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# Critical Discourse: A way of emancipation of the mind

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## ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis is an interpretative practice and a discipline that, although it arose within linguistics, has become an interdisciplinary academic field. In this sense, this article is focused on the critical reflection of the language and how this can help people in different ways giving empirical evidence that sustains discourse analysis theories. Based on an interdisciplinary dialogue, from a qualitative perspective: political discourse, racism, sexism and a proposal to make a critical discourse analysis (CDA), are the topics addressed in this text, whose hypotheses arise from the theoretical-practical study of language, analyzing from scientific and empirical evidence the different codes of the language. Finally, we concluded that education is the key to analyze in a critical way the actions and intentions from different political actors.

## KEY WORDS

Critical Reflection, Discourse Analysis, Political Discourse, Racism, Sexism.

## RESUMEN

El análisis del discurso es una práctica interpretativa y una disciplina que, aunque surgió dentro de la lingüística, se ha convertido en un campo académico interdisciplinario. En este sentido, este artículo se centra en la reflexión crítica del lenguaje y cómo este puede ayudar a las personas de diferentes maneras, al otorgar evidencia empírica aplicable a las teorías de análisis del discurso. Basado en un diálogo interdisciplinario, desde una perspectiva cualitativa: Discurso Político, Racismo, Sexismo y una propuesta para hacer un Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD), son temas abordados en este texto, cuyas hipótesis surgen del estudio teórico-práctico del lenguaje, analizando desde la evidencia científica y empírica diferentes códigos del lenguaje. Finalmente, concluimos, la educación es clave para reflexionar de forma crítica las acciones e intenciones de diferentes actores políticos.

Reflexión Crítica, Análisis del Discurso, Discurso político, Racismo, Sexismo.

### **Introduction**

Since ancient times philosophers have tried to explain the function of human beings in society and how they can communicate with others and the world. Certainly, language has played an important role to achieve such a goal because through words people can make meaning about the world that surrounds them. For example, Immanuel Kant (1781), asks himself what can he know? By asking such a question, he tries to understand the world that surrounds him, and explain how human beings are able to acquire knowledge.

This question is very interesting because if we analyze it in depth, then we understand that everything that we granted seems to be questionable. When people speak, they use words to create meaning in order to communicate with others who use the same language code.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this assignment is to investigate more about Critical Discourse Analysis and how this stream has helped to make people more aware of politics and other situations of inequality such as racism, sexism, and other types of discrimination through the use of language. This is due to the fact that, for decades, various groups who are in power have used discourse as a tool for manipulating the masses in order to preserve their interests even at the expense of the progress of the majority.

In addition, through the use of some discourse analysis tools, we will describe an example of political problems with the comparison of three distinct articles in journals about the same item, we could do a reflection on situations that as citizens of the world are concerned. Using methods applied in the critical review, we could infer, make assumptions, descriptions and get deep about certain topics. Thus, we could understand how the world is changing in its diverse perspectives.

### **Research method**

The research is based on a qualitative eclectic methodology, which estimates that researchers are social subjects who approach the analysis of their reality with a conscious subjectivity, that is, through a particular effort of critical analysis to propose a set of elements with which it is feasible. Reflect on a social problem or a speech with a political connotation.

### **Literature review**

As Bloor and Bloor (2013: 15) noted: "meaning is created when a sign occurs in a specific context". However, signs and words could mean different things when implemented in different contexts, for example, the word fair isolated, it would be difficult to know what people in reality are trying to say. For this reason, As Bloor and Bloor (2013: 15) argue: "when we consider language as a carrier of meaning, a more complex picture emerges. Language is often thought of as a system of signs but it is not a simple or straightforward system". It is important to take into consideration Kant's question what can we really know? Do we actually know people's real intention when they talk? Perhaps we might encounter ourselves in a critical situation that can only be solved by faith. By faith, there is no intention to associate it with religion as it commonly is. Here the intention is

that as human beings, we believe that the words that are spoken by a person are acceptable or as true in relation to the meaning they want to transmit and there is no intention to harm other people, by giving false information.

Discourse Analysis (DA) seems to be a new stream in the academic world; however, the Greeks used to use DA or as they would say the art of good speaking in their discourse when they spoke in public events. Van Dijk (1985: 1) notes that "its origins can be traced back to the study of language, public speech, and literature more than 2000 years ago. One major historical source is undoubtedly classical rhetoric, the art of good speaking." Various definitions have been given about Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), most of them refer to the relation of social context and power abuse through discourse.

For example, Van Dijk (2001) illustrates that CDA primarily studies the form social-power abuses and inequalities are enacted, legalized, and confronted by written or oral in different social and political contexts. According to this definition, CDA not only helps to dominate people through discourses, especially the less privileged, but also it could become a tool to help the unprivileged to resist and fight not to be dominated, persuaded, or manipulated easily. Moreover, MacCarthy (2011: 5) argues that: "discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used." Moreover, Fairclough, Graham, Lemke & Wodak (2004) comment that the purpose of CDA is not only to analyze texts or speeches in a critical way to identify problems but also to find a way of how to alleviate or cure social problems from its roots. The idea of CDA then could be to create critical thinkers or mold critical minds in order to identify social problems that can harm the majority of the citizens of a community and make them aware of such problems. They note that "of course critical social scientists can claim no special expertise in curing social ills, but we can certainly reflect on what the problems are and how they might be resolved (Graham, Lemke & Wodak, 2004: 2)." Reflection is important, as it can help people think about the social problems that exist in their communities and try to find a way to solve them.

The aim of CDA, could be argued, is to provoke people to be more conscious of what happens in their surroundings and if possible, to resist those who want to control them through the use of language or any type of discourses. As it was mentioned prior, do we really know or understand what people say? Language could be a powerful tool to persuade or manipulate masses, after all, how do we know that people would do, what they say they will? As Gee (2014) expresses:

If I say anything to you, you cannot really understand it fully if you do not know what I am trying to do and who I am trying to be by saying it. To understand anything fully you need to know who is saying it and what the person saying it is trying to do (2).

Alternatively, you can be critical about what that person is saying, and analyze to try to unveil the real intention of that person. However, at the end it is only and interpretation of what you think that person said.

### **Political Discourse**

There are various types of discourses, for example, a discourse given in a graduation ceremony, or when there is an inauguration of a new place. There are also political discourses which are used by politicians especially during their campaigns before and during the elections. Van Dijk (1997: 11) mentions that "the very notion of Political Discourse Analysis (henceforth PDA) can be ambiguous. Its most common interpretation is that PDA focuses on the analysis of 'political discourse". In this

sense, CDA would illustrate speeches and discourses used by politicians, and the lexicon used by them can help persuade people, or manipulate their minds prior and during the elections to vote for them. Van Dijk (1997: 22) argues that “if (members of) any group publicly or covertly acts such as to influence the political process (e. g. elections), then again the contextual (conditionality and functionality) criteria will categorize such discourse as political”. Persuasion is an element that politicians use to make people believe in their political ideas.

Usually, people who are in power tend to use situations that go against society or community, for example, violence, and discrimination and so on. Frequently, the majority of people are weak when it comes to social problems that affect them. In Mexico, there is a problematic situation with violence throughout the country. Much of the violence is caused by drug cartels that fight for territory but in some occasions, regular citizens find themselves involved inadvertently. When things like these happen, politicians take advantage and promote through their discourse the alleviations of such problems. It is clear that politicians use manipulation in order to gain votes for the elections. The majority of the pre-candidates for the presidency of the different political parties are offering the eradication of violence in the country.

Manipulation is unacceptable because it takes the opportunity away from people to decide freely:

Manipulation not only involves power, but specifically abuse of power, that is, domination. That is, manipulation implies the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated (...) ( Van Dijk, 2006: 360).

Here we can see that slavery has involved, during the periods of colonization and throughout history, slavery was only physical but never of the mind.

The new way of dominations has hit the most precious thing that human beings have, a free and critical mind. In ancient Greece, the philosopher Plato argued that the soul was in a prison, the body, and it needed to be set free from that imprisonment. As it was argued by Plato (1966):

Philosophy, taking possession of the soul when it is in this state, encourages it gently and tries to set it free, pointing out that the eyes and the ears and the other senses are full of deceit, and urging it to withdraw from these, except in so far as their use is unavoidable (83).

It means that the only thing which can free a person is their desire to learn and acquire knowledge. Our desires can involve our mind and prevent it from thinking critically. Now, it seems that the imprisonment of the mind is not by the body but by discourse.

As philosophy helped Greeks to liberate the soul from the body's domination, CDA can play the same role to free the minds of the people in our era, we need to be critical and analyze political discourses and as a society, we need to question ourselves if their discourse is demagogical only or their proposes are capable of being achieved. For example, Jose Antonio Meade was a formal pre/candidate for the presidency of Mexico in 2018; in one of his spots, he promotes equality of opportunities for women. Unfortunately, Mexico has a long way to go in order to reach the equality of gender. Another case is the Mexican Partido Verde who each year they proposes death penalty in Mexico, that is impossible because the international treaties signed by the Mexican government prohibit those types of laws or punishments to be implemented in the territory.

## Racism

When a person hears the concept racism, perhaps the first thing that comes to his/her mind is racial differences, discrimination of people either by gender or by ethnicity. According to Van Dijk (2000) there are different forms of racism. The old type of racism refers to lynching, slavery, segregation discrimination, and the feeling of superiority by white people. However, the new way of racism, those who were inferior are now considered different. It seems that democracy has helped to twist the concepts in order not to sound too discriminative or racist. Van Dijk (2000: 35) pointed that "racism is a social system of 'ethnic or racial' inequality, just like sexism, or inequality based on class."

Much of the racism happens at different levels, for example, people could be discriminated by the way they dress. Here in Mexico, people tend to discriminate natives because of their cultural backgrounds. Such is the case of the Huichol community in the state of Zacatecas. Discrimination seems to be something common in countries like the US and the UK, and sometimes we as Mexicans complain of what those governments and their people do to our people.

However, something similar happens here, most of the immigrants of Central America suffer from discrimination while crossing the Mexican territory. In some cases, immigrants are associated with social problems such as, trafficking of drugs, violence, crime, or unemployment. Van Dijk (2000: 38) points that "neutral topics, such as immigration, housing, employment, or cultural immigration, soon tend to have a negative dimension: immigration may be topicalized as a threat." Immigrants are exposed to society as undesirable and unwelcome people due to the fact that they enter a country illegally and take away from citizens the opportunity to have a job. This idea can be promoted through media as minorities do not have the control of what is said in the news. As Van Dijk (2002) illustrates:

everyday conversations are the natural locus of everyday popular racism. Because they do not have active control over public elite discourse, ordinary people often have no more "to say" or "to do" against the others than talking negatively to them, and about them (151).

## Sexism

Discrimination towards women commence, according to biblical reading, when God created Eve from Adam's rib. Since then, women have been discriminated and dominated in various forms, language, sexually, and socially. However, through education women have stood and fought for what corresponds to them by right, the right to have the same opportunities as men. Through language, women are commonly seen as illiterate and frivolous users of language. As Pauwels (2003) points out:

The history of women as language regulators is very different. As stated above, women were subjected to linguistic regulation much more than men. However, women were given some authority in language regulation as norm enforcers, both as mothers and as school teachers (especially in elementary school) women were to ensure that children learned to use language according to the prescribed norms (550).

As it could be seen, women commenced to have opportunities that before were only given to men. This means, that women were able to work, to earn their own money. The idea of implementing nonsexist language is something that has kept some scholars occupied of what is the best way to

implement language in order not to discriminate or dominate minorities. Martyna (1980) illustrates that there are various points of disagreement towards the implementation of language. As she mentions, some agree that language has a sexist side while others deny it. She (1980: 485) notes: "the need, they say, is to change the sources, rather than the symbols, of sexism in society."

By changing the sources, perhaps it could be argued that norms of language have to be changed but also the mentality of people so each being receives the respect they deserve. Then, how can we change the minds of others? Many laws can be approved but that does not guarantee that they will change people's ideologies or beliefs. It seems that the only way is education and changing the pedagogy we use in our school systems throughout the world. Education is the key to transform our way of thinking and if possible, vanish discrimination, racism, sexism, inequality and marginalization in order to create a better society, at a local level and worldwide. However, minorities do not have the power to make drastic changes, but those who are in power can, since they accept educational policies. The question that arises is would they do it, even if that means the loss of power?

As Akbari (2008) expresses:

The same people who have the power to make decisions in society at large are the ones who also have the decision to design and implement educational systems, and consequently, their ideas and values get accepted and promoted while the values and ideas of others are not given voice (276).

The idea is to change both students and teachers' ways of thinking who are left out in order to liberate them from the oppressive system and resist the ideology of social division that is promoted by the people who are in power.

Here, promoters of CDA and Critical Pedagogy can work together to create awareness of how social structures are by analyzing and questioning such forms, in order to be able to change them. Akbari (2008: 277) illustrates that "supporters of CP seek to expose the discriminatory foundations of education and take steps towards social change in such a way that there is more inclusion and representation of groups who are left out."

### **Research methodology description**

Since this article is based on the compilation and analysis of texts without an in-depth approach to numerical data, the methodology that was chosen to conduct this paper (qualitative eclectic) is based, in the first instance, on the generation of assumptions through the description and understanding of texts. It is also based on the use and application of interdisciplinary theories focused on the study of CDA (Cárdenas, 2015; Hernández-Sampieri y Mendoza, 2018).

Being a flexible research methodology the one that is used in this study, this fact facilitates interdisciplinary dialogue and the obtaining of meanings. Hence, we consider necessary to conduct the writing based on foundations that favors the understanding of, for example, complex concepts, processes and social interactions.

Therefore, this text is based on the review of the existing historiography on the critical analysis of discourse, the conceptualization and study of political discourse, added to the description and exemplification of political-cultural phenomena such as sexism. In this sense, based on the use of the texts and theories reviewed, we can reflect on the political discourse that we can find in

the written press, this allows us to develop a proposal for the realization of discourse analysis, as shown in tables 1 and 2 of this paper.

**How to make CDA**

According to Merton (1972), to write about a topic, usually scientists consider them as insiders or outsiders’ authors, in this sense the first kind of writers are those that analyze an issue being members of the groups or population which are studied. On the other hand, outsiders’ researchers describe collectivities and topics that are not part of their environment. Researchers as Taylor (2013) consider that to make a CDA of a text the problem description, interpretation of the context, and identify the frame problem on a written fount can help to do a good discourse analysis as we can appreciate in the Chart 1 and 2.

Chart 1. Critical Discourse Analysis of Newspaper

<b>Newspaper</b>	<i>New York Times</i>	<i>CNN</i>	<i>BCC</i>
<b>Date</b>	September 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2017	September 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2017	October 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2017
<b>Section</b>	Political Section, Europe.	Political Section, Europe.	Political Section, Europe.
<b>Title</b>	Angela Merkel makes history in German Vote, but so does far right	Angela Merkel: The moral leader of the west	Merkel ‘agrees on migrant deal’ in German coalition talks
<b>Quantity of words in the title</b>	12	8	9
<b>Problem description</b>	The popularity of Angela Merkel has down respect to 2013, also the new electors changed their tendencies to the right but not all agree with the results of this chancellor election.	The far right was winning more electors in some first world countries as France, Germany, USA, U.K., and Austria. Those were changing the globalization tendencies and the neoliberalism policies in 2017. Nevertheless, the liberalism continued being directed by Angela Merkel in the industrialized west nations.	Merkel was pro migration policies in her country, but the new tendencies in the developed countries of the world are nowadays opposite. In this sense, countries as the U.K. and the U.S.A. were taking anti migration policies in their States trying to create more jobs for their native population.

**Source:** Owned based on D. Tannen, H. Hamilton & D. Schiffrin, 2018; Taylor, 2013



**Chart 2. Analysis of Political Discourse**

<b>Antecedents</b>	The Europe Union has been led by Germany's interests where the European countries had done the things that help globalization and inequality competitiveness which favored German economy directed by Ms. Merkel.
<b>Identity of the subjects</b>	Conservative party of Angela Merkel has changed its immigrant's policies since 2015, receiving less acceptance by the German population.
<b>Interpretation of the context:</b>	In opposite to the new U.S. economic policy, in Germany the tendency to have more globalization and free market continues to lead the European Union and improve the German's economy, being the most competitive country of Europe community.
<b>Description as an insider or an outsider:</b>	We read some texts about the German political economy and how it is linked to the European Union, its policies and institutions. Also, we understand that Merkel did history being the first woman chancellor, reelected in several occasions and the third who has won four national elections in the German post war era. On the other hand, her political party was getting divided and losing electors in 2017.
<b>The frame problem</b>	Merkel has done history in a moment when some population is concerned by the increase in adepts of the far right German party. Also, the young people in Germany wish a more global country and a cosmopolitan nation. We could understand that some government policies in Germany were different, that's why a part of the population has a different point of view on Ms. Merkel.
<b>Dialect</b>	Political English directed to the general public.

**Source:** Owned based on D. Tannen, H. Hamilton & D. Schiffrin, 2018; Merton, 1972

**Findings, scopes, and application of the study**

An enormous area of opportunity is offered by political discourse in Mexico. If this model is successful for emancipation in a democratic culture as developed in Germany, it would be even more useful in a culture of Mexico, which suffers from more severe problems regarding freedom of discourse. In this respect, it can be noted how Mexican journalism faces much greater limitations than those of other countries. According to the analysis of the year 2022 by Reporteros Sin Fronteras (Reporters Without Borders), Mexico is the most dangerous country to practice journalism in the past 4 consecutive years. This tells us about the urgent need to exercise a very critical analysis of the discourses that are elaborated from the country, because due to its degree of danger, the emancipatory work that journalism should exercise is much more limited than in other continents. It is even more dangerous to practice journalism in Mexico than in Ukraine or in other territories who are at war.

In a context such as the one mentioned above, the critical analysis of the discourse is urgent, necessary, and a political and ethical obligation, since all of Latin America suffers from a scandalous lack of freedom of expression. As a last piece of information to affirm the relevance of the critical analysis of the discourse, we will give one last piece of information: according to the report of Reporteros Sin Fronteras, in 2022 there were 11 journalists executed for exercising their profession.

This research has the potential to be used for the critical reading of different texts, both political or economic, social, environmental, cultural, or other areas of human reality.

During this research it was noted that political discourses are plagued of ideologies that have as a goal the creation of a false reality in order to manipulate people. These discourses have the objective to create a system of beliefs that are irrational, however, they are accepted by authority and serve as a function of domination over individuals. Political Discourse responds to the particular interests of a class, of a group, that tries to justify them.

As a counterpart to those discourses of domination, CDA could play an emancipatory role as it gives people the tool to analyze them in a critical way. Giving them the opportunity of demystifying the activity that often uncovers a reality hidden beneath conventional beliefs or discourses. In addition, it can also circumvent it, giving rise to new concealing beliefs derived of the debate that is created when the two discourses clash.

## **Conclusion**

CDA, as it was illustrated working along with CP, can create a context in which society can shape transforming ways of approaching and analyzing discourses of any kind. Education then is of great importance in order to create consciousness and critical minds on learners and people in general. As members of society, we need to rescue critical thinking from the hands of the powerful because it seems that it is more important to create ignorance in people creating ideologies that benefit them to remain in power rather than critical thinkers who can question them. We can commence this journey in the privacy of our homes, in our work spaces or simply in our daily interactions with people.

We, as educated people, believe that change happens in oneself. It is very difficult to change in already set minds, so it is important for new generations to grow with different perspectives about ideologies and social structures. Here CDA can help because it proposes social concerns of discipline and gradually offers a range of techniques that exist to critical discourse analysis. It has as a main point to develop awareness of language and ideology on readers and to offer practice in analytic tools which could be applied to different kinds of discourses. CDA then will help minorities to resist and create new societies in which discrimination and oppression, particularly of the mind, will not be permitted in future generations.

We conclude that in order to understand a discourse critically, it is important to take into consideration that linguistic expressions carry meaning and to a certain point an ideology that intends to create a reality that could not be questioned once it is accepted. It is imperative to deliberate, question, and analyze discourses critically in order to reveal the true intentions from those who uses them. In this sense when someone says something, expresses an opinion, desire or intention that tends to convey a hearer in order to manipulate that person or people, to do what he or she desires. To sum up, we must consider that some phrases or words have common meaning throughout the world, this is why certain sentences in some occasions cannot mean what one likes.

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**The guidelines to write and present the proposals are described below:**

**1. Title:** in English and in Spanish.

**2. Summary (in English and in Spanish, 100 words), containing the following aspects:**

- a) Introduction:** This section describes the context where the research was carried out, reason why the topic was selected, importance of the study, reason why the research was carried out.
- b) Purpose:** Here the writer states and explains the research objectives, intentions, questions or hypothesis.
- c) Research method:** In this part, the author mentions and justifies the research method that was selected, describes briefly the subjects, the context and the research procedures, as well as the instruments that were used for the data and information collection.
- d) Product:** Here, the writer presents the main findings, the degree to which the research objectives were reached and the answers to the research questions.
- e) Conclusion:** This section suggests the importance of the findings, considering the contribution to the theory, the research area and professional practice and suggest practical uses as well as possible applications for further research.

**3. Body of the article:**

- a) Key words:** Five, in English and in Spanish.
- b) Introduction:** Present the research topic area, studied theme, and the research study, mentioning if it is: descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, correlational, interpretative, ethnographic, etc. Also, emphasize the research problem or topic.
- c) Literature review:** Present the main terms, concepts, and theoretical claims or principles, models, etc. analyzing and discussing the ideas presented by the main authors who have studied the topics related to the research or study presented. The references should not be more than 10 years old.
- d) Research methodology:** Describe the research approach: qualitative, quantitative or mixed.
- e) Describe the research method:** Case study, longitudinal research, transversal research, experimental research, cuasi-experimental research, etc. Describe the **data type** (describe

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and justify the data base, or universe, or sample, etc.) Characterize the **subjects** (describe the participants in the research). **Context** (describe the geographic and the institutional context where the research was carried out). **Instruments** (describe the research instruments used to collect information and data). Data analysis methods (describe and justify the quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods).

- f) **Main findings.** Synthesize, present, interpret and argue the most significant results found.
- g) **Main limitations of the study** (related to the geographical or institutional context or knowledge area where the conclusions or suggestions could be applicable).
- h) **Main applications and impact of the research.** Describe the main benefits of the research and the possible applications of the proposal.
- i) **Conclusions.** Describe the main conclusions generated from the answers to the research questions.

## Topics for the articles:

1. Language learning and teaching processes.
2. Professional competencies development.
3. Teaching methodology based on constructivist principles.
4. Alternative language learning theories.
5. Curriculum design: design of language programs or language courses.
6. Design, selection and adaptation of language teaching materials.
7. Language learning evaluation.
8. Language and culture.
9. Research and professional development.
10. Educational technology in languages.

## Format:

- Title using Arial font, size 14
- Text using Arial font, size 12
- Margins: top 2.5, bottom 2.5, left 2.5, right 2.5.
- Spaces: 1.5
- No indented paragraphs

## Length of the articles:

- 8 to 12 pages containing text (from 3000 to 5000 words approximately)
- 1-2 pages containing references (using the American Psychological Association APA format)

**Languages:** The articles can be written in English or Spanish.

The editorial process includes a rigorous academic review by a strict pair of “blind” reviewers and the use of **Plagius software** to verify that ethical standards are respected and that there is no plagiarism in any of the documents.

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**Deadline to send the proposals:** January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

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# LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS

MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA  
INGLÉS Y LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA



## El Centro de Idiomas Extranjeros "Ignacio Manuel Altamirano"

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A los aspirantes interesados en cursar la **Licenciatura en Letras Inglesas** (Modalidades: Presencial y/o en línea) o la **Maestría en la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés y Lingüística Aplicada** a participar en el Concurso de Selección para el ingreso al Ciclo Escolar 2023-2024, presentando el examen de admisión que se realizará mediante previa cita hasta el 30 de agosto de 2024, conforme a los siguientes:

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Los interesados en participar deben realizar todos los trámites y procedimientos institucionales, además de cumplir con los requisitos descritos en el cronograma y el instructivo correspondiente a esta Convocatoria, los cuales son:

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