



Explorando las necesidades fundamentales de los estudiantes y la importancia de la jerarquía de Maslow en el aula de inglés

Exploring students' fundamental needs and the significance of Maslow's hierarchy in the English classroom

Explorando as necessidades fundamentais dos alunos e a importância da hierarquia de Maslow na sala de aula de Inglês

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Ciencias Sociales

Artículo de Investigación

*** Recibido:** 26 de agosto de 2025 ***Aceptado:** 24 de septiembre de 2025 *** Publicado:** 28 de octubre de 2025

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Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación analiza las necesidades fundamentales de los estudiantes en el aula de inglés considerando la jerarquía de necesidades de Abraham Maslow, tomando en cuenta la influencia del ambiente de clase y el rol del docente en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. El estudio se sustenta en la teoría humanista, ya que plantea que el aprendizaje solo puede desarrollarse plenamente cuando las necesidades básicas fisiológicas, de seguridad, sociales, de estima y de autorrealización son atendidas de manera progresiva.

Esta investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque cualitativo, aplicando el método de síntesis narrativa para revisar y organizar información de artículos científicos, tesis y fuentes académicas recientes que den validez a este trabajo de investigación.

Los resultados evidencian que el papel del docente es esencial para equilibrar los objetivos cognitivos y humanistas. Atender las necesidades básicas y emocionales de los estudiantes permite incrementar su motivación, participación y rendimiento académico. Por otro lado, se enfatiza que un ambiente de aula seguro y estimulante fomenta la confianza y la disposición para un mejor aprendizaje.

En conclusión, se enuncia que la enseñanza del inglés debe asumir un enfoque integral centrado en el ser humano, en el cual la atención a las necesidades fundamentales se convierta en la base para alcanzar tanto el éxito académico como el desarrollo personal de los estudiantes.

Palabras Clave: Necesidades fundamentales; Jerarquía de Necesidades; Teoría humanista; Enfoque cualitativo; Necesidades básicas.

Abstract

This research analyzes the fundamental needs of students in the English classroom, considering Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and taking into account the influence of the classroom environment and the teacher's role in the teaching-learning process. The study is based on humanistic theory, which posits that learning can only fully develop when basic physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs are progressively met.

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach, applying the narrative synthesis method to review and organize information from scientific articles, theses, and recent academic sources that validate this research.

The results demonstrate that the teacher's role is essential to balancing cognitive and humanistic objectives. Addressing students' basic and emotional needs increases their motivation, participation, and academic performance. Furthermore, it is emphasized that a safe and stimulating classroom environment fosters confidence and a positive attitude toward learning. In conclusion, it is stated that English language teaching should adopt a holistic, human-centered approach, in which addressing fundamental needs becomes the basis for achieving both academic success and personal development for students.

Keywords: Fundamental needs; Hierarchy of needs; Humanistic theory; Qualitative approach; Basic needs.

Resumo

Esta pesquisa analisa as necessidades fundamentais dos alunos na sala de aula de Inglês, considerando a hierarquia das necessidades de Abraham Maslow e tendo em conta a influência do ambiente da sala de aula e o papel do professor no processo de ensino-aprendizagem. O estudo baseia-se na teoria humanista, que postula que a aprendizagem só se pode desenvolver plenamente quando as necessidades básicas fisiológicas, de segurança, sociais, de autoestima e de autorrealização são progressivamente satisfeitas.

Esta pesquisa foi conduzida utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa, aplicando o método de síntese narrativa para rever e organizar informação de artigos científicos, teses e fontes académicas recentes que validam esta pesquisa.

Os resultados demonstram que o papel do professor é essencial para equilibrar os objetivos cognitivos e humanistas. A satisfação das necessidades básicas e emocionais dos alunos aumenta a sua motivação, participação e desempenho académico. Além disso, é enfatizado que um ambiente de sala de aula seguro e estimulante promove a confiança e uma atitude positiva em relação à aprendizagem. Em conclusão, afirma-se que o ensino da língua inglesa deve adoptar uma abordagem holística e centrada no ser humano, na qual a satisfação das necessidades fundamentais se torna a base para alcançar tanto o sucesso académico como o desenvolvimento pessoal dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Necessidades fundamentais; Hierarquia das necessidades; Teoria humanista; Abordagem qualitativa; Necessidades básicas.

Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language has acquired intrinsic importance in today's education, as it is considered a crucial language for integration into competitive educational contexts. Considering that success in English language acquisition depends not only exclusively on the quality of teaching or the use of methodological resources, but also on personal, emotional, and social factors that influence student motivation and disposition. Thus, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, developed in 1940 and still relevant today, has become a key tool for understanding student behavior and designing equitable pedagogical practices that serve as a reference in the teaching-learning process.

Maslow's theory holds that human beings act on the basis of needs structured into five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Within the teaching process, these needs are not always identified by teachers; this lack of awareness leads to learning environments disconnected from the student's reality.

For example, a student whose basic needs, such as food, rest, and safety, will not be able to have an optimal performance in the classroom, as it requires concentration, active participation, and collaborative work. The classroom becomes a space where diverse human realities meet within the learning process, which must be addressed from an integrative perspective.

The objective of this research work is to analyze how the fundamental needs of students are presented within the English classroom and how the pedagogical use of Maslow's hierarchy can positively influence the planning, execution, and evaluation of the educational process. Through an analytical approach, the aim is to inquire into students and explore their experiences, perceptions, and expectations regarding English language learning; in order to generate didactic proposals that place the student as a human being within the educational process, thus promoting more empathetic and optimal teaching.

La enseñanza del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera ha adquirido una importancia intrínseca en la educación actual, al considerarse un idioma muy importante para la inserción en contextos educativos competitivos. Considerando que el éxito en la adquisición del idioma inglés no solo depende exclusivamente de la calidad de la enseñanza o del uso de recursos metodológicos, sino también de factores personales, emocionales y sociales los mismos que influyen en la motivación y disposición del estudiante. Es así que la jerarquía de necesidades de Abraham Maslow, que fue

desarrollada en el año de 1940 y que sigue vigente en la actualidad, se ha convertido en una herramienta clave para comprender el comportamiento del estudiante para diseñar prácticas pedagógicas equitativas que vayan como referencia en el proceso enseñanza aprendizaje.

La teoría de Maslow sostiene que el ser humano actúa en función de necesidades estructuradas en cinco niveles: fisiológicas, de seguridad, sociales, de estima y de autorrealización. Dentro del proceso de enseñanza, estas necesidades no siempre son identificadas por el docente, este desconocimiento da paso a ambientes de aprendizaje desconectados a la realidad del estudiante.

Por ejemplo, un estudiante que no ha satisfecho sus necesidades básicas como: alimentación, descanso, seguridad; no podrá tener un rendimiento optimo en el aula de clase, ya que se requiere concentración, participación activa y trabajo colaborativo. Ya que el aula se convierte en un espacio donde se encuentra diversas realidades humanas dentro del proceso de aprendizaje que deben ser atendidas desde una perspectiva integradora.

El objetivo de este trabajo de investigación es analizar cómo se presentan las necesidades fundamentales de los estudiantes dentro del aula de inglés y cómo el uso pedagógico de la jerarquía de Maslow puede influir positivamente en la planificación, ejecución y evaluación del proceso educativo. A través de un enfoque analítico, se pretende indagar en los estudiantes y explorar sus experiencias, percepciones y expectativas en torno al aprendizaje del idioma inglés; para generar propuestas didácticas que pongan al estudiante como el ser humano dentro del proceso educativo, fomentando así una enseñanza más empática y optima.

Research Questions

- What are students' fundamentals needs according to Maslow?
- To what extend does the classroom environment influence the students' fulfillment of fundamental needs?
- What is the teachers' role in addressing students' basic needs and promoting a supportive learning atmosphere?

Objectives

General Objective

- To examine the fundamental needs of students in the English classroom based on Maslow's hierarchy.

Specific objectives

- To investigate the extent to which the English classroom environment supports the fulfillment of students' fundamental needs according to Maslow's hierarchy.
- To analyze the role of teachers in addressing students' basic needs and promoting a supportive learning atmosphere in the English classroom.

Literature Review

Abraham Maslow and the humanist theory

This section starts presenting relevant information about Abraham Maslow. He was born on April 1st, 1908, in Brooklyn, New York. He used to spend much of his time in the library immersed in books and described his childhood as unhappy and lonely besides having six siblings. Maslow studied law in the City College of New York; later, he realized his passion was psychology and switched to the University of Wisconsin where he found a mentor, the psychologist Harry Harlow, who served as his doctoral advisor.

After obtaining his doctoral degree, Maslow began teaching at Brooklyn College in 1937 and continued to work as a member of the school's faculty until 1951. During this time, he was strongly influenced by Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer and anthropologist Ruth Benedict. Maslow believed they were such exceptional people; for that reason, he began to analyze and take notes on their behavior. This analysis served as the basis for his theories and research on human potential. During the 1950s, Maslow became one of the founders and driving forces behind the school of thought known as humanistic psychology. His theories included the hierarchy of needs, self-actualization and peak experiences, which became fundamental subjects in the humanist movement. Maslow felt that Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Skinner's behavioral theory were too focused on the negative or pathological aspects of existence. He also felt that these theories neglected all the potential and creativity that human beings possess; consequently, Maslow's theories were more focused on maximizing well-being and achieving one's full potential (Cherry, 2023).

Undeniably, Maslow's theory highly contributed to the teaching-learning process, as teachers could understand that students need more than only pure knowledge; they have needs and feelings which

influence in their performance. In language teaching, students not only need to be concentrated, but also to feel they are in a safe and friendly environment they enjoy and motivates them to learn. To continue, the applications of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in education is analyzed. Regarding teaching and classroom management in schools, Maslow adopts a holistic approach to education and learning; he looks at the complete physical, emotional, social, and intellectual qualities of an individual and how they impact on learning.

Applications of Maslow's hierarchy theory to the work of the classroom are obvious; before a student's cognitive needs can be met, they must first fulfill their basic physiological needs. For example, a tired and hungry student will find it complicated to focus on learning. Students need to feel emotionally and physically safe and accepted within the classroom to progress and reach their full potential. Maslow's suggests students must be shown that they are valued and respected in the classroom, and the teacher should create a supportive environment. Students with a low self-esteem will not progress academically at an optimum rate until their self-esteem is strengthened.

Maslow argued that a humanistic educational approach would develop people who are stronger, healthier, and would take their own lives into their hands to a greater extent. With increased personal responsibility for one's personal life, and with a rational set of values to guide one's choosing, people would begin to actively change the society in which they lived (McLeod, 2023). Here comes the dilemma; bringing the theory into practice. The vast majority of teachers are aware of their role and the fact that students are the main actors in the teaching-learning process; nevertheless, it seems that the challenges, obstacles, and barriers teachers face, limit them to focus on students' fundamental needs more than in their cognitive ones.

Certainly, education needs to be transformed; and teachers need to accept that they are the instrument for the change to happen.

In higher education, teachers assume students are mature enough to deal with their fundamental needs without any problem; for that reason, the relationship among teachers and students is completely different from the one they experienced during elementary school and high school; nonetheless, even though students still need the guide and support of their teachers, they do not receive personalized education, feedback or monitoring. Students are seen as a group, not as individual with their unique characteristics, needs, and learning styles.

In this context, teachers must analyze if they are implementing good practices and contributing to the formation of strong, healthy, and successful professionals.

In spite of the fact that Maslow's theory has constituted a significant change in education, it also has its limitations. The most significant limitation of Maslow's theory concerns his methodology. Maslow formulated the characteristics of self-actualized individuals from undertaking a qualitative method called biographical analysis. He looked at the biographies and writings of 18 people he identified as being self-actualized. From these sources, he developed a list of qualities that seemed characteristics of this specific group, as opposed to humanity in general which is extremely subjective, prone to bias and the validity is reduced. Therefore, Maslow's operational definition of self-actualization must not be blindly accepted as a scientific fact (Celestine, 2017) .

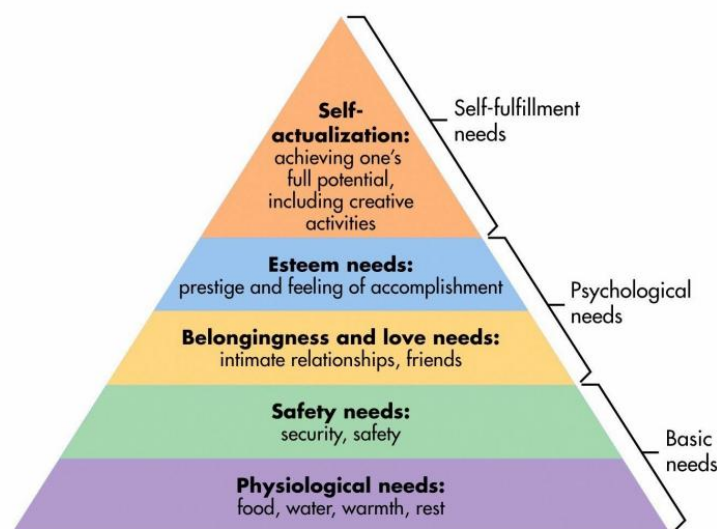
Concerning this limitation, teachers must understand that a theory could be proved as applicable or even effective once it is implemented in a real setting; thus, the suggestion would be teachers to analyze humanism deeply and prioritize students' fundamental needs in the teaching-learning process.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs in education

According to Maslow, humans are driven by an innate desire to achieve more. In the 1950s, he came up with a popular psychological theory to explain what drives human motivation, he states that actions are motivated by the pursuit of certain needs, from basic to complex, depicted as hierarchical levels in a pyramid.

Figure 1

Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid



Note. Image taken from <https://www.classcaruapp.com/blog/how-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-can-be-applied-in-teaching>

Over the years, Abraham Maslow's theory has been used in different spheres and is being increasingly used in the field of education to motivate learners; this theory can be used in the classroom to gauge students needs and find an optimal way of motivating students to perform their best (Vázquez & Valbuena, 2018).

In order to motive students to achieve and be willing to take risks, teachers have to understand the needs humans have that impact their ability to tap into that motivation. In the hierarchy of needs, Maslow proposes five tiers.

Tier 1: Physiological needs

Physiological needs are the primary level of needs in Maslow's hierarchy and includes those biological needs which are essential for survival such as food, water, sleep, clothing, and shelter. It is of outmost importance to ensure that the physiological needs of our students are being met. In the case they are not, students will not be able to prioritize education. Many teachers can agree on the fact that a sleep deprived or hungry student will be unable to concentrate in class and may even disrupt learning for others.

Without these biological and basic needs, the body cannot function as its best. These foundational needs were determined by Maslow to be most important, causing the other stages to be secondary until these basic needs are met. It is more important than ever to remember how powerful these physiological needs are. Students who are hungry and sleep-deprived are not cognitively open to learning. It is not that they choose not to learn; their brains and bodies simply make it extremely difficult to do so.

Tier 2: Safety needs

Security and safety needs come next on the hierarchy. People desire order, certainty, and predictability in their lives so that they can feel in control and consequently feel safe and secure. These needs include financial and physical security, in the ways of employment, resources, health, and prosperity.

In addition, emotions and mental health are necessary for students to be able to learn and to flourish without other concerns weighing on their minds. They must feel at ease to ask questions or raise concerns, without the fear of being reprimanded by the teacher or judged by their peers. A sense of order and routine empowers a learner to feel assured and certain as they are able to anticipate what is likely to come their way. Thus, creating a safe space is vital to employ this step of the hierarchy.

Tier 3: Love and belonging needs

On the third level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are love and belonging needs. Humans are inherently social creatures that crave love, affection and acceptance from others. People are endowed with an emotional need to be part of a group, to belong, to avoid loneliness, and depression. These needs include friendship, family, intimacy, trust, and connectedness.

As stated by Nicholas Ferroni, students who are loved at home come to school to learn, and students who are not, come to school to be loved (Wong, 2020). To support the love and belonging needs of learners, it is fundamental to make them feel they are part of a close-knit group, like they fit in, like they belong. It is essential that they feel loved, nurtured, supported, and accepted as a part of the class. Strong and healthy relationships have to be developed and fostered with both, their peers and teachers.

Additionally, this stage is related to lack of exclusion and avoiding isolation. Besides their families, students often experience feelings of belonging at school. Classroom families, friendship groups, clubs, and sports teams offer the sense of being part of a group. Students who are missing love and belonging in their home lives can get some of these needs met in the educational and social setting; this can be accomplished through seating arrangements, peer partner group, an overall sense of caring and compassion, and taking interest in students outside their identity as a learner (Hamilton, 2021).

These three tiers play a fundamental role in the learning process. However, teachers do not feel trained or prepared enough to take the challenge of personalizing education by keeping a balance and the respect they expect from their students.

Furthermore, with the large number of students, teachers consider there is not time even to cover the content of the subject and comply with the syllabus or the planning; for that reason, it is not common to hear a teacher asking their students questions related to their physiological, mental, emotional, safety, love, or belonging needs.

Tier 4: Love and belonging needs

Esteem needs constitute the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy and include self-worth, recognition, accomplishment, and respect. These needs have been classified into two categories: (1) the desire for respect from oneself, encompassing dignity, achievement, freedom, independence, confidence, and (2) the need for respect from others, which includes fame, prestige, status, and recognition. To meet self-esteem needs, students need to feel important and worthwhile and gain respect, approval,

and appreciation by engaging in activities and tasks that bring them achievement, success, and recognition. Students may seek gratification from not only teachers but also from peers. As teachers and leaders, it is important to regard each student as a unique individual, appreciating them for the originality that they bring to the class.

Tier 5: Self-actualization needs

At the very peak of Maslow's hierarchy are the self-actualization needs. Self-actualization can refer to the pursuit of a person's full potential and personal growth. Self-actualization could mean different things to different individuals; for some it could be making millions of dollars, while for others it could be dedicating their lives to the welfare of others. In essence, it is the desire to be the most one can be.

At this level, students proactively look to teach their full potential. They seek higher levels of knowledge and aim to achieve higher learning goals. At this point, it all comes down to finding fulfillment out of what they are learning.

Then, the quest of reaching one's full potential as a person leads to the summit of Maslow's motivation theory. Unlike lower-level needs, this need is never fully satisfied; as one grows psychologically, there are always new opportunities to grow. Self-actualized people tend to have motivations such as: truth, justice, wisdom, meaning. They also have frequent occurrences of peak experiences, which are energized moments of profound happiness and harmony (Shah, classcard, 2022).

The education system has evolved; nowadays, teachers have to deal with lack of values, technology influence, a misconception of freedom, and countless issues related to the 21st century generation. This reality requires teachers to be fully committed to their profession; always looking for new theories, methods, strategies, and techniques which can contribute to the formation of not only bright students, but also productive citizens.

Empirically, it can be said that the interest teachers have for students' fundamental needs fulfillment in higher education is almost nonexistent. Students are seen as a number and the pressure they receive does not contribute to cover their safety and love needs. And of course, the English classroom is not the exception. In higher education, it is mandatory for students to approve a certain number of levels of English (4 to 6); hence, students are not really interested in learning, but in complying with this requirement; this circumstance makes the teachers' job even harder since students do not conceive English learning and the development of its competence as a need.

Consequently, in the next section, the teachers' role is discussed as well as the relevance of creating an environment which can significantly contribute to the fulfilment of students' fundamental needs in the English classroom.

Shah (2022) in her article entitled *How Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can be applied in teaching* presents valuable recommendations all teachers sure consider and apply in their English lessons. First, the author emphasizes the fact that human actions are motivated by the pursuit of certain needs, from basic to complex; therefore, certain basic needs have to be met before a person tries for complex needs. In the education context, teachers have the opportunity and the means to gauge students' need and cater to them; hence, Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be used in the English as a Foreign Language classroom to find the optimal way of motivating students to perform their best.

Regarding the physiological needs, the author suggests for teachers to allow students to take regular breaks; in this time space, students can have a snack, hydrate, or go to the toilet. Teachers also have to ensure adequate lighting and ventilation, and monitor the temperature. Several of these recommendations are not complicated to follow, but some schools even prohibit students to bring water bottles or snacks to the classroom; in that case, teacher must allow students to walk outside the classroom during the breaks.

Concerning security and safety needs; it is advisable to enact well-defined routines in the classrooms and clearly communicate them to the students. The rules can include the extension of the breaks, the possibility for students to gather or stay inside the classroom and have healthy discussions and non-judgmental conversations. Moreover, during the lesson activities, the teacher must monitor students as to identify and prevent bullying or non-regular behavior in students.

Referring to love and belonging needs, teachers must establish ground rules; highlighting values such as respect and responsibility. In addition, teachers must create a sense of team (community) by engaging students in team-building and bonding activities; as well as group work and other inclusive learning techniques. Teachers have to foster a sense of community where students support each other and focus not only on their own needs, but also their peers.

With respect to esteem needs, teachers must encourage and praise students' efforts by making them notice their process is appreciated. It is also necessary to provide powerful affirmative feedback with phrases such as "Great job," "Well-done" in this way, teachers are boosting students' self-

esteem and self-worth. Additionally, teachers must motivate students to participate in competitions, extra-curricular activities, and events.

On the subject of self-actualization needs, teachers have to encourage and support students to explore topics in depth to satisfy their hunger of knowledge, as well as give opportunities to students who have a better level of English to help their classmates. Teachers could practice peer coaching or apply the MKO (More Knowledgeable other) strategy in the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

Teachers and educators must power to effect change; remembering that it starts in the classrooms. By applying these simple yet effective suggestions, students progress can be notorious since their needs are satisfied. And even though, sometimes teacher consider some of the pyramid aspects irrelevant; the challenge is to implement them in the classroom and observe students' reaction, acceptance, and satisfaction (Shah, 2022).

A study that highly contributes to fully comprehend the relevance of humanism and Maslow's hierarchy of needs is entitled "*Humanizing Foreign Language Instruction based on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of needs.*" This research conducted in Iranian schools presents a clear definition of humanism in the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

To start, the authors state that for education to be an enriching experience the meanings that emerge must become personal, and they must be significant and important in some aspect of the student's life; considering that language learning is strongly linked with interpersonal communication skills. These communication skills are not only based on cognitive aspects such as the knowledge of the language per se, but also on affective ones; such as the capacity of relating to others, personal security, and self-confidence. In this study, it is affirmed that pupils learn more and better if they feel comfortable with themselves and with the group. Moreover, humanistic language teaching considers learners as responsible for their learning; it means that the teacher has to favor students' learning autonomy through reflections about learning styles, strategies, and self-assessment tasks. Furthermore, in the humanistic classroom students are involved in something else than completing mechanical exercises in the target language. They are given the opportunity of encoding their own thoughts in the Foreign Language. Hence, humanistic teachers take on the task of guiding learners' attempts without discouraging them; their role is to facilitate students to handle real-life situations, to find satisfaction in discovering the ideas of others and in gaining new ways of self-expression.

The second aspect which is valuable and useful from the cited study is related to humanistic teaching techniques. Humanistic, affective, or awareness exercises attempt to blend what students feel, think, and know with what they are learning in the target language. Humanistic exercises are more than a linguistic technique; they are means for students and teachers to grow and better fulfill their potential as human beings. In order to facilitate learning in a way that is consistent with both the values of the humanistic psychology, and with our own individual awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Finally, the authors present a list of implications teachers must consider when implementing humanistic education: (1) Teach learners to be authentic, (2) Teach learners to become world citizens, (3) Help learners to discover their vocation in life, (4) Teach learners that life is precious, there is joy in life, (5) Teach learners to transcend the trifling problems and tackle the serious problems in life, (6) Teach learners to make good, long-term choices. Additionally, educators must plan their classes well; clearly define processes, procedures, rules, and practices; keep a fair discipline; guide students to feel free to take risks; provide praise for correct responses; consider students likes, dislikes, and concerns; be available for students in need; be supportive, listening to students or organizing a class discussion and praise correct responses; use one to one instruction, and give positive feedback. Furthermore, teachers must be empathic, considerate, patient, fair and always keep a positive attitude; then, they could consider students strengths and assets; consider individual needs and abilities; be alert to students' difficulties; involve all students in class participation and responsibilities; give students freedom to explore and discover; make learning meaningful connecting it to real-life; and allow students to get involved in creative activities and projects which give them the opportunity to develop their metacognitive and self-expressive skills. In sum, the teachers' role could seem complicated, but humanism and Maslow's hierarchy of needs call to reflection; to keep a balance between the relevance of developing cognitive and humanistic skills. It is a reality that in higher education, the majority of teachers consider that the most important is for students to master the Foreign Language skills; nevertheless, focusing on the basic students needs should be a must. Teachers need to take the time to feel more familiar with this pedagogical model and implement it in their English classes; and as it has been mentioned during this literature review, they could see the positive results of humanism and Maslow's hierarchy of needs in their students' performance (Khatib & Seidi, 2022)

Materials and Methods

Undoubtedly, the teachers' role represents more than a certificate or a degree. To be a teacher is mostly to see students as unique entities and human beings with specific needs. Therefore, in order to understand what are the students' fundamental needs and the influence that teachers and the environment have in the fulfillment of these needs; this qualitative research is presented.

For this literature review, the narrative synthesis method was applied as it involves summarizing and interpreting the findings from individual studies in a narrative format. The purpose is to identify common themes, discrepancies, or patterns across studies and provide a coherent and comprehensive overview of the literature (Rashid, 2023).

This study presents a description of the five stages of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs connected to English teaching; thus, the approach is structural and psychological. The data was collected using three techniques: (a) read and understand background studies related to students' fundamental needs in the English classroom, (b) classify the information that contributes significantly to answer the research questions and fulfill the objectives, (c) conduct a literature study to obtain secondary data as a complementary data regarding the role of the teacher and the influence of the environment in addressing students' fundamental needs. The data is collected mainly from peer reviewed articles and thesis.

Results

The results of this research show that students' fundamental needs in the classroom are clearly aligned with Maslow's hierarchy, confirming its relevance to understanding the teaching-learning process.

First, it was found that physiological factors are a determining factor, as students who experience problems related to sleep, eating, or fatigue show poor concentration levels, resulting in less participation in communicative activities in the classroom. This reaffirms that, without meeting the most basic needs in the classroom, learning a foreign language is hampered.

Furthermore, it was observed within the safety needs of the school context that a predictable and appropriate environment, with clear rules and proper discipline management, generates a sense of trust and stability in students that fosters active participation. On the contrary, when the classroom lacks an orderly and respectful atmosphere, anxiety levels increase and students show resistance to interacting in English, which limits the development of their language skills.

Furthermore, the findings regarding belonging needs indicate that students significantly value interaction and collaboration with their peers in the classroom. Collaborative activities and projects in pairs, along with integration dynamics, foster feelings of acceptance and reduce feelings of isolation. This aspect is key in teaching a foreign language, where communication and social interaction are pillars of learning.

Regarding esteem needs, it was confirmed that students show greater motivation when they receive positive feedback from their teachers. Furthermore, reinforcement of individual achievements, appreciation of participation, and respect for differences contribute to students' self-confidence and their willingness to take linguistic risks, such as public speaking or writing more complex texts in English. These factors are directly associated with sustained learning progress.

Finally, regarding self-actualization needs, it was identified that students achieve greater autonomy and satisfaction when they realize that learning English opens the door to their personal and professional goals. Thus, at this stage, English ceases to be seen solely as a subject and becomes a tool for personal and academic growth.

Discussion

The results obtained in this research allow for a dialogue between Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and pedagogical practices in the English classroom.

First, it confirms that basic needs constitute the foundation of learning, as students who lack rest, adequate nutrition, or an appropriate physical space have greater difficulty maintaining attention and motivation. The results obtained are consistent with the evidence of Zhao (2021), who, through a study conducted with Chinese ESL students, observed that a lack of self-esteem and self-realization limits their performance, and recommended that teachers foster a sense of belonging to encourage positive behaviors.

It's also worth mentioning that the safety dimension, both physical and emotional, proved to be a determining factor in student performance. A classroom where rules are clear, mutual respect is fostered, and anxiety about making mistakes is reduced becomes a space that promotes active participation.

Marszalek et al. (2022) reinforce this point by showing that intrinsic motivation and the experience of “flow” in language learning depend on the perception of a safe and stimulating environment.

Regarding the need to belong, data shows that social interaction, cooperation, and a sense of acceptance create a favorable environment for students to learn English.

Activities such as group work, communicative dynamics, and collaborative projects strengthen cohesion and reduce inhibition when speaking in another language. This observation aligns with Maslow's humanistic vision, in which a sense of community and cooperation constitute a pillar for achieving self-esteem and, subsequently, self-realization.

It has been proven that students who relate learning English to their personal aspirations, life plans, or professional goals show greater autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and creativity. Here we observe a coincidence with the approaches of Marszalek et al. (2022), who highlight that the connection between self-concept and intrinsic motivation enhances commitment to learning a second language.

In summary, the discussion reflects that the satisfaction of fundamental needs is not only a prerequisite for learning, but also a factor that influences the quality of the educational experience. The English classroom thus becomes a privileged space for applying Maslow's hierarchy as a pedagogical guide and as a tool for personal and academic transformation.

Conclusions

This research allows us to draw several relevant conclusions. First, it confirms that learning a foreign language is deeply influenced by the satisfaction of the fundamental human needs described by Maslow. A student who lacks security, belonging, or esteem will find it difficult to achieve self-realization through mastery of English.

Second, the findings demonstrate that English teachers not only serve a linguistic function, but also a motivational and emotional one. The role of the teacher as facilitator, guide, and companion is crucial to addressing these needs and creating an environment that promotes trust, cooperation, and personal development.

On the other hand, the application of pedagogical strategies aligned with the different levels of Maslow's pyramid helps reduce anxiety, increase motivation, and foster active participation in the classroom. These practices translate into more meaningful learning and strengthen students' overall development.

Finally, this work confirms that Maslow's hierarchy not only remains relevant in contemporary education, but also becomes a practical and necessary tool for teaching English in contexts where students face multiple personal, social, and academic challenges.

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