perspectives. Despite the limitations of narrowing the systematic review, which could make it appear not totally comprehensive, the study focuses on high-impact research on the topic and as such responds to the research questions of the study. It also follows logically that the findings of the study are probably not limited to the Chilean EFL context, but rather are open and relevant to the entire global EFL community. Further study in different parts of the world could throw light on this possible relationship.

### Implications

The implications of the study go in line with adding new dimensions to the ongoing topic on methodology to the teaching of EFL. The findings of this analysis provide a critical and current overview for practical implications to all those teachers and researchers involved in this area of methodology in ELT. The researchers anticipate that the problems identified in terms of the gap found on methodology to the teaching of EFL could provide insights for academics and researchers to look into this reality and consider for future research, which could favor the improvement of the English language skills in the Chilean context.

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