U ANDES Develops Dialect Platform To Assess K-12 Reading Skills

Universidad de los Andes

International standardized test results show Chilean reading skills are still very poor, with more than 60 percent of K-12 students failing to reach a baseline level of proficiency.

In an effort to change this, in 2012 researchers from the Faculty of Education in Universidad de los Andes in Santiago, Chile, Pelusa Orellana and Carolina Melo, PhD, developed Dialect, a program to help assess Spanish reading skills in students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The program consists of automated tests and teaching strategies.

> *Kindergarten students who used Dialect showed significant improvements from the beginning to the end of the school year in reading patterns, listening and vocabulary.*

Dialect is a test automation platform accessible from any device. The tests, a central part of the program and platform, provide an instant achievement report, which contains an analysis of the student's performances and suggestions of actions that may be taken to help them develop each skill. The student's teacher receives the information to formulate a specific intervention plan throughout the school year. Teachers have recognized that personalized evaluations and

strategies to bolster a student's deficient areas help them make better use of teaching time.

To scale Dialect, models were implemented to adapt the test difficulty to the abilities of the students, and automatically generate individual and group reports. More than 55,000 students have used Dialect in Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Spain. As the technology is focused on the Spanish language, it has the potential to reach a much bigger market.

U ANDES' TTO supported researchers in managing the registration of their IP rights. The TTO also created a commercial agreement with the world's leading learning assessment company, Metametrics. Through this alliance, the tests were validated, creating a high standard measurement system, Lexile, which will be used exclusively throughout Latin America. The TTO facilitated a commercial agreement with the Chilean company Colegium S.A, where the platform was developed. The project was initially financed by the Chilean state.

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