Evidence of Intercultural Communication Competence in Tenth Grader's Narrative Texts[1]

Evidencia de la Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural en Textos Narrativos de Estudiantes de Décimo Grado

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Abstract

This action research study explored the effects of an intervention linking both culture and citizenship in a tenth-grade English language class, and aimed at finding evidence of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) skills through the writing of narrative texts in English. Participants were 75 tenth-grade students, between the ages of 14 and 17 years old who attended three different public schools in Bogotá, Colombia. Through literature circles (discussion groups) and storytelling tools, learners played an active role, discovered similarities and differences among cultures, reflected upon their tolerance levels, and explored ways to face problems. Findings suggest that students were able to identify differences in cultures and how those differences helped them to build identity. In addition, they analyzed how they reacted in situations where their tolerance skills were challenged.

Key words: Intercultural communicative competence; culture; citizenship; narrative texts; literature circles; storytelling, SOLO taxonomy, language acquisition.

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Resumen

Este estudio de investigación acción exploró los efectos de una intervención pedagógica que combinara la cultura y ciudadanía en una clase de inglés de décimo grado, y tenía como objetivo encontrar evidencia de las habilidades en la competencia comunicativa intercultural (ICC) a través de la escritura de textos narrativos en inglés. Los participantes fueron 75 estudiantes de décimo grado, entre los 14 y 17 años, de tres colegios públicos de Bogotá, Colombia. Por medio de herramientas como círculos literarios (grupos de discusión) y narración de historias, los estudiantes jugaron un rol activo, descubrieron similitudes y diferencias entre culturas, reflexionaron sobre sus niveles de tolerancia y formas de enfrentar problemas. Los resultados sugieren que los estudiantes pudieron identificar las diferencias entre culturas y cómo éstas los ayudaron a construir su propia identidad. Adicionalmente, los estudiantes analizaron cómo reaccionaban ante las situaciones en las que sus habilidades de tolerancia eran desafiadas.

Palabras claves: Competencia comunicativa intercultural, cultura, ciudadanía, textos narrativos, círculos literarios, narración de historias, taxonomía de SOLO, adquisición del lenguaje.

Resumo

Este estudo de pesquisa ação explorou os efeitos de uma intervenção pedagógica que combinasse a cultura e cidadania em uma aula de inglês de segundo ano do ensino médio, e tinha como objetivo encontrar evidência das habilidades na competência comunicativa intercultural (ICC) através da escrita de textos narrativos em inglês. Os participantes foram 75 estudantes de segundo ano do ensino médio, entre os 14 e 17 anos, de três colégios públicos de Bogotá, Colômbia. Por meio de ferramentas como círculos literários (grupos de discussão) e narração de histórias, os estudantes desempenharam um papel ativo, descobriram similitudes e diferenças entre culturas, refletiram sobre seus níveis de tolerância e formas de enfrentar problemas. Os resultados sugerem que os estudantes puderam identificar as diferenças entre culturas e como as mesmas ajudaram-nos a construir a sua própria identidade. Adicionalmente, os estudantes analisaram como reagiam diante das situações nas que suas habilidades de tolerância eram desafiadas.

Palavras chaves: Competência comunicativa intercultural, cultura, cidadania, textos narrativos, círculos literários, narração de histórias, taxonomia de SOLO, aquisição da linguagem.

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Introduction

During the last two decades, the Colombian government has been implementing policies regarding the learning and teaching English. These policies are primarily aimed at increasing and improving the teaching of English in the country, with the goal of making Colombia more competitive, with citizens who can cope with the demands of globalization. According to these goals, it becomes relevant as well to train people on cultural aspects, as these have an impact on the way people can establish more effective communication and personal relationships with others around the world.

As such, it is important for teachers to support learners in order to understand cultural aspects when learning a foreign language as cultural contact is inevitable in the current globalized world (Graddol, 2006). Even though there is research on the teaching of culture as part of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), through different strategies (Karnyshev, et al., 2014), few studies on this topic have been carried out in the context of Colombian education (Gómez, 2011).

When dealing with culture in the language classroom, teachers can use ICC to help students obtain knowledge and understanding of their own and others' culture, as a way to also help students be able to down prejudices, become more tolerant, and develop the ability to see cultural differences as well as similarities (Byram & Risager, 1999). Furthermore, the inclusion of cultural aspects in the language classroom can also expand learners' world vision and help them to solve the different problems inherent in globalization (Kramsch, 2001).

This article presents the results of an action research study conducted with tenth grade students at three public schools in Bogotá, Colombia. The research question was: *How is intercultural communication competence in tenth-grade English language students developed by storytelling and narrative text writing?* Researchers intended to help learners develop cultural skills such as tolerance, identity, and conflict resolution while enhancing their sense of the self and other. These aspects were explored in cultural contexts (real or fictional) by using literature circles and storytelling. To recognize and assess cultural skills and awareness, the researchers used the SOLO taxonomy (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes).

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Literature Review

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

In general terms, ICC deals with the recognition of the other. It has to do with the person's ability to interact in a foreign culture respectfully with people who have different ways of life, to accept them the way they are, and to appreciate similarities and differences with the own culture (Byram, 1997). For this study, researchers selected the co-orientational model to analyze the ICC components (Fantini, 1995), considering that it focuses on how communication takes place in intercultural interactions and how insights, meanings and intercultural comprehension are built while interacting. Furthermore, this model takes into account relevant concepts to comprehend the resulting outcomes from interactional processes such as understanding and overlapping perspectives.

Communicative competence, in terms of ICC, allows learners to establish and express relationships and understanding of cultural issues that allow them to know the self (identity) and other, solve problems, and reflect on the reasons for decisions or actions, as well as their consequences in a more empathic way. All these features are at the core of the citizenship skills, which foster peaceful coexistence, responsible participation and understanding of difference. Consequently, ICC equips students with tools for providing solutions, bearing in mind different perspectives.

When making interpretations, individuals develop a process of reflection, understanding, and construction of the concept of the self and the other by comparing and contrasting different characteristics, attitudes and behaviors (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004) that shape the individual's identity. In addition, knowing the self and the other helps individuals develop more tolerant attitudes in terms of mutual understanding and respect for cultural diversity, concepts that are key for many educational systems today (Pigozzi, 2006).

Therefore, to test the role of a person in a society and his/her responsible attitude in different situations, becoming familiar with conflict resolution strategies is a must. In this sense, it is necessary to create spaces for students to face real or simulated situations that help them train themselves in finding constructive, peaceful and creative ways to solve problems (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004).

Research in this field (Gómez, 2011; Karnyshev, et al., 2014) has demonstrated that learners improved their ability to reflect upon the importance of being tolerant, as well as the need to become open minded

and respect other people. In addition, learners developed intercultural empathy toward harsh situations of other cultural groups.

Narrative Texts

Narratives are stories in which individuals share experiences, which often reflect the way they perceive the world. These texts may also depict the individual's feelings in relation to life issues and present viewpoints in a critical way (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The creation of narrative texts as extended writing projects (Kearney, 2010) in a culturally immersed classroom can require students to call upon a number of cultural aspects.

For this study, narrative texts were used in literature circles (Garrison, Forest & Kimmel, 2014), providing the cultural input as the stories' characters could provide the social context students needed. Literature circles (Daniels, 2002; Furr, 2004) are mini-discussion groups, in which participants choose a book, tale, poem, or article and read it within a period of time. In the context of literature circles, peer interaction and clear roles among learners are vital to develop the different cycles. To carry out a literature circle in the classroom, students take specific roles, such as Summarizer, Literary Luminary, Connector, Questioner, Character Wizard, or others that the teacher considers essential. These roles enable students to share ideas and opinions about the texts. By using this tool, students can demonstrate a higher level of respect for others' thoughts, attitudes and behaviors (Medina, 2013).

Likewise, narrative texts for storytelling can account for the cultural contexts students are involved in, which at the same time allow for a better understanding of learners' backgrounds. Storytelling allows students to share experiences, somehow as mirrors of their own reality (McDrury & Alteiro, 2004), which in turn makes learners recognize their own identity and raises their understanding and awareness in relation to ICC (Wu, 2015). They promote students' critical thinking skills, self-acceptance and acceptance of diversity to understand different cultures and their own cultural context (Doganay & Maksut, 2013).

Although storytelling has been mostly used in oral production, and the studies described here were focused on the development of ICC orally, few studies have evidenced ICC skills in written way (Wu, Marek & Chen, 2013). Having this in mind, implementing storytelling in a written form provides more concrete evidence of students' understanding and apprehension of the topics studied according to their conditions and level.

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Structure of Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) Taxonomy

The SOLO taxonomy was originally created by Biggs and Collis (1982). It can be explained in terms of five levels of understanding that are useful to classify the quality of participants' data regarding the assessed items, as described in more detail in the Data Analysis section.

ICC studies show that it is important to have materials and approaches in the language classroom that allow for the teaching of culture through language. This offers possibilities to enhance not only communicative competence, but also to improve experiences and outcomes in relation to this (Mejía & Agray-Vargas, 2014). Consequently, implementing the SOLO taxonomy to evaluate learning outcomes regarding cultural competence can be an effective tool to evidence students' perceptions, understanding, and progress in a more objective and concise way.

In the educational field, the SOLO taxonomy has been used for different purposes and subjects, such as geography, math, accounting, or sciences (Braband & Dahl, 2009; Hussain, Ajmal & Rahman, 2010; Jurdak & El Mouhayar, 2014; Lucas & Mladenovic, 2009; Munowenyu, 2007; Smith & Colby, 2010). This taxonomy has been used to analyze the students' level of understanding of a topic, measure the progression in a competence, establish course objectives, analyze the quality of academic essays, and grade and improve critical thinking skills (Smith & Colby, 2010). Despite the fact that many research studies have been done, there is no evidence of the use of the SOLO taxonomy for measuring learners' outcomes in EFL classrooms or the students' outcomes in regards to their ICC skills development.

Methodology

Research Design

This research study was conducted under the principles of collaborative action research and used students' narrative production as a way to evidence their understanding on ICC topics and the effectiveness of the implemented tools. In order to do so, different instruments such as artifacts, logs, a final questionnaire, and narrative stories were used to collect data in different stages of the implementation.

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Participants and Context

Participants for this research project were 75 tenth graders ranged from 15 to 17 years old with B1 English level (Council of Europe,

2011). Selection of participants of the same grade was done to have homogeneity in terms of age, grade, interests, skills, and cognitive development. Furthermore, these learners were characterized by an interest for getting closer with new things, topics and experiences.

Bearing in mind the difficulties of public schools in terms of students' attendance, teacher-researchers used the purposive sample method to choose the population to work with. In this case, the sample is chosen with specific purposes on the basis of the researchers' judgement, as a response of their specific needs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The criteria to select the subset of participants was based on completeness of the process and activities to guarantee that information collected was not biased. As a result, 15 participants were chosen, five per school.

Pedagogical Intervention

The intervention and lesson planning were applied in three cycles. Each cycle comprised orientation sessions, literature circles, and storytelling tools. One of the reasons for the selection of these last two tools was the need to apply an ICC model (co-orientational model), which worked with comprehension outcomes on intercultural interactional processes.

Orientation sessions were carried out to help participants in the comprehension of basic cultural concepts, tolerance features and conflict resolution strategies. After that, literature circles were the means of providing the comprehensible input which enabled learners to analyze, compare, contrast and take a stance regarding the topics studied in the orientation sessions, and which could appear in the tales they read. Teachers-researchers modelled the first literature circle using the story "Two Monks and a Woman." Then, students, chose their texts using a web tool named *World Stories* which provides readings from around the world. Some of them were "The Fool and the Donkey," "The Wind and the Sun," "Hard Times," among others. Once students had read the story, they carried out the literature circle roles and methodology. These stories helped raise awareness of the differences among cultures, the importance of being tolerant towards the others, and the recognition of their own identity.

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Lastly, storytelling was the tool that allowed students to give written evidence of their understanding of concepts while having the opportunity to create fictional or real stories from their own experiences, reflecting upon topics such as culture, tolerance, and conflict resolution.

The length of the written products was around 300 words, and some were created using the Storybird artwork or Power Point Presentations. Storytelling gave evidence of learners' critical thinking skills, intercultural competence, and the ability to get messages across.

During the implementation, data was collected using the instruments described above. Initially, all instruments were completed in paper and then organized in a spreadsheet in Excel, and analyzed using the SOLO taxonomy to solve the research question.

Data Collection Instruments

Artifacts (instructional materials) allowed students to give an account of perceptions regarding different cultural aspects; thus, researchers could keep track of the participants' interpretations of different topics discussed. In this study, artifacts were applied during the orientation sessions and provided evidence of the participants' critical thinking skills like comparing and contrasting information, evaluating and judging situations, and proposing strategies to solve a problem.

Learning logs were used to record the participants' reflections about the content being studied. These were applied at the end of each cycle of the pedagogical intervention and provided information about students' feelings, knowledge, and thoughts regarding their learning experience and ICC skills when being in contact with other cultures.

Stories were used by participants at the end of each cycle to express themselves about their cultural context and perceptions which at the same time allowed researchers to evaluate their intentions and interpretations of complex settings and their way of interacting in different situations (Bruner, 1986; Cohen, et al., 2007) through narrative stories.

Finally, a questionnaire was applied at the end of the process and aimed at collecting factual, behavioral, or attitudinal data through open questions to evaluate students' background, experience, actions, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values (Burns, 2010).

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Data Analysis and Interpretation

For analyzing the information, stages proposed by grounded theory were applied. In the open coding stage, a color was assigned to each level of the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) to find codes and patterns as follows: purple for pre-structural (the student

does not understand the concept); orange for uni-structural (the student understands the concept but just repeats the information given by the teacher); red for multi-structural (the student understands the concept but finds difficult to make connections between the topics); light green for relational (the student makes connections with the topic and other topics); and light blue for extended abstract (the student proposes something regarding the concept or situation studied). All instruments were analyzed under these criteria. In addition to this, instruments were classified taking into consideration beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge since these are the most important factors when teaching and assessing culture. Then, the axial coding was applied by analyzing the highest SOLO taxonomy levels in order to define the categories for the study. The previous process also allowed researchers to reduce data in a more accurate and objective form.

Results

When applying the literature circles and storytelling (narrative texts production) tools, researchers found that participants gave evidence on ICC awareness and skills development through the different data collection instruments. In this sense, it is possible to assert that somehow students' ICC level went from a misconceptions about culture and how it affects communication and interaction, to the recognition of its importance to get messages across, increase tolerance towards differences, and to have a wider world vision. Thus, three main categories emerged: *demonstration of cultural awareness by analyzing and understanding culture, evidence of the use of ICC skills through writing, and demonstration of a sense of knowledge and identity.*

Demonstration of Cultural Awareness by Understanding and Analyzing Culture

Being culturally aware means that a person is capable of reflecting, being sensitive, and being able to explore language in a pragmatic way when acquiring knowledge of how the language is used in a target culture (Dufva, 1994). According to Muikku-Werner (as cited in Dufva, 1994, p. 21), this awareness makes the first attempts to communicate in a foreign language possible and successful, demonstrated through different attitudes and behaviors, as explained below.

As Dufva (1994), Lonner and Hayes (2004) assert, culture means everyday behavior and everyday thoughts that a person uses to face daily social interactions. In this sense, there are three components to bear

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in mind when approaching culture: a comprehension of what culture means, how cultures are different taking into account communities' beliefs and behaviors, and how those differences have an impact on communication (Murray & Bollinger, 2001).

Taking this into consideration, the most representative attitudes recognized during the study were respect for other individuals, and action-oriented behavior in problem solving. In relation to respect for others, findings evidenced the concept of respect in terms of the adaptation to the conventions that can be established in specific contexts. The process of adaption is possible when the opportunity to value other people is granted and interaction leads to inclusion rather than to exclusion, as evidenced here by one participant:

> The lack of tolerance affects in a huge way because not all the people would tolerate that someone disrespect them regardless of the place they are in. Because if you go to a country and you do not like anything, people can turn you down to the point you are excluded.[3]

Likewise, respecting the others means accepting the difference, avoiding judgements of physical appearance, and valuing cultural diversity. In the stories written, the participants gave evidence of respect for different points of view as a way to show that everybody thinks differently. Similarly, the abovementioned sample corroborated that ICC skills are learnt, and as a result, learning is progressive as well (Byram, 1997), which might be a fundamental attitude to be a better citizen in society.

On the other hand, according to Dufva (1994), when a person is able to take a stand and assume a critical attitude, he/she has reached some power to discover hidden meanings of a situation that makes her/him take action in order to solve a problem. For this study, participants evidenced the necessity to take action when analyzing real life situations. This allowed them to express and reflect positive changes when applying conflict resolution strategies in order to have harmonious relationships within their community.

To sum up, it is important to demonstrate that knowledge put into practice can contribute to a positive transformation in society. Participants identified that strategies to solve problems can be taught and used at the same time. This confirms the importance of teaching ICC skills in the English classroom, as reported here:

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[3] Original Spanish: Pues afecta de una manera dimensional, porque toda la gente no va a tolerar que les faltes al respeto independientemente en el lugar que estés. Porque si tú llegas a otro país y no te gusta nada pues las personas te pueden rechazar hasta llegar a excluirte.

I learnt to live together in the society, be more tolerant and accept things of others, since I am aware that each person is different. It is good to teach what I learnt.

Evidence of the Use of ICC Skills through Writing

Since the focus of the writing was to go beyond the form (Hillocks, 2005), this research study used freewriting (Elbow, 1998) to concentrate more on the content to evaluate participants' ICC skills. With this in mind, participants used language to build a world vision; it became a resource for demonstrating understanding, expressing meaning, and interacting with others. Moreover, it helped participants make connections among social communities, reflecting upon different cultural aspects. Finally, it allowed learners to build their own identity and their identity in a group. The results of using this approach are evidenced as follows.

Firstly, being aware of how negative actions can affect communication and interaction is one of the central aspects participants reflected in their stories. Individuals who reflect upon the consequences of their actions are able to re-evaluate their behavior and restructure their response for future situations (Byram, 1997). The opposite is implied when individuals are not sufficiently instructed in ICC skills. Finally, considering the recognition of cultural features, which is an essential part of effective communication and interaction, participants demonstrated awareness when reflecting about respect and tolerance as key aspects for this to happen as stated here: "... We have to breathe and tolerate different people to have a better communication."

Second, the ability to recognize other individuals, bearing in mind their attitudes, behavior, and viewpoints is an essential element within ICC skills (Pusch, 2009). As part of participants' cognitive flexibility, they demonstrated in their writing a capability of analyzing and evaluating situations such as discrimination due to racism, bullying, displacement, age, disability, neighborhood, appearance, gang affiliation, and personal capabilities. Participants in this study were able to conclude that no matter the differences between cultures, there are things that are essential for every human being to live together in harmony.

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In the same line, researchers obtained evidence of the understanding of one of the ICC aims in regards to finding the self in a societal context (Byram, 1997), when a participant extrapolated this conception to the necessity of adopting a different behavior as a country if cultural and socioeconomic changes are expected, as reported here:

For example, that the oriental culture is very organized, punctual and educated culture; for that reason they are global potencies because those are those little things that makes the difference.

Furthermore, when dealing with ICC, a person needs to be open-minded and able to adapt to different cultural values. These are survival strategies that allow us to recognize individualities and capabilities, as evidenced by the participant:

Juan Martin was advising them that they all had to help other one and not to judge all. Grandmother: but how is it possible, they are animals, they neither think nor feel. Samuel, you are not travelling with me, close well the eyes and open your mind.

Finally, cognitive flexibility is a component of critical thinking, and it is also considered an ICC skill (Yue & Ning, 2015). In this way, while some participants showed clear stances in relation to different topics and situations regarding conflict resolution and tolerance, others revealed avoidance as a way to face problems, demonstrating a lack of social relaxation and comfort when sharing points of view with others (Rubin & Martin, 2009). Therefore, the lack of flexibility might prevent those individuals from having positive approaches when interacting with others.

Demonstration of a Sense of Knowledge and Identity

Recognizing strengths and weaknesses and having a clear definition of the self and a strongly defined role within a group is important for ICC, as stated by one participant:

The identity can fall ill for people that is not accustomed to live in another culture. At the time there, starting changes of attitudes and loss of own identity.

Thus, having contact with another culture or social group should not disrupt what the individual thinks of himself/herself or what makes him/her unique (Kim, 2009). Participants recognized that if identity is not strongly formed, it can be overridden or distorted when interacting with other people or other cultures.

However, researchers obtained evidence of the recognition of the influence that the environment may have over identity and how being different can exclude individuals from a social group, as stated thus:

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> We must be able to accept another people and this is the problem of this culture; if you are different, you are out. We are obliged to respect the other.

As a consequence, being culturally competent requires having a group identity and sharing viewpoints within a group to be accepted (Byram, 1997).

Having analyzed the data and obtained the codes and categories, the core category of the research study was identified as narrative *texts to evidence the recognition of cultural awareness, cultural skills and identity perceptions in ICC*. Writing stories is an exercise that helps learners to develop cultural imagination (Usó & Martínez, 2008). In this sense, participants were able to comprehend, analyze, and reflect upon cultural differences that could somehow shape their world vision. Similarly, once students managed to recognize the ICC skills needed to relate with others, creating narrative stories with cultural focus demanded that they inquire about cultural aspects, put themselves in the shoes of other people, and see the world with new lenses (Kearney, 2010). When writing narratives, individuals had to imagine the situations the characters were immersed in, and reflect upon the choices they had to make. By the same token, students not only became more critical regarding their contexts; they also could identify themselves within the stories (Kearney, 2010). Therefore, giving students the opportunity to express and tell their own stories is a way to recognize the value of what they have learnt in the classroom, taking advantage of their knowledge and understanding what they have experienced regarding culture and citizenship in their own lives.

Furthermore, when students put into practice what they have learnt or read, it facilitates the use of that knowledge in other situations making learning meaningful and long lasting. In this sense, life-long learning skills are being implemented and thus, learners may realize the importance of using what they learn in their real contexts.

Finally, one of the most significant advantages when using narrative texts is the possibility to allow learners to represent and build their own self-concept (Bruner, 1994). Participants played an active role in the process of building their identity when writing and reflecting upon different topics, in some occasions about themselves and about situations that were closely related to their reality, as depicted in earlier studies where individuals comprehended how their identities were shaped (Coffey & Street, 2008).

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Conclusions

This study focused on analyzing what happens to ICC when using storytelling to implement the writing of narrative texts with B1 EFL tenth-graders. In addition, effects of literature circles and storytelling tools in ICC recognition when reflecting upon topics such as culture, tolerance, and conflict resolution were analyzed.

The main discoveries in relation to the use of literature circles and storytelling tools were that these proved to be effective in order to evidence participants' perceptions and insights when teaching ICC. On one hand, literature circles helped learners express themselves in a natural way. On the other hand, reading stories from diverse parts of the world enhanced participants' exploration of different countries and their cultures, instilling their curiosity to learn from and about other cultures, and boosting in students a sense of being more socially responsible (Garrison, et al., 2014). Likewise, by using storytelling in this study, participants could explore different aspects of ICC skills.

Regarding writing narrative texts, findings indicated that these evidenced the growth of cultural awareness since participants recognized the importance of knowing the culture to be able to communicate effectively with the others and respect them. At the same time, participants showed growth in cultural skills as they demonstrated willingness to change and to be more tolerant and empathetic when interacting with others, and a change in perception about their own identity. In this regard, these changes and new knowledge enabled students to have a different way to interact with others since they were aware of the impact that cultural aspects can have in communication. Considering these aspects, participants could reflect, evaluate, and analyze upon cultural similarities and differences, which allowed them to better comprehend different situations and prepared them to communicate more accurately.

Taking into account the context where this research was developed, the possibility to continue applying this methodology could, firstly, decrease the schools' reports of bullying and discrimination as students could continue being trained on the different strategies to solve conflicts and on raising their tolerance levels by exploring ICC within the English classroom. Second, it is necessary to encourage and support students in the construction of their own identity to recognize and appreciate their traditions, cultural values and viewpoints, so that they can have healthy relationships with others (Holliday, et al., 2004). Lastly, using the SOLO taxonomy for analyzing data is highly recommended since learning outcomes can be objectively set and tracked during the learning process.

Although this research study evidenced ICC skills growth to some extent through the use of narrative texts, further research should investigate the implications of the written narrative texts in the students near contexts and their impact on their families and relationships.

Important drawbacks were, on the first hand, participants' distraction with the use of different websites different from the ones required for the study (Storybird and World stories). This situation could be overcome by training students to learn how to use the internet, so they can be more aware of the advantages to use it for learning purposes. On the other hand, time allotted for the pedagogical intervention was longer than the expected due to the extra activities that each school had to comply with, unexpectedly. Consequently, there were sessions where participants and researchers could not meet, which affected students' capability to recall key information. Teacher-researchers tackled this situation by reviewing the topics at the beginning of each session. Additionally, regarding the writing of narrative texts, learners had problems organizing their written production. As a result, it was truly difficult to comprehend students' ideas and perceptions at the analysis stage. To overcome this situation, teaching students the writing process of narrative texts could support their performance when expressing in a written way. Finally, students' speaking ability can be boosted if they are instructed in the use of cohesive devices and useful expressions for everyday situations. This may avoid the use of the mother tongue during the discussion sessions.

To conclude, this study allowed researchers to ascertain that including ICC in the classroom is vital. Consequently, teachers need to provide educational environments where cultural aspects play an essential role in the process of building identity. Thereby, learners are required to be able to act according to a globalized world which demands being aware enough to respect others and communicate effectively, no matter their ideology, race, gender or beliefs; aspects that are currently being included in Ministry policies in Colombia.

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