THE INSTRUCTIONAL USE OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND HIGHLY VISUAL MATERIAL OF FIFTH GRADE ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS IN A COLOMBIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de Licenciado en la Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa

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ABSTRACT

There are many reasons why English language teachers may choose to construct their own teaching materials, despite the availability of commercially produced materials. This paper presents some of these reasons by examining advantages of teacher produced materials. It also suggests factors that teachers should take into account when designing materials for diverse learners and present a set of guidelines for designing effective materials for teaching and learning English.

Effective strategies used to overcome interaction and motivation difficulties among students in the classroom are of crucial importance for second language (L2) learners. Therefore, L2 learners might benefit from instruction on how to use culturally relevant and highly visual materials in the classroom to cope such difficulties. In Colombia, much research has been conducted on use of materials in an English foreign language classroom, the means used to overcome strategies and learning styles of the students. Due to differing theoretical perspectives, researchers have disagreed about the question of whether such strategy training is beneficial. However, few studies have specifically considered cultural and visual material strategies from a pedagogical point of view.

In this paper, we will first briefly present the importance of using culturally relevant and highly visual materials with EFL students, some conceptualizations, and samples of studies about cultural material. Then, we will discuss the advantages of the application and design of the material done by the facilitators to contextualize the topics, arguing in favor of it. This will be reinforced by descriptions of research projects that analyzed the use and impact of culturally relevant material in foreign classrooms. Findings suggest that culturally relevant material will provide learners the opportunity to apply their background knowledge in all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). This thesis provides evidence in favor of the success of designing, using and developing culturally relevant material for the Colombian English classroom. Finally, suggestions for materials and pedagogical implications will be discussed.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This research intends to provide a description of a particular teacher education program to enable teacher educators to reflect critically on the use of culturally relevant material (CRM) in our local and national contexts. Although the literature reviewed stresses the importance of materials, there is not enough studies carried out in Colombia that critically review how English Foreign Language teacher education programs address training on materials use in the curricula.

Considering research as a very important form of self-reflection about the impact of the CRM in fifth grade students at the Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede La Hermosa from Santa Rosa de Cabal; could show different behaviors with the use of the culturally relevant material in the classroom (interest, motivation, and autonomy).

CRM is a channel of communication and it can be achieved with help of instructions, explanations and examples made by the teacher into the classroom, since we often use style of literary and rhetorical patterns of expression in our target language. CRM provides visual stimuli such as the environment allowing that students to develop skills to communicate with others. According to Silva (2003) language found in CRM could help non-native learners to understand and to share ideas with their classmates. Moreover, this kind of material allows learners to learn in a different way, to comprehend the culture outside the classroom and to use authentic language in their lives.

The purpose of this research is to show the readers that culturally relevant material provides basic and comprehensive information to assist students in the development of an effective learning.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The participants of this research are students of fifth grade of the Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede La Hermosa from Santa Rosa de Cabal. In this group there are 39 students; 20 girls and 19 boys. All of them are from 10-12 years old. We wanted to focus our research on children who are learning a foreign language and we noticed that in this classroom some of students wanted to learn English but they did not have sufficient resources or materials to study it. Moreover, we observed lack of culturally-relevant material in the English teaching.

Today, English teachers have a lot of choices in terms of textbooks. Nevertheless, many of them rely are useless textbooks that focus students' attention on grammatical structures, and on practice in isolation. In spite of, there are excellent textbooks to practice in a classroom but the teacher's methodology is no appropriate to expose students to develop competences in English. For instance, a textbook could include culturally relevant material to use it in a class, but teacher does not allow this material to be explored and contextualize in our country. Also, the activities chosen are based on both teacher-talk and student-listen routines or textbooks instructions and students only follow those instructions. These practices are unlikely to lead students to develop a genuine interest in learning English. Students lacking motivation to learn a language need variety and excitement.

That necessity of motivating students in the classroom is important to involve students in the execution of their activities and tasks. Despite of enthusiasm students to participate in the classroom, students who were observed in the sessions done at the institution mentioned before showed lack of motivation and participation because they were not exposed to authentic CRM like pictures,
Culturally Relevant Material
drawings, readings, posters and so on. We should help them notice that learning a language is not just learning its grammatical rules, vocabulary items and so on.

On the other hand, learning a foreign language requires that students in the classroom help and collaborate to the teachers to find different ways of matching their teaching styles to the culture and home background of their students. In other words, teachers should make an effort the school experience of students more compatible with their everyday lives. Edge & Wharton’s theory (1998) about the use of CRM indicate that students can connect their own experiences with the material used in the class. They also say that teachers should use culturally relevant material as an art not as a science to be learned and used. Thus, culturally relevant material could form part of the communities or context in which students live to be taught giving something relevant to the class. Using this culturally relevant material can be successfull for each student and a part of that success depends on helping students make connection between themselves and their community, national and global identities.

According to Weisman (2002) “without culturally relevant material, students could not understand easier lesson objectives, they could not maintain student focus, and they could not keep a sense of direction and understanding of a situation and give clear written directions” (p. 30). It means that students could not capture and retain teacher’s explanation, introduce and review key concepts and skills, reinforce key contents from teaching materials and finally, review lesson activities.

Observed classes at the Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede la Hermosa from Santa Rosa de Cabal from Fifth grade showed that there are several limitations of culturally relevant materials based on the learning of a foreign language into the classroom. We support this information based on the observations done at the school, which notice that the English teacher did not use visual material to reinforce the explanation of the topics. In addition, English
teachers did not implement free visual materials (magazines, newspapers, flash cards and drawings) to motivate and engage students in their classes.

Taking into account Ladson’s theory (1990) about CRM is that the reason for the use of culturally relevant components in classrooms is due to it will foster learner’s feelings, motivations, varieties and excitement. He also argues that it could obtain in a variety of culture materials and not only an overload of culture in ELT classrooms. Besides, we agree with his assumption in relation to learning a culture does not mean accepting that culture. If the role of the culture in the materials is just to create learner interest towards contents and thus towards language, that is highly desirable. But overuse of CRM in the language classrooms will constitute problems not for students but also for the teachers because it will be related to an art class but not related to develop the competences in the literacy skills.

While efforts are made to teach the elements of a foreign language in this classroom, students do not pay much attention to the explanations done by the professor. This situation happens due to the professor does not use visual material to encourage the necessary skills to develop a cultural impact on the students, even though culture materials are common and most rapid ways to share knowledge. English language learners may greatly benefit from culturally authentic material learning, because such opportunities promote academic skills such as writing, listening, reading and speaking. Naiman (1978) suggest that this material could help students feel more integrated into the classroom community, and could increase motivation. Thereby, students could be connected among them to the realities of life outside the classroom.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question

• What is the response towards the instructionally use of culturally relevant and highly visual material of fifth grade English Foreign Language students in a Colombian public school?

Sub- Question

• What are the characteristics of the materials designed for instruction that may have facilitated student’s English literacy abilities?
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To expose students to real school contexts in which students face the limitations in the use of materials experienced in regular English Foreign Language classrooms. In that sense, to characterize how the application of culturally relevant material impacts on the students learning of fifth grade at the Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede la Hermosa.

Specific Objectives

- To encourage fifth grade students through culturally relevant material to communicate in a foreign language.
- To expose students to CRM to develop relation and integration of culture and learning.
- To ask students to express themselves in the classroom using authentic culturally relevant material.
- To assess how students communicate among them through implementation of CRM in the classroom.
- To observe how CRM allows students to communicate with an understanding in our context into the classroom.
In Colombia, the General Education Act 115 (1994) states that one of the objectives of education should be the acquisition of speaking, reading and comprehension skills in at least one foreign language, making it the starting point for the creation of new regulations regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Colombia. This objective is somewhat vague since in order to create curricula, syllabi, schedules, learning tasks and assessment, everyone should have a very clear idea of what we need to achieve in foreign language education.

Phillips (1988) says; “Language is the most significant quality that distinguishes humans from other creatures” (p. 152). It refers to humans as creatures that use language to communicate with another to convey information and understand each others. In other words, learners communicate into a culture to express their own feelings, thoughts, opinions and ideas in writing. The necessity for talking and interacting with people from other cultures has suggested the development of an intercultural communication.

It suggests the necessity of a common language which allows people to accede to a new global world. It can be gotten through different uses that students can communicate with two languages and cultures, depending on the context in which a person develops. A foreign language is a language not spoken by the people of a certain place. It can be learnt in a classroom, in a job, or in an institute in which people or students are exposed only for controlled periods of time.

English is a foreign language and due to its value, we can talk about a Bilingual education in Colombia (Cardenas, 2006). It refers to the necessity for people to speak among themselves, to travel to other places, to comprehend and
to interchange knowledge with new cultures and to work in another country. Moreover, bilingual education allows students to have opportunities to hear and speak the language in a social milieu.

Bilingual education has developed through an educational program in which a native language and a foreign language are taught into a classroom as subject matter and used as media of instruction of other academic subjects (Baker, Colin, & Jones, 1998). The important language that is being taught in Colombia (English), has served as an important link of languages of wider communication around the world. It is very often spoken as foreign language in our country. In addition, these authors claim that in Colombia there are people who have received and continue receiving portions of English through a foreign language environment; but in Colombia there are other people who receive portions of English in their formal education or they have been educated exclusively via the first language. In many parts of Colombia, bilingualism, involving the use of two or more languages, constitutes a normal everyday experience (Dutcher, 1994).

We consider that the use of a foreign language in education may be attributed to numerous factors, such as the language of a country, specific social or religious attitudes, behaviour or customs of people, needs of people or the desire to promote national identity. Moreover, innovative language education programs are often implemented and applied to promote the relationship between an international language and a national language to facilitate a better practice and a better proficiency of wider communication with both languages. In Colombia, for instance, a person can receive some of the academic instruction in English and can develop proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking or other skills depending on the time that he/she is exposed to the foreign language. Immersion programs for children or programs for youngsters and adults are the means to combine informational content of interest and relevant to the learner. The teaching learning process of the English skills are useful to students because they promote interaction with others.
The skills which are taught into the classroom are established in performance levels through different stages in education. These stages show the learning process that students obtain in a language. In Colombia, English standards are organized in beginners, basics, pre-intermediate, intermediate, pre-advanced and advanced. In this way, our research is focused only in the basic standards of education (fifth grade). It is necessary to take into account the performance levels about learning competences in Basic English level (waystage) level (Cup, 2004). The institutions’ aims are to think on strategies about the use of CRM and its application containing the rules of the standards waystage (Basic English). These objectives allow students to know what they need to learn and to do in a determined context.

According to Ministerio de Educacion Nacional (2006) the communicative competences are given through knowledge, dexterities, and individual characteristics that permit students to do actions in any context (p.11). They are seen in sociolinguistic competences which refer to the knowledge of social and cultural conditions that are implicit in the use of the language. Equally, Tucker (1999) says that culture is immersed in the bilingualism (p. 2). It refers to the customs, values, laws, technology, artifacts and art of a particular time or people. Culture in English language teaching materials emphasizes over the use of cultural content in a classroom. Furthermore, learners’ culture is relevant in the learning of a foreign language because students can react in a good way to the overload of the unknown in the new culture with curiosity, confusion, frustration, and anger. Besides, the learners’ culture facilitates understanding of the second language recognizing and expressing their feelings, examining their beliefs and native cultures, and observing and understanding aspects of the new culture.

Consejo Académico Gimnasio La Montaña (1998) claims that changes in learning theory suggest that culture can be used as an important element in language classrooms, but many students say that they do not want to learn about the culture of the target language (p.129). This might be because of the fear of
Culturally Relevant Material

assimilation into what they perceived as something strange to them. Also, misrepresenting cultures by reinforcing popular stereotypes and constructing these cultures as monolithic or static, rather than as dynamic, fluid entities might result in failure in making cultural content an effective element in language learning and teaching.

In our context (Colombia), culture is a key factor to teach and learn English as a foreign language and introduce it appropriately in our way of life into an English Foreign Language classroom and teaching strategies and learning materials effectively. Knowing a language goes beyond the knowledge of grammatical rules, vocabulary items and pronunciation of these items (Dutcher, 1994). Successful language learning requires language users to know the culture underlying language in order to get the meaning across; which means that culture effects change on individual perception and is vital for expanding an individual's perspective of the world.

The individual's perspective in the learning of English can be seen through authentic material which enables the learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. Considering this, it may not be wrong to say that at any level, authentic materials as visual stimuli should be used to complete the gap between the competency and performance of the language learners, which is a common problem among the nonnative speakers. Authentic material requires of the use of language patterns being put into practice in real life situations. Since learning about a culture is not adopting it and the role of the culture in the materials is just to create learner interest towards the target language, there should be a variety of culture in the materials, not a specific one.

There are several kinds of cultural material (visual, verbal and auditive) which can be used in a foreign classroom. Visual tools are an instructional
medium to teach a foreign or second language. Learners learn primarily because of what they bring to their classroom experience in terms of their perceived needs, motivations, past experiences, background knowledge, interests and creative skills.

Visual aids continue to be a simple, effective way to get your message across. They satisfy the audience’s needs and expectations. The class will ideally form a bridge between something you have and your audience wants. In this way, students may acquire easily the learning skills that help them to construct meaning of topics which are being learned. It permits interaction with others to develop language.

In that sense, the sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of the social and cultural conditions to recognize and use in the culture through the communication among people. According to Carol (1986) English Foreign Language students can be expected to react to the overload of the unknown in the new culture with curiosity, confusion, frustration, and/or anger (p.112). New classroom experiences such as collaborative work, participating in analytic discussions, self-reflection and the interaction with other people can be made through interaction among students; with this tool, students are practicing literacy skills that are essential for academic success. English Foreign Language classes can assist students in recognizing and expressing their feelings, examining their beliefs and native cultures, and observing and understanding aspects of the new culture. These creative activities and practice exercises help children develop skills they can use for a lifetime. In our opinion, the use of authentic CRM is one of the most challenging tasks students are asked to perform because learners could have access to strategies that can heighten the quality of thinking without a limitless potential for pondering, observing, and extending the learning.

Increasing culture in fifth grade students, the institution could change its aims in learning by creating powerful learners, instead of indifferent learners facing the new learning in their school. Active teachers could encourage children to
examine and explore the world around them, to look closely at their relationships, and to expand their senses of perspective and personal relevance. In this way, children could share their skills to construct meaning with their classmates and help them to understand themselves as thinkers, interpreters, and communicators. Thus, students from Veracruz school could think that learning is a form of education, which requires having relationships with social situations, context and experiences lived by themselves.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following literature review, we included different topics that will be relevant for the development of our research such as the definition of CRM, native and target language, interaction and communication, material design and motivation, among others.

In this study, we explore the use of culturally relevant teaching materials as an instructional medium to teach a foreign language. Learners learn primarily because of what they bring to their classroom experience in terms of their perceived needs, motivations, past experiences, background knowledge, interests and creative skills. Marines & Ortiz de Montellano (1993), claim that culturally relevant material allows students to learn from a familiar cultural based, to develop pride and understanding in their culture. When the material is culturally relevant, students can connect new knowledge to their own experiences, thus empowering them to build on their personal background knowledge. In that sense, Battle (1997) in his research about the importance of integrating culturally relevant materials into the primary schools, found that through culturally relevant materials, students build and strengthen the self-esteem of learning their own culture. It influences the development of students' values, attitudes, lifestyle choices, and approaches to learning.
Moreover, the researchers mentioned before concluded that using the methodology about culturally relevant material, teachers can help students keep their culture instilled in their hearts and in their minds by incorporating multicultural perspectives in their lessons. Teachers can support students’ experiences by implementing culturally relevant content. When teachers address students’ real life situations in their teaching, students will more likely relate to the examples, and thus make connections to the content being learned. Students are empowered when teachers draw examples from their own experiences.

Tinajero (1984) agrees about Battle’s finding in relation how the teachers can incorporate their own personal experiences along with the experiences of the child into lessons. He says that teachers should personalize the content by using the places, locations, and names familiar to students in addition to using analogies to relate new concepts to experiences within the students’ backgrounds. When trying to determine information familiar to students, it is best for teachers to directly obtain that knowledge from the students. It means that through the use of CRM in the English classroom, teachers and learners will be benefited of its advantages.

However, Collier and Thomas (1988), agree that cultural differences may interfere with second language acquisition in the differences between word connotation, ethics, and values from one culture to the other.

Native Language and Target Language

Pica (1986) argues that English Foreign Language Learners have limited knowledge of the target language and there is cultural interference due to the difference in the style of literary and rhetorical patterns of expression in their native language and the target language (p.7). That means, when students write in English, they do not create the text themselves, they only translate their thoughts word by word from their native language into English, often with grammatically
incorrect results. In order to help our students develop the ability to express themselves in English, we should first limit ourselves to use Colombian learning material with our students through authentic English material to develop the four skills which promote interest in students.

Improving the four English skills in foreign language learners is necessary to acquire information, experience, and knowledge of a culture. As Bossone (1979) points out, developing the four skills is largely a process of learning to think more clearly. By recognizing logical thinking in foreign language students, they will be able to use this knowledge to organize and develop ideas in their own communication. Therefore, to accelerate language acquisition and aid of it, they must be exposed to extensive comprehensible material input, and then encouraged to employ rhetorical patterns in their own culture. That means, students could use a foreign language through symbols and abstracts tools such as images, pictures, drawings, posters and cards to communicate and express their ideas, feelings and understanding of the topics with their partners. In that sense, students observe previous materials to increase vocabulary, contextualize the topics and makes references to their own culture.

Pica argues that through culturally relevant material children (fifth grade) discover what they know about themselves and the world. It allows them to explore their likes and dislikes, their passions, and their hobbies. Developing the four skills, allow children to hear their own voice, to communicate in their own words, and to be themselves. Children’s voice is about encouraging them to communicate their personal thoughts, feelings, ideas, and emotions in their culture.

Moreover, this approach takes up the challenge of students’ culture and the materiality of exercises in the classroom as significant participants in the learning process. The application of the materials in the learning is understood as a set of practices not simply preoccupied with rules and principles, but concerned with cultural values. Kathleen (1994) says that; “Nineteenth-century culture is as a site
of learning rather than a fixed body of knowledge between learning and culture” (p. 114). In other words, it can be considered that students can contextualize their culture associated with modern culturally relevant material in relation to cultural topics such as food, transportation, clothes, places and so on.

These cultural topics are determined by three types of culturally relevant materials: target culture materials, learners' own culture materials and international target culture materials. For Mckay (2006), the best type of culturally relevant material is international target language materials, which supposedly covers a variety of knowledge from different cultures all over the world using the target language. That will probably increase the learners' interest rather than imposing only one culture all the time and prevent learners from having the fear of assimilation into a specific culture, by help them respect other people's cultures. Students' own culture should be discussed together with target culture. In other words, home and target culture should be integrated.

Our own culture is something consisting of facts to be learnt and it is a helpful tool to make learners feel the need to speak and use the target language; Robinson (2004) (as cited by Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 435) refers to this integration as the 'Color Purple'. It is about the integration between home and target culture is created when one becomes aware of one's own cultural lens (e.g. blue) through the recognition that a person from another culture has a different lens (e.g. red). Neither person can escape his or her own cultural lens, but each can choose to overlap lenses (e.g. purple) in order to understand better the other's perspectives and arrive at shared meaning. While using cultural content in classrooms, teachers should keep in mind that English is an international language, and culture is an aid to motivate our students rather than something to be taught.

Interaction and Communication
Teachers of foreign language have been urged to make the culture of the target language an integral part of classroom work. It is related to teachers teaching of a foreign language without introducing the culture in which that language operates at the same time (Winfield and Felfeli, 1982). The teacher is merely conveying words to which the students attach the wrong meaning. Students develop competences in the four skills according to their own feelings, ideas and thoughts and apply them in their own context, focus on audience, generation of ideas, organization of the text and their purposes.

In spite of students using some culturally materials such as books, drawings, stickers, etc. to communicate with others; there are disadvantages to share information with people. It is reflected when teachers give insufficient importance to the kind of materials that students have or design into the classroom to share ideas with their classmates. On the other hand, there are teachers who offer learners insufficient input, particularly in terms of linguistic knowledge, pronunciation, learning through games and didactics to contextualize the topics successfully. Moreover, teachers undervalue the capacity of the students to produce new ideas and see learners as largely passive. One of the strategies to avoid isolation into the classroom is the White & Arndt’s (1991) technique about how the teacher detects the capacity of students to interact with others and how he understands the importance of developing competences in the skills and recognize that what learners bring to the classroom contributes to the development of the communication ability. Furthermore, techniques such as group work, where input is provided by other students can help, to develop in an effective way interaction in a social situation, with a particular purpose which comes out of a particular situation.

During the interaction into the classroom, teachers could mention any situation or topic in the class; repeat and reproduce it as closely as possible and then provide enough support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social contexts. Likewise, social interaction activities approximate more
closely to the kind of communication situation encountered in the classroom where language is a form of social behavior. This means that learners must pay greater attention to the social as well as the functional meanings that language express.

Eventhough some students work with culturally relevant material to communicate ideas and it is a form of learning, there are ESL classrooms that do not use pedagogical strategies to acquire new knowledge of a foreign language. It is related to the Samovar and Porter’s thesis (2008) that culture can be defined as the overall systems of perceptions and beliefs, values and patterns of thought that direct and constrain a social group. In that sense, English Second Language teachers need to know how culture influences communication in their classes, how individual students bring distinct learning styles to the classroom, how schema theory helps teachers understand connections between learning, culture and social context. These key cultural issues will determine what assumptions they make about their students, their classes, and their assignments. It allows teachers to increase knowledge of students culture through the four skills which increase learning of the student’s background.

Similar research drawn from another study conducted by Silva (2003) about teachers’ reactions to students’ different cultural backgrounds in classroom interaction, suggest that the perceptions and outlook of the teachers on teaching in a multicultural classroom are important to increase communication among students. The factors (needs, interests, motivational styles and choice of materials) in relation to students’ perceptions of the teachers’ reactions about cultural and linguistic differences are essential in a communicative classroom environment. In other words, these factors are the key aspects that teachers should have in mind to teach students to value and interpret their perceptions and reactions to the new learning environment into the classroom and interact with their classmates (Silva, 2003). She also pointed out the necessity to acquire awareness about culture in which the teacher facilitates learning to students. That is, that teachers need to
know the culture in which students are involved to have a great influence on students’ identities to contextualize the new language learning.

On the other hand, she drew the relationship between culture and education. Education is not just implemented in classrooms and schools. Education is a way for students to assimilate the culture and comprehend it in the revolutionary changes through which we live. Teachers take into account these changes as significant issues to be used in the classrooms. From this perspective, students and teachers communicate their ideas, feelings and necessities. The author also argued the influence of the stereotypes in ESL students’ perception. Students can interpret the role of the communication in a different way from others students according to their mother culture. Also, the most common forms of cultural test bias takes place in the types of material that teachers choose to use in the classroom. Through material, students can have several interpretations of the world; students can express their feelings and emotions out of them.

But including the cultural element in the classroom not only facilitates learning. It also fosters motivation. Motivation is related to “the factors that determine a person’s desire to do something” and it can affect second and first language learning. In other words, communication increases motivation and it engages students in the activities for their own sake and not only they lead to an extrinsic reward. When students are internally motivated to do tasks, activities and exercises into the classroom, they feel pleasure, they think the multicultural English class is important, or they feel that what they are learning is significant. They may also think that the English classes are interesting due to the fact that the material used by the teacher generates pleasure and gratification in them, and they evidence understanding and comprehension from learning. Besides, maintaining curiosity to acquire more learning, students increase autonomy learning and they engage in an activity, without obvious external incentives.

Silva (2003) in previous study presents her findings under four main groups:
1. Teachers define classroom interaction: One of the way to increase social environment is through interaction. It is built through collaborative learning in which students develop social competences and become critical thinkers in the classroom providing opportunities for intensive, structured interaction among students. Moreover, interaction can engage students in structured group to work in oral discussion, rehearsing ideas, probing judgments, empathizing, listening and questioning. In other words, interaction helps students to practice among them and improves students' attitudes toward the classroom, motivation and discipline. Students not only learn more, but also they like what they are learning.

2. Teacher's cultural perception: Teachers analyzed students' behaviors and characteristics taking into account students' mother culture. Also, the teachers perceived characteristics from all students such as politics, religion, social interaction, points of view, likes and dislikes. Those factors were essential at the moment of teaching a second language. By knowing the culture of students, Silva found that some students were more talkative than others; some of them participated more than others.

3. Impact of students' cultural background on teachers' pedagogical choices: Teachers included students' cultural background in their classes. Teachers analyzed students' feelings, beliefs, social events, politics, religion, ideas and cultures. Teachers tried to connect different cultures from students into the classroom to share the same learning in the English classes. Students and teachers not only learned a new language, but also they learned about their own cultures in order to understand them in relation to others.

4. Selection of material: The observations done in this study showed that sometimes the material selected to promote interaction, can make students feel uncomfortable and unsure and, for that reason, many times unable to successfully complete the task proposed. Some of the materials were not relevant for students and they did not belong to the context; for that reason, some students did not know
the meaning of the topic presented in the material and they did not do connections and recognition of the new material with their cultures. That is that students can be unable to identify and relate the material with the content of the activities proposed by the instructors. Another important point reported in the findings, is that students’ reactions to given input vary due to unfamiliar materials or these materials did not have any of their cultural value attached to them.

Material Design

But to implement CRM in the English classroom takes time and preparation. It is important to know what kind of material to use and how to do it. The process of culturally relevant material refers to a movement from the identification of a need until its eventual use in the classroom, identification by teachers or learners of a need to fulfill or a problem to solve activities and tasks in the classroom. The design of materials also include the creation of materials, exploration of topics and exercises using the materials in terms of what language is, what meanings are, what functions are, what skills students develop and so on. For that reason, the importance of designing authentic relevant material is that learners can be exposed to real language and the materials can be used in its own context. Moreover, the materials can be designed to learners’ needs and interests and by the speakers of the language.

The following case study illustrates, from different teaching contexts, how the steps in the path are taken into account in actual samples of material; materials produced for a class at upper intermediate level; identification of need. Leech & Svartvick (2003) in their study found that when students read a text, they come across the sentence: “It’s time the Prime Minister listened more carefully to her critics”. They are puzzled by the apparent clash between the past form and the actual meaning of the verb “listened”. They ask for an explanation and further examples; exploration of language. The teacher promises to respond and consults the Communicative Grammar of English; contextual realization. The Teacher
decides to produce worksheets on Hypothetical Meaning to try to anchor the concept and the related language in students’ own experience (p. 383-7).

It means, culturally relevant material is most effective when it is turned to the needs of a particular group of learners. The respond of some teachers to the use of this kind of materials depends on many variables, the prevailing norms in a specific educational context, the amount of time available, the availability of reprographic facilities, the teacher’s background and training. The most effective materials are those which are based on a thorough understanding of learners’ needs, their language difficulties, their learning objectives, their styles of learning etc.

Teachers understand their own learners best. It means that teachers understand their needs and their preferred learning styles. The more they become sensitive and responsive to these needs, the more they become involved in researching their own classrooms. Indeed, we believe that the teacher as materials designer firmly belongs in the tradition of the teacher as researcher. All teachers need grounding in culturally relevant materials design. In other words the process of materials design raises almost every issue which is important in learning how teach: the selection and grading of language, awareness of language, knowledge of learning theories, socio-cultural appropriacy; the list could be extended. Teachers need to be enabled to design their own materials in order to reduce their dependency on publisher materials and as a means of professional development.

All teachers learn themselves when they are teaching. It means that when teachers teach a specific group of learners, they share experiences with other teachers and students and this has powerful implications when it comes to the materials they are using. Teachers produce their own effective materials and help them to teach themselves. Trialing and evaluating culturally relevant materials help to the success of material resources in their uses. Teachers know that
learners are the users of materials, and we as teachers have to need their opinions and listen to their feedback. This is easy enough for the teacher-designer, working with her own group of learners.

Design material allows that learners have a greater immediate need to be motivated by the teacher or the materials in order to effectively learn. Prizes and similar extrinsic rewards can help, but more effective on the whole are the elements that contribute to intrinsic motivation: interest in doing the learning activity itself. One of the main objectives of the Prabhu’s proposal is to pass to teachers at least some of the control over four major factors in the classroom: Content (what), order (when), pace (how fast) and procedure (how) (1987).

Materials production provides a range of possible inputs, without envisaging that they will be used in any classroom or that all classrooms will use the same input. They may suggest different teaching agendas and lesson formats which are not organized into lesson units. They may provide input at different levels of difficulty and in different quantities, leaving it to the teacher to select from the range in both respects, the expectation is that teachers will find it useful to draw on them in implementing the decisions they themselves make as teachers being as faithful as possible to their own perceptions of learner states and learning processes. (Prabhu, op. cit)

Prabhu suggests two possible ways of categorizing such resource options, Semi-materials. These can be of two kinds, single-type activities such as listening comprehension, writing activities, reading skills exercises, vocabulary development work, role-play, etc. Such materials would still be “centrally” produced, i.e. published, but it would be left to the teacher to decide on the order of presentation, the pace and the way in which they were combined with other materials.

Previous theory is also supported by Maley & Duff in their study about the design of material. They argue that there are some materials which can be
considered as collections of “raw” input, i.e. collections/selections of written, spoken or visual texts which are presented without specifying how they are to be used (1990). It is left to the teacher to decide which procedures (grammar awareness – raising activities, vocabulary in context, role-play, comprehension questions, diagram completion, etc). It is appropriate to use with a particular class at a particular moment.

Meta-materials. Essentially, meta-materials are “empty” pedagogical procedures. For example, dictation is a meta-material. Other examples would include role-play, gap-filling, summary writing, jigsaw listening, drama techniques, etc. The teacher decides on the nature input the “text” and applies the procedure to it. In this way, the teacher is in control of the content side of the teaching event.

Material design also can include computerized materials. Eastment (1994) claims that clearly the storage of multimedia materials both as text and exercises which can be rapidly and flexibly accessed offers enormous potential for the freeing of learners and teachers alike from the constraints of the coursebook. So far however, there has been only modest development of such materials, which are attended by a new set of problems. It is certain, however, that we now stand on the threshold of a new generation of materials based on CD-Rom technology, and its successors.

Successors develop a course which is specially designed to allow for different pathways through it. Guidance would be given to teachers on possible route maps but ultimately the choice would be their own. This might be a development of the Resource book idea but, rather than offering material in three major blocks, it would incorporate the choices within each unit. This would imply the inclusion of a great deal more material than is usual.

Develop a set of texts roughly grated for length/difficulty. Alongside it, develop a set of varied activities at different levels of task difficulty (Nunan, 1989;
Culturally Relevant Material

Skehan, 1993). Teachers would then be able to choose texts at a suitable level of difficulty and match them with tasks at a corresponding level of cognitive/linguistic demand. This is a possible refinement of the flexi-materials concept, for one way in which this can be done. Increase a set of materials in which students are given instruction and practice in a particular strategy or set of strategies. Build up a course with a central core component which it would be essential for all teachers/learners to follow. This would be accompanied by a cluster of optional modules at a number of levels, focused on different aspects of the language: skills modules to develop writing, listening, reading, speaking skills), vocabulary development modules, grammar awareness-raising modules, cultural awareness-raising modules, testing modules, project-based modules, thematic modules, games/fluency activities modules, etc. Teachers/learners would then be able to select modules appropriate to their interests, learning needs and level at any particular point.

Materials will always be constraining in one way or another, so that teacher will always need to exercise their professional judgment about when and how a particular piece of material is best implemented in any particular case.

Culturally Relevant Material and Motivation

According to Leech & Svartvick (2003), culture and material design English Second Language students can be expected to react to the overload of the unknown in the new culture with curiosity, confusion, frustration, and anger. New classroom experiences such as collaborative work, participating in discussion and design of material, can benefit English Second Language students profoundly. Besides, English Second Language classes can assist students in recognizing and expressing their feelings, examining their beliefs and native cultures, and observing and understanding aspects of the new culture. In addition, learning and develop our own material can increase student awareness; the English Second Language classroom is a safe place in which to identify and practice appropriate behaviors
and to make mistakes. Moreover, learning about the factors affecting rhetorical patterns in academic prose can help students manage the adjustment of their evolution into full participants in the new culture.

Jolly has identified a need for materials; textbooks inevitably and necessarily make pedagogical selections of exponents used for specific language functions which do not suit all learners or satisfy all teachers (1989). In exercises given to students is necessary to recognize a need, exploring the language required to meet the need and finding a reasonable context for practice. Materials need to provide meaningful practice whereby students would make statements of greater or less certainty, they clearly fail. Part of the material tasks must be to provide clear exercises and activities that somehow meet the need for language-learning work initially recognized. Some would say that this is the core of material tasks.

The physical appearance and production of materials is important both for motivation and for classroom effectiveness.

CRM allows students develop motivated activities which there are not apparent reward. Deci (1975), claims that students seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward. It means, students do not carry out behaviors outside and beyond the self. They are not motivated with money, prizes, grades and even certain types of positive feedback. Moreover, students develop motivation in the second language classroom in which learners can express and make their own ideas freely and openly, create oral discussions to talk about what interests them and know about a teacher a sign topic. Furthermore, learners develop autonomy and not dependence; they obtain personal goals and use learning’s strategies to cooperate among them.

The author of a classic study of successful language learning, Naiman, came to the conclusion that the implementation of cultural material in a classroom
and the most successful learners are not necessarily those to whom a language comes very easily; they are those who display certain typical characteristics, most of them clearly associated with motivation (1978). Example: Positive tasks orientations, goal orientations, ego-involvement, use of authentic material and others.

Authentic and Meaningful Material

There are very important sources of interest for learners in the classroom. Materials can include visual stimulus, aural and activating language production. Some of the authentic materials that a teacher can use in a classroom are pictures. Pictures are visual material which is a very dominant channel of input: so much so, that if young learners are not supplied with something to look at that is relevant to the learning task in hand they will find and probably be distracted by something that is not. The most obvious type of visual material for children is the picture: and the more clearly visible, striking and colourful the better.

Stories, Learners love having stories told to them. Moreover, stories are pure language; telling a story in the foreign language is one of the simplest and richest sources of foreign language input for younger learners. The most effective combination in teaching is pictures and stories together.

Games are essentially recreational time out activities whose main purpose is enjoyment; language study is serious goal-oriented work, whose main purpose is personal learning. Children in general learn well when they are active; and when action is channeled into an enjoyable game they are often willing to invest considerable time and effort in playing it. If we design our games in such a way that they are productive of language learning they become an excellent, even essential, part of a program of children’s learning activities.
Edge & Wharton claim that authentic material allows developing learner autonomy. It can be thought of as primarily a matter of taking responsibility for one’s own learning (1998). It is a goal, but more importantly it is an ongoing process requiring both individual and collective effort in the classroom context. One of the most important aspects of the process is the acquisition both of study skills and certain attitudes towards study.

Study skills can be thought of as instrumental techniques, such as reading or vocabulary-learning strategies, which are relatively easy to concretize. Helpful attitudes towards study, like self-confidence and independence of mind, are more nebulous. So while it is clear that materials could be designed to help foster study skills, it is less obvious that they could foster helpful attitudes.

Our approach to teacher development is to make choices available and to indicate how they might be used. If we return specifically to the “choices” section of the materials we have looked at, we can see that, for those teachers who wish to develop their teaching in this direction, any or all of the decisions concerned can be handed over in a structured way to the students themselves. In other words, the “choices” become available in the following ways: If there is sufficient time in the course, students have relevant supplementary material available and can choose which is most appropriate for them. If there is unexpectedly, some time left at the end of a lesson, students individually or in groups can decide which of the “Choices” it would be appropriate for them to follow.

If one or more pairs or groups in a class finish a task before the others, they can look for relevant follow-up material according to their needs. The “Choices” are available for working outside class. The “Choices” sections can be left towards the end of a course and studied as coherent mini-syllabuses for review work in the various areas.
Initially under guidance, but increasingly independently, students can be offered the opportunity to become more aware themselves of the purpose of what they are doing in class, of how they individually seem to learn best, and of how they can support their own learning outside the class and away from the course book.

For those wishing to pursue issues of learner autonomy and development, the exchanges between Chamot & Rubin (1994) (as cited by Rees-Miller, 1993, p. 683) highlight differing positions in this area, as well as giving a useful contemporary bibliography. Cotterall (1995) provides an interesting case-study of the integration of such ideas into a teaching programme. For our own purposes, at this point, it is time to look at examples of the “Choices” materials themselves.

Similar outcomes derived from another study conducted by Moore, Morales & Carel state that foreign language teachers use available technological facilities like videodiscs, interactive video, CDROMs, and computer networks for teaching culture in Urban, Rural, Suburban and Inner city schools from the state of Texas (1998). It is also supported by Moore, Morales & Carel (1998) (as cited by Bacon, 1995, p. 198) in relation to technology is another meaningful and authentic material that teacher can use in foreign language classrooms to facilitate the teaching of a foreign language. That means, the education world has been greatly influenced by rapidly changing technology and the increasing availability of information. Educators are trying to help students keep up with technology, and they are using this technology as culturally relevant material in the classroom. The use of technology allows teachers and students to vary cultural topics, display more information, and enhance student learning. By using different technologies in the classroom, teachers can save time and energy allowing them to grab the students' attention.

Moore, Morales & Carel (1998) (draw from the theory by Thrush & Thrush, 1984, p. 24) to suggest that teachers need to have two responsibilities with
technology: The first responsibility is about thinking of learning in students. That means that teachers need to think about the goals that they want to achieve with their students in the foreign classroom and the aid that technology can bring to modern culture; and the second responsibility is that teacher should know how to use technological tool before exposing students to their use. They also report Warschauer’s assumption that technology (CD rooms, internet, and E-mails) approach students to real time communication activities and roles with other people from their culture or foreign culture (1996). Through technology, students can interact with native speakers to increase learning, knowledge of the world and provide for more authentic interaction in simulated cultural contexts.

Moore, Morales & Carel (1998) (refer to the work by Brown, Lewis, & Harceload, 1983) to support the idea that technology offers several ways to learn a language, e.g. pictures, songs, videos, multimedia tools. That means, teachers and students not only should be exposed to textbooks and reading materials in a classroom but also they can use technology to control the use of material and decide how and what they wish to learn.

Moore, Morales & Carel present their findings under five main subsections:

1. Level of education: Taking into account the level of education of teachers, some students were exposed to technology access more than others. Therefore, some students could interact with other people from other culture more than others.

2. Years of experience: Years of experience concluded that experienced teachers used technology in their classes. However they did not use modern technologies and they were not success in some technological tools such as CD – ROMS. While least experienced teachers made the most use using technology in the classroom and exposed to students to real context due to they were more familiar with the newer multimedia tools.
3. Languages taught: Some of the teachers who spoke Spanish, French and German had more access to technology than teachers who spoke other languages. This characteristic was found because most of technological tools were designed for these three languages.

4. School setting: Students from rural settings showed lower scores in learning and the use of cultural technologies according to less access to these tools. That is, that these students had fewer opportunities to be exposed to other culturally relevant material (technology) than students from urban and suburban settings.

5. Type of school: Teachers at the middle or high school level had greater use of videodiscs than elementary school teachers. In other words elementary teachers did not have enough access to technology.

These findings allow us to reflect on the fact technology is an important tool to be used in a classroom with English foreign language students. In our modern world, specially in Colombian education, teachers in classrooms need to implement technology as culturally relevant material. The use of technology in the classroom allows engaging students in the class discussions, cultural topics, and interaction activities. Teachers can facilitate this engagement with the technologies they are familiar with. The use of technology in schools has a great effect not only on students, but also on teachers. Today, we think of technology as computers, but it is much more than that. In fact, most students today should use technology as an educational tool throughout their school day. Students and teacher can use technology like main material for every subject matter a student has; especially in the learning of a second language.

Technology in learning is useful because it helps children in their learning process. All children learn differently, and technology there helps the children who have no other place to go. That is that technology is the learning support to those students who have not access to education in schools. Some children are just unable to learn from a teacher, that is when technology plays a big role in their
learning. Some children have to show themselves how to do things and technology will allow that. Technology has many different effects on education, one of them being enhancing the students learning. Technology may enhance the students learning and may assist most students in achieving their academic standards. When technology and appropriate teaching methods are combined, technology may increase the academic achievement.

Technology is also significant in children learning due to the rapid changes in society. The teaching and learning process can increase ways of teaching and evaluation more in keeping with the multifaceted nature of culture. Through culturally relevant material such as technology, schools can give opportunities to build a better instructional material to teach language and culture and making more effective use of those materials than was previously possible. Moreover, technological resources can facilitate easy understanding of cultural context from students and relevant information can be brought to students.

Use of Authentic Material in an English Foreign Language Classroom

When the teacher plans a lesson, there are many reasons for using cultural material resources. Some of the main ones are books, pictures, posters, cards designed for teachers to be used at different levels, use simpler language to give essential information about culture. Moreover, this kind of material can help teachers to find the most suitable ways of defining new vocabulary and giving examples of its use.

One of the ways to give new vocabulary to students is through books. Williams (2005) claims that the use of authentic material like books help to the teacher to develop his own understanding of language. There are a number of books for teachers which aim to increase our language awareness (our understanding of how language works) and our awareness of how to teach language. They often include tasks that we can do by ourselves or with a colleague and detailed explanations and comments as well as answers.
Following this, reference materials such as books can help us anticipate particular language problems that our learners might have. Many difficulties with vocabulary or grammar are the result of interference from L1. Books or articles about specific differences between the learner’s L1 and English can help to explain these problems. Moreover, we want to give our learners something different from their coursebook; so, we have looked for new approaches to teaching lessons and new classroom activities like supplementary materials focusing on particular skills. There are also many teachers’ resources with ideas and materials for all kinds of lessons. Some of these provide a wide range of activities for extra communicative practice, for example, while others focus on a particular type of classroom activity, such as dictation or storytelling. Most of these resources have very clear indexes, giving information about timing, preparation, level, and so on.

Clearly, Maley claims what actually happens in classrooms using published materials, is that there is a complex trade-off between the three major elements in the equation: the materials, the teacher and the learners (1996). This equation is focused when the materials have been designed for a relatively specific learning group; even, owing to individual differences among the learners and teacher’s factors. Very informal can occur a degree of language proficiency and confidence, personal learning experiences and teaching style among learners and teachers in the classroom. Culturally relevant material used in a classroom, can be conceived of as constituting a constraint upon the individual teacher’s sense of what may be appropriate at a given pedagogical moment. The materials may also be far from the learners’ capacity or sense of relevance at a given point.

What typically happens in these circumstances is that the teacher has to bridge the gap between the materials and his/her sense of the learners’ needs at that particular moment. So, the more widely used the materials, and consequently the more different and varied the learner need from the prescribed, pre-empted materials, the harder the teacher has to work to adapt the one to the other. (Maley, op.cit.)
The solution which is sometimes applied is to design materials with relatively specific groups in mind, with respect to cultural and cognitive content, local learning conditions, etc. But this still fails to address the central problem. What is needed is, not just a decentralization of materials production, but a fundamental change in the design of materials' (Prabhu, op. cit), in the direction of providing greater flexibility in decisions about content, order, pace and procedures.

Use and Practice of Culturally Relevant Material in Colombia

Materials are an essential component in teaching English in Colombian classes. As a starting point, we consider that materials are anything used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language. English classes in Colombia include materials such as, videos, CD-Roms, DVDs, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks, photocopied exercises, pictures, flash cards, posters, all kinds of realia, lectures and talks by guest speakers, Internet sources, and so on. Brinton (1991) defines materials, “the media” as she calls them, into non-technical and technical media (p. 460). In the first category she proposes the following items: “whiteboard, magnet boards, flashcards, index cards, wall charts, posters, maps, scrolls, board games, mounted pictures, photos, cartoons, line drawings, objects/ realia, pamphlets/brochures/leaflets/flyers, equipment operation manuals, puppets, newspapers/ magazines.” She says that these items have many advantages in places where technical resources are scarce. They are also cheap and user-friendly. The technical media category is composed of the following: “audiotapes/audio-recorders/players, records/record players, CD’s/CD players, radio/television, telephones/teletrainers, films/film projectors, computer software/hardware, overhead transparencies/overhead projectors, language lab/multimedia lab, opaque projectors, slides, filmstrips/slide and filmstrip projectors.”

McDonough and Shaw also agree that the use of culturally relevant material in Colombia is necessary to improve learning and develop competences in a
Culturally Relevant Material

Foreign Language (1993). They support that “books and paper, audio-visual material (hardware and software for video), laboratories, computers, the design and choice of teaching materials will be particularly affected by the availability of resources as well as the capacity to teach effectively across a range of language skills. We assume that the use of those materials are available in all the teacher preparation programs in Colombia; and they are cited by English Foreign Language teachers as the basic devices to teach an effective English lesson.

Teachers and students recognize the importance of using materials, since the teaching process is made easier and materials may be used to explain, exemplify or practice the content presented to students. Hinkel (2006) draws that culturally relevant materials can represent a source of motivation for students when these materials change the dynamics of the class routines through the possibility of manipulating objects, accessing audiovisual material or promoting interaction with others (p. 125). Materials, if chosen adequately, can promote the integration of language skills by addressing language and content in a holistic way. In terms of learning styles and intelligences Gardner signs that materials can also help the teacher address the individual differences of students (1993).

According to Kitao & Kitao (1997) materials in Colombia are considered a key element in language teaching and may have the same status in language instruction as students, teachers, teaching methods and evaluation (p. 3). These five elements are interrelated. Thus any change introduced to any of these elements will affect the others. Defining a closer relationship between materials and students’ motivation, Peacock (1998) found that materials considered “enjoyable” and “useful” increased the on-task behavior in English classes. Consequently, students became more involved in the learning tasks (p.2).

Some English Language Teachers in Colombia use methodologies which have based their implementation on the use of certain kinds of materials. Without access to those resources, teachers may have serious difficulties with carrying out
their teaching under the principles of the given methodology. Nunan in his theory about Task-Based Language Teaching (1993) and Krashen & Terell in their approach about Natural Approach (1983) state that the use of authentic texts, oral and written are a requirement to the learning of a foreign language. Although methods may require a specific set of materials that may be indispensable for their effectiveness, textbooks became an alternative because they were apparently eclectic alternatives to save time and money. Pictures and graphic materials presented in textbooks may be more efficient than teachers’ descriptions, and can represent all kinds of objects that may be hard to take to the classroom.

More than ten years ago, the teaching of English as a foreign language started to be introduced in the curriculum of public elementary schools in Colombia resulting from the Ley General de Educación, 1994. To date, the Colombian government has undertaken numerous initiatives to support these teachers such as designing and promoting curricular guidelines for foreign language instruction at the secondary school level, providing teacher education programs and professional development courses focused on early foreign language instruction, and giving computer-based resources to schools, among others. Despite these governmental initiatives directed towards helping primary schools and teachers, local research studies have shown that primary school English teachers and their learners continue to face difficulties with this educational endeavor.

Cárdenas reports a lack of planning, culturally relevant material and standards in the implementation of English Foreign Language programs at the regional and national level (2001). In a study to determine the needs of English Foreign Language teachers in Colombia, González, Montoya & Sierra (2001) cite teachers’ needs related to inadequate levels of proficiency in English and knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical strategies (p.15). These issues were also highlighted in a study conducted by Cadavid, McNulty & Quinchia (2004) when they explored the methodological strategies used by public elementary school teachers in Colombia (p. 43). Teachers had limited or unrelated educational
preparation, insufficient training and target language preparation. A major finding of this study was the need for the teachers’ target language development and pedagogical enhancement related to theme based instruction. Berry (1990) points out those effective in-service programs for teachers can integrate language improvement with a methodological component (p. 99).

Vélez-White, the Colombian Minister of Education, presents findings of a diagnostic study to determine the level of communicative competence of English school teachers in six regions of Colombia (2005). Results indicate that a high percentage of teachers are at a basic level of proficiency in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This led Vélez-White to conclude that both primary and secondary school teachers are in need of programs to improve their proficiency in English, their methodology and the implementation of culturally relevant material into the classroom. The fact that teachers may be required to teach a foreign language before they have acquired the language skills to do so has also been recognized by Murphey (2003) in the Asian context (p. 1). This author believes that “we need to develop methods and materials to acknowledge the situation of these teachers and to support and encourage them to grow more professionally through their own learning and teaching of English”.

Taking into consideration the reality of EFL teachers in our context, our curriculum development effort focused on the implementation of a holistic professional development program with a group of public elementary English teachers in Colombia. This initiative explored the possibility of integrating strategies directed towards improving the teachers’ target language and reflective practice based on principles of theme-based instruction as part of an action research study.

Nunan’s hypothesis about the curriculum is that curriculum development would be contextualized, progressive, and process-oriented in nature while focusing on learning and pedagogical activities to support the integration of the
target language component with the pedagogical (1994). The Nunan’s hypothesis is also supported by Cambourne, Kiggings & Ferry (2002) in relation to construction of knowledge. They illustrate delivery program from a “campus-based-lecture-tutorial mode to problem-based-learning-within-school-site” mode of program delivery (p. 39). This program model would help university researchers to respond to the needs of the elementary school teachers and adopt the role of co-learners who facilitate and participate in the shared learning and construction of knowledge for a community.

Similar argues derived from another research conducted by Ajayi (2008) about integrating sociocultural perspectives into pedagogical practices, illustrate that the social-cultural background of students and the reactions of teachers’ understanding to observe English as a second language, is restricted and limited when students and teachers translate sociocultural perspectives into practice (p. 645). She also has supported her research taking into account the sociocultural perspectives from Lantolf & Thorne (2006). They argue that second Language teachers need to be aware of the ideas, skills, opinions, thoughts, cultural backgrounds, perceptions and behaviors that students bring to the multicultural class environment.

This research is based on a sociocultural approach and suggests a need of more studies that bring ideas on the dynamics of teaching and learning of a language which is given in a social context and the situations in which these factors are involved. Through interaction with social and institutional structures, teachers can use their pedagogical strategies to understand and know the culture, aspects and features of their students.

Ajayi (2008) (referenced Vygotsky, 1978) to argue that human cognitive development and functioning are mediated by the social and cultural contexts of everyday activities. It means that the activities done by students in their lives, allow them to develop behaviors and cultural aspects that can communicate and
show in their context. Those factors are important to develop intelligence and acquire knowledge. In that sense students can create tools to generate artifacts that change the conditions of their lives.

Ajayi (2008) (cites the work by Thorne, 2001, p. 225) about second language learners theories which suitably sums up that language is socially constructed and mediated through language users’ social and cultural identities. Students can solve problems through social interactions which none of them can solve individually. Interacting together with the physical world is part of the learning. So, interaction with other human beings is considered crucial for learning. For example, in the classroom, a learning event involves an interaction between at least two individuals in a shared environment. That is that any activity proposed to develop into the classroom, can suggest the participation of students through pairs, teacher-students and students-students.

Moreover, language, as well as literacy learning, is ingrained in social practices: knowing about a social practice always involves recognizing various distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, knowing and using various objects and technologies that constitute the social practice. Gee (2003), refers to social learning like something that is learned being exposed to the culture and interaction with people allowing activation in learning in a world full of other human beings. Social learning can focus on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that students learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling from people and factors which are around students.
Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Type of Study

This research took into account the participation of fifth grade students Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede La Hermosa from Santa Rosa de Cabal. It pretended to evaluate how culturally relevant material content permitted students to improve communication into the classroom. This research was focused on a qualitative interpretative-descriptive case study.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) says: “Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants” (p. 17). Qualitative research was used to help us understand how people felt and why they felt as they did. It was concerned with collecting in-depth information asking questions such as why did you say that? Through qualitative research, we could discover patterns which emerged after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of our research. It indicated that we could study things in their natural settings, attempting interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people brought to them.
With this research, we wanted to get insights concerning attitudes, beliefs, motivations and behaviours of individuals. According to Rothery (1997) some remarkable characteristics of the Qualitative approach; taking into account it, we used field notes, surveys, evaluation of personal experiences and interaction with a group of students (p. 165). This research was done in a natural environment where the participants (students of fifth graders) behaved as they do it in their daily life.

Our research was based on interpretative and descriptive research. Interpretative research refers to methods of research that are aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the information system and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context (Walsham, 1995). It refers to the understanding processes of individuals to detect and classify typical interactional structures of teaching and learning. In other words, it is comprehensively perceive and understand the actions of the observed individuals. Moreover, our interpretations could be adequately understood because they were seen in a natural context (fifth graders students). It context of inquiry was not contrived; it was natural.

As we mentioned before, our research was based on interpretation that we as observers could see from students; it referred to analyze and explore which were the meanings that students gave to culturally relevant material to apply it through communication with their classmates. It also referred to interpret how students expressed feelings and thoughts through interaction, how they communicated with others and what impact produced culturally relevant material in students.

Following this, Descriptive Research was concerned about explanation that we observed in a classroom. Mertler (2005) argues; “the aim of descriptive research is to provide a reasonable description of things, people or events in details. It is a general term to describe a research project that does not manipulate
variables and does not try to establish causal relationships between events” (p. 138). It means that description is usually to answer the question what, including only the relevant attributes of the object. For this reason, we could describe and made interpretations about the current status of individuals, settings and events. We could examine the phenomenon as it existed; there was not attempt to artificially manipulate any conditions or situations.

This research was also a Case Study. It referred to observe the characteristics of an individual unit, to say, a child, a classroom, a school or a community. Kazdin (1982) claims: “Case study provides an experimental technique for evaluating interventions for the individual subject. Interventions can be directed towards the particular subject or group and replicated over time across behaviors, situations, or people” (p. 266). It refers that we as observers could be based on our own perceptions about students’ behavior. Our observation was simple and to the point: We observed a group during its actual activities; in that way, we could understand the behaviors and actions showed by students in relation to culturally relevant material. This research allowed us to study a group for their own sake; it could provide us a context for understanding group as it is formed and developed in its natural setting. We as observers had become familiar with the group by studying its behavior in face to culture and developing different skills. In our process to carry out our research we observed all the individuals in the classroom, aspects like where they sat in relation to one another, who talked to and after whom, how they used culturally relevant material with relation to their culture and who concentrated in communicative activities, we did not give verbal messages and always we took notes.

Researcher Roles

Through our research, we as researchers had two roles: Participant as observers. The researcher’s observer activities, which are known to the group, are subordinated to the researcher’s role as a participant (Merriam, 1998). We, as
researchers, were involved in the setting’s central activities, assuming responsibilities that advanced the group. As for participants, we could keep detailed records of what occurred, including those things characteristically took for granted and periodically detaches self from the situation to review records from the neutral position of a social scientist. Likewise, observer as participant: we presented our activities to the group, so students could participate in the class. It facilitated us to gather information, had access to students and a wide range of data. It also allowed us to observe and interact closely enough with the students to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership.

CONTEX OF STUDY

Setting

The place where we did our research was the Agropecuario Veracruz Institute sede la Hermosa in Santa Rosa de Cabal with fifth grade students (5-3); this institution is located via Pereira km1 Neighborhood La Hermosa (See appendix 1). Its aim is to be an educational institution that offers a technique and technology formation in Administración de Empresas Agropecuarias, Agroturisticas and Agroindustriales; to give significant answers “AL SER Y AL HACER” of the person in a Globalized Society. Moreover, Veracruz is a knowledge Institute and developing integral and professional laboral specific competences of agroturismo, agropecuarias and agroindustria with a Religious, Solidarity and Management orientation.

This institutional Educative Project from this school establishes the aims that follow Veracruz School and the way to contribute to the improvement of the education quality. So, this institution looks for training participative, solidarity, innovative and competent citizens who autonomously and creatively learn in a coexistence atmosphere and mutual respect. Moreover, they teach young learners
the organization and leadership to have a better life in the society; allowing students to pursue high education or start their working life.

The institution and students built learning alternatives that carried to the personal and social self-determination to develop a critical and reflective awareness about real life, as essential condition for their participation in the society and to improve life conditions. Equally, science was seen as a knowledge system, as an essential activity into the culture and the way the human being brings near the world in which he/she belongs to.

In relation to English subject, this school had been involved with the Bilingual National Program proposed by Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2006) which looked for competence and competitive in communication into a society (p.13). In this way, Veracruz school permits students to belong to a new globalized world, to communicate with other cultures and to travel to other countries, to face with technological advances, to develop elements of conversation, reading, listening and writing skills in a foreign language and comprehension and capacity of expression in a foreign language.

Veracruz School helped their learners to go beyond stereotypes and raise cultural awareness by providing them with as much valid and accurate information about their own and foreign cultures as possible.

Participants

The participants of this research were students of fifth grade from the Instituto Agropecuario Veracruz sede La Hermosa from Santa Rosa de Cabal. In the use of visual material and the application of it, students belonged to an A1 level of Common European Framework due to they communicated and expressed topics about their interests, they made descriptions based on illustrations, they described places and people and so on. In this group there were 39 students; 20 girls and 19 boys. All of them were from 10-12 years old. This was a heterogeneous group in
which there were students with different developed competences in reading and writing skills (See appendix 2).

Those students lived in a typical neighbor from Santa Rosa de Cabal town. They belonged to medium-law status. Some of the students had good academic performance and other students presented some difficulties in their English learning process. Students from this group were discipline people and cooperated among them in group works.
INSTRUMENTS

The instruments that we used for our research to collect data were; Field notes, interviews and journals.

Field Notes

Emerson (1995) defines field notes in ethnography as a term referring generally to descriptive writing in anthropology, and also a subfield of sociology as accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner (p.127). We used this technique to take notes as researchers about the behavior of students in the classroom, use of culturally relevant material, use of interactions, how culturally relevant material increased relations among students, use of visual aids. Moreover, we gathered information about classroom situations.

In this technique, we considered necessary to add “observer comments” (see appendix 3). They consisted on take our own comments, ideas or thoughts about why things were happening as they were; in order to support the taken notes. It was applied to similar students (students of fifth grade).

Interviews

Hammersley (1995) declares: “Qualitative interviewing is generally distinguished from questionnaire-based interviewing, even if the form of communication, such as face-to face conversation, may be the same. Some
interview styles like unstructured interview produce highly structured data on people's opinions on a specific matter, whereas other interviews facilitate a more evocative communication of people's life experiences, activities, emotions and identities" (p. 124). That means, that qualitative interviews are designed to give space to expand their answers and accounts of their experiences and feelings. Moreover, these qualitative interviews are often used in an exploratory manner which seeks to investigate the subjective interpretations of social phenomena. Through Interviews, we could ask students to comment on real events rather than giving generalities. This could reveal more about their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors and we, as researchers, were able to obtain more detailed information from each subject (see appendix 4).

Journals

Matusevich (1996) claims that journals have many of the attributes of diaries, the difference is that they have been written to be read as public documents. Journal, therefore, have to be as it was edited in the process of composition, like any other document that one knows will be read by others (p.1). In other words, we began writing an account of this school year that included our thoughts and feelings about what was happening in class (See appendix 5).

As for the process for data collection; we carried out this research through different visits: Each week during 6 months. The process to collect data was through observations and we applied the instruments mentioned before.
Culturally Relevant Material

DATA ANALYSIS

Collecting data is collecting information that relates to your inquiry, information that you believe will respond to your research question. The data are not the answer to the research question; they are the raw material out of which responses to your question will probably emerge. The process of drawing responses out of the data, or finding them in the data, is called data analysis (Freeman, 1998).

Following this, our data collection included a documentary analysis of versions of the application of activities related to “Cultural Materials and Materials Design”. It also included the course evaluation using six in-depth interviews, six field notes and six journals with fifth graders students during six months, one session per week. We analyzed data taking into account the instruments above mentioned.

Each session was transcribed using standard orthography. Then, we read the data collected in each session looking for common patterns and identifying meaningful words. Then, the words were labeled, grouped and codified (See appendix 6) according to similar answers given by the students in the interviews (3 students were interviewed per session and they were chosen at random) and the answers given by the researchers as participant and observer. The codes were done and written based on visits at the school, the instruments that we used and applied in the sessions, the number of the student which was interviewed, the
number of the answer that the student answered (there were 10 questions) and the line of the answer in relation to the transcription. After, we named the similar answers and information with a relevant title according to the topic that we as researchers were facilitating.

Example of a code: IV2S1A10L43  -  I: interview (instrument) – V2: visit 2 (number of session) – S1: student 1 (number of the student which was interviewed) – A10: answer 10 (number of the answer given by the student) – L43: line 43 (line of the answer that we used in the transcriptions of the data).

Our epistemological assumptions were interpretive (Bassey, 1999), as we based our analysis of the application on materials used in our sessions through a semiotic analysis of the data collected. We constantly compared the words or sentences obtained in the instruments used to understand their relationship. We based the analysis on a grounded approach (Freeman, 1998) as we constructed the selection of the words or sentences taking into account what the participants reported.
FINDINGS

This section describes general findings representing patterns across all cases. In order to maintain the results of the use of culturally relevant materials in an English Foreign Language context, we present the following conclusions:

The Importance of Culturally Relevant Material to Give Instructions in English Avoiding L1.

One of the most effective ways to communicate ideas and facilitate learning of a second language is the use of CRM from the context in which students are involved. For that reason, we use this kind of material to give instructions to students avoiding L1 in the classroom. The material which was used by the teacher in the class was supported with clear instructions in English to facilitate students a better comprehension of the topic. First, the teacher elicited information from students about professions asking questions like “What is a lawyer? / What is a secretary?” Then, he explained vocabulary of the topic and showed them some pictures about different professions (singer, doctor, president) and grammatical structures (he is a doctor, she is a secretary). To avoid L1 in the teacher’s explanations, he used posters, drawings and pictures to ask questions, clarify doubts and reinforce explanations. In the following example, taken from the interview visit 1, one student answered about the material that the teacher showed him in the class to explain the professions that there are in his context:

Researcher: ¿El profesor como presentó el material cultural en la clase? (si fue por medio de la escritura, de la parte visual, o de lo auditivo)
Student 1: Ehhhh [sic] fue por la parte visual porque él colocó unas fotos en la en el tablero
Y entonces uno podría ver yyy [sic] tambiéeen [sic] auditivo porque él nos hablaba en inglés y nosotros escuchábamos y escrito porque el nos pasaba una fotografía y nosotros teníamos que escribir sobre la vida de ellos.

In this answer the student supported that the facilitator used visual material such as posters and pictures in the class to explain the topic about professions. Moreover, the student also reported that those materials were the channel to explain the topic giving information only in English because the teacher reinforced the explanation of the topic through photographs of professions from different famous people from Colombia.

In order to help our students, the teacher gave English instructions through the presentation of pictures, posters and photographs to develop skills in the classroom. The teacher used posters about famous people from Colombia and described them in English giving examples of their professions, clothes, physical appearance and main characteristic of their personalities. Also, the teacher used short descriptions of some characters from students’ context. In the following excerpt taken from visit one, in our field notes line 38, teacher gave instructions in English to students showing and telling them a short description about Juan Pablo Montoya.

He is Juan Pablo Montoya. He is an excellent driver. He is 32 years old. He loves cars. He is handsome, tall and intelligent. He is married and he has 2 daughters. His uniform is White and red, and his car is big and fast. He is from Bogotá.

In this example the teacher used a famous person from their country to give an example to students. The teacher preferred to use a known person by students and a character who was recognized by them in their culture. Moreover, the teacher used short sentences to describe Juan Pablo using easy and understandable grammatical structures. All the description focused on the use of
pronoun “he” to refer to a man; in the line 1, the teacher wrote adjectives to describe that person and he gave personal characteristics from the character. Furthermore, the teacher used the structure “he is 32 years old” to emphasize the use of verb to be to express the age in English. Finally, the teacher reviewed vocabulary such as members of the family, means of transportation, professions, colors and cities from Colombia.

The teacher asked the students to work in pairs to choose a Colombian celebrity and to describe him or her using short grammatically accurate sentences in L2 based on the example given by the teacher. The teacher asked the students to use the image on the poster below to produce a written English description of Veronica Orozco, a Colombian celebrity. In our observations, we noticed that Camila and Valeria demonstrated their understanding of instructions in English by writing a short description of this Colombian celebrity. The text below illustrates the written description that Valeria and Camila produced.

She is Veronica Orozco. She is an actress and singer. She is beautiful and thin. She is from Bogota. Her boyfriend is from Mexico. He is strong and beautiful.

In their example, Camila and Valeria (two students from the school) reached the teacher’s expectations as to the written description of the character. Notice the correct use of the verb to be, the use of the article a/an, the adjectives, and the possessive. Moreover, the students did not need the teacher to prompt them to write about this celebrity. They spontaneously offered the information using their previous knowledge of this character, as well as their knowledge of English to express their ideas in writing. Moreover, students chose that character due to
similarities in relation to style, clothes, gestures, and they want to look like her. Students wrote the paragraph using the model given by the teacher.

On the board, there were several posters of famous people from Colombia. Teacher explored those posters asking yes/no questions in order to know the professions of the people who were on the posters. The teacher pointed each photograph and asked students: Is a man or a woman? In this part, students recognized and identified the gender of the people saying: “he is a man, she is a woman”. Moreover, teacher wrote in front of two posters sentences like “he is a police, she is an actress”. To know if students recognized the professions and identities from famous people, the teacher showed students posters of a singer and a model and he asked students: Is he a singer?, is she a nurse?. Students answered “yes, he is a singer / No, she is a model. In that sense, students answered correctly in English about people from Colombia.

Students demonstrated a good domain of vocabulary of profession and a good use of the language. Moreover, the students described the posters (writing) of the famous people from Colombia naming and recognizing them with their appropriated profession. Finally, the teacher wanted to check the spelling of short sentences asking students to write on the board short descriptions of the people who were on the posters. The following examples evidenced in the field notes (visit 1) showed the comprehension by some students about matching professions with their correct pictures:

He is Alvaro Uribe, he is a president / she is Orozco, she is a singer / He is el Pibe, he is a soccer player / he is Calero, he is an actor.

Instructional Material Fosters Student Engagement and Enthusiasm

Our data analysis reveals that there are several kinds of meaningful material that teachers can implement in an English Foreign Language classroom to motivate students. We used these materials to increase visual stimulus and to encourage
the students’ English language production. During classroom observations we focused on pictures, posters, games and stories to catch the attention, facilitate learning and motivate students in our own context. Students showed a high level of motivation through the use of these meaningful materials when they developed assigned tasks by the teacher. Example, through field notes (visit 2), one observer wrote that the teacher asked students to draw two objects about Halloween with their respective names, such as: pumpkin, ghost, witch, cobweb, Halloween costume and so on.

One instance in which we noticed heightened students’ motivation was when the teacher conducted a class about Halloween costume. The teacher showed pictures which were the dominant channel of input. That is, students did their first perceptions of the topic through visual material and they made connections of the topic with their background and culture through posters, pictures and other visual material used in the classes. The following data collected from the interview (visit 2), showed us that students identified the material used by the teacher (costumes, decorative objects) and related them in their own style to celebrate at homes:

Researcher: ¿El material utilizado por el profesor se relaciona con tu cultura?

Student 2: Si…porque nosotros aprendimos el nombre de algunas cosas de Halloween en inglés como disfraces, adornos y pedir bobadas (dulces).

Researcher: ¿El tema visto en clase corresponde a su cultura?

Student 2: Si porque nosotros acostumbramos en la cultura Santa Rosana a disfrazarnos todos los años.

The teacher also told students a story using code switching for students to understand real situations from their town. The following extract taken from the journal (visit 2) referred to a typical story from Santa Rosa de Cabal about Halloween that the teacher told to his students:
"Many years ago, a beautiful little girl drowned at San Eugenio River when she was playing with a ball. Some years later, she appeared to the rest of the people wearing a white dress and crying blood tears…"

The previous legend was a real story from Santa Rosa de Cabal. The teacher told the story to the students based on evidences written by researchers from the town. Moreover, students could listen to descriptions of the text supported by images from the girl, the river, the blood tears, etc. Through this story, the students contextualized the topic and they were motivated observing the pictures. According to our observations, we noticed that some students did not understand the sequence of the text; however, they guided the interpretation of it through the images that the book had.

The use of meaningful material allowed students to be motivated, they expressed their feelings, examining their beliefs and understood the topics making an approach to their context. The following exercises reported in the field notes (visit 2) showed how the motivation and involving of the students in the class was and what was the importance of the meaningful material to them.
Moreover, those activities done by the same students engaged them in their own sake and not in an extrinsic motivation. This was described in the following interview (visit 2) that we did to one student to know her interests about Halloween’s tradition in her life:

Researcher: ¿Qué fue lo que mas te gusto del material utilizado en clase?

Student 3: Dibujar, pintar, recortar el rompecabezas yyy [sic] dibujar mi objeto favorito de Halloween.

Furthermore, with the previous interview, we also noticed that students acted in an effective way showing interest and enthusiasm in the exercises. They did not do the activities for money, grades or presents. Moreover, students felt motivated in the classroom when they could express and draw their own ideas and drawings freely and openly. They drew some objects which they identified in their houses or neighbors (see previous page). Students created short oral sentences about their interests in Halloween; they reviewed colors painting their own pumpkin and jigsaw according to the Halloween colors. Likewise, when students did the jigsaw, they identified vocabulary with relation to Halloween. We observed that they were enthusiastic in the moment they had to build this activity because they were concentrated on the organization of this jigsaw

Researcher: La cabeza va aqui, el brazo encaja en este lado, mire la capa del esqueleto.

Students did halloween’s drawings taking as a model the figures that the teacher put on the board. The teacher decorated the walls, ceiling and doors of the classroom contextualizing the topic in our culture. Students mentioned some costumes that they usually wear in their town; e.g. clown, campesino, gitana, police, fireman, nurse and others. When students mentioned those customs, they expressed that they like to wear clothes to be similar to people who were around them. In the journal (visit 2) the teacher wrote a sentence said by one student
making relation to wear similar clothes to people who were around her: “Teacher I like my nurse costume because my aunt works in the hospital”. This student was motivated because she could draw and show her creativity in the execution and design of her Halloween costume drawings, using “fine motor skills” drawing, painting and cutting the activities propose by the teacher.

The Importance of the Design of Culturally Relevant Material to Implement in a Foreign Classroom.

The analysis of classrooms observations suggests that the teacher designs culturally relevant material to satisfy the needs and learning styles of students. For that reason, we created several activities involving students through all the sessions. In the design of those materials, we used pictures, posters, drawings, table games, role plays and others to create a better visual stimulus for students.

It is important to highlight that the material designed for the sessions was a model for the students to design their own material. Some of them reported that they felt motivated with those tools because all the material was created according to students’ context, facilitating students to be in contact with their culture. In the following answers taken from two students in the interview visit 3 lines 23 - 24 (student 1) and lines 55 – 56 (student 2); students argued the importance of the culturally relevant material which was applied during the class.

Researcher: ¿El tema visto en clase corresponde a su cutura?

Student 1: Si, siii [sic] porque, porque, porque si porque, porque la comida, la comida es de Acá de Santa Rosa de acá de todo Colombia; como el sancocho, fríjoles, lentejas, Chicharrón.

Student 2: Si porque el tema que vimos hoyy [sic] de la comida, nosotros lo [sic] comemos en nuestro país.

In both answers students agree about the importance of culturally relevant material showed in the class, due to the fact that they could recognize and relate
the food from the picture with their typical food from their country. For example, on line 23 student 1 identified and recognized food that he usually ate at home. He noted that that typical food was his favorite food from his home. On the other hand, student 2 introduced his answer by recognizing the topic with different examples of food from different places from Colombia. With that interview students agreed that they were familiar with the topic. It allowed researchers to understand that students knew the topic and identified it. We supported this information based on the notes that we wrote in the journal (visit 3) in relation that students understood the lesson because they connected their culture with the topic shown in class (food).

The culturally relevant material, designed for the sessions, allowed those learners to be motivated to learn effectively. In the following model illustrated by one of the researchers in field notes (visit 5), we showed that students fostered enthusiasm and motivation when they observed and identified pictures and objects about means of transportation that they usually used in their town.

Researcher: some examples of means of transportation that the teacher showed through flash cards and we usually used in Santa Rosa de Cabal, were identified by students because they pronounced aloud in English the name of some transportations. Example: bus, chiva, taxi, car, bike, carretilla, horse and motorcycle.

Other example that gave evidence about the importance to design visual material to encourage students to participate in the classroom, was in our journal (visit 5) which refers to means of transportation. All of students participated actively during the activity; it revealed that students were intrinsically motivated because they were exposed to authentic and culturally relevant material from their town; such as drawings, objects and flash cards of cars, chivas, horses, mega buses, bikes, carretillas, jeeps and so on. Finally, in the same journal written by the researcher, we noticed that when students watched those pictures they
recognized the means of transportation like proper transportations from their context and they expressed sentences such as:

Students: “Teacher yo monté en chiva”, “teacher the mega bus is green”, “campesinos Use jeeps”, “In my house there is a bike”.

The Role of the Teacher as a Model and the Use of Examples into the Classroom.

Our data analysis discloses that the teacher can use several kinds of strategies to communicate with students taking into account new applications of information and communications; since culturally relevant material, such as; magazines, cards, games, pictures, newspapers, jigsaws, graphic organizer, puzzles, posters and others; have created and allowed many new communication possibilities for school.

Through those tools to share learning with students, we played an important role with them. We exposed students to activities designed from their context and they could exchange experiences with their classmates using visual material, body language, gestures, writing descriptions and so on. That means, the teacher facilitated interaction among students because they often worked collaboratively in groups or teams. The teacher divided the whole class into small groups asking them to describe their school and their town. The following data collected from classroom observations, let us see the way that teacher used students’ context to
teach “there is”. In that way, students participated orally expressing short
descriptions about different places that their school had:

Students’ reactions: In the school there is a teacher’s room, in my school there is a
playground, In la Hermosa school there is a cafeteria.

Our data analysis also revealed that students could draw and describe their
own school and other places out the school. It was due to the fact that teacher
made the students watch famous places from Santa Rosa de Cabal and their
importance in our culture. In the following example, provided in the field notes
(visit 4) we could notice that a student drew and described her school using short
sentences and vocabulary of places seen there. Moreover, the student employed
the quantity expression “there is”.

Student sentences:
In my school there is a playground
In my school there is a field
In my school there is a cafeteria
In my school there is a parking
In my school there is a library
In my school there is chapel
In my school there is a bathroom
In my school there is a teachers’ room
In my school there is a garden

In previous data, the student identified and named some places which
belong to her school. She wrote accurate sentences about the common places
that she visited but she did not mention some unknown places of her institution.
For example: Principal’s office, computer system room, sports’ room and others.
Furthermore, student used right grammatical structures about quantity expressions
(there is), possessive pronouns, and articles. These examples also revealed that
student contextualized the topic; she described her school through group work,
integrated by 5 students, in which she shared her task with other partners. She
Culturally Relevant Material

read her description to her classmates facilitating them a good comprehension of the topic. It was evidenced from field notes (visit 4), line 28-36.

Researcher: Teacher asked students to draw on their notebooks “La Hermosa School” (Institution where they study), and write a description about it. Besides, they had to write fifteen sentences using the expression “There is” learned before. Teacher provided them an example “In my school there is a library”. After, students shared their exercises and drawings in small group works, they described their school in a successful way and they practiced vocabulary about places reviewed in the session.

In that activity, the teacher was a guide to the student because he gave her easy instruction to develop the activity; he explained and provided instructions to student and gave feedback through the activity. Furthermore, student showed understanding of the topic because she was in a real situation where her attention was focused on meaning rather than on language. In other words, she made connections between pictures from her school which were pasted on the board and the real context from her town. (described through field notes visit 4, mentioned before).

Teacher as a model helped students to create and apply their activities freely and openly. Students guided through the examples and explanations provided by the teacher in their tasks. Students interpreted the actions done by the facilitator and they tried to make similar actions to develop successfully their exercises. Other role of the teacher was about the use of examples in all sessions and collection of data. The teacher used several examples to involve students' comprehension of the topic and enjoyment of the activities. Through singing, chanting rhymes, giving oral and writing examples, use graphic organizers, using culturally relevant material, body language, gestures; teacher induced to students learn better and get fun activities. The teacher also used board examples which allowed students to be involved and absorbed in the class, such strategies helped
them in their comprehension and production process. In the following graphic organizer, reported in the journal (visit 3), the teacher gave an example about food times, categorizing it according to parts of the day (morning: breakfast, noon: lunch, evening: dinner) to students design their own food times chart according to the meals that they usually ate at home:

Teacher's model:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Arepa, egg, chocolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This example showed to students the use of vocabulary seen in previous activities. The teacher asked students to give examples about vocabulary of the food and taking into account this vocabulary, all class completed the graphic organizer about daily food. After the teacher gave the examples, students took the model of the teacher to design a similar daily food according to their favorite food or common food eaten at their homes. With this instrument (journal), we noticed that the example of the teacher allowed students to be creative using the language and vocabulary of the topic; students could use new words and communicate their own likes, expressing their favorite meals in their daily food.
Finally, the observations also revealed that students were highly receptive through the explanations of the topic about food because they had a general background of the vocabulary. At the end of the session, the teacher did a wrap up activity to summarize understanding and application of learning acquired in that session.

The Use of Culturally Relevant Material to Foster Identity in our Country.

Our data analysis reveals that the use of culturally relevant material in our Colombia context helps students to improve learning, develop competences in a foreign language and increase identity of their country or context in which they are immersed. According to the answer showed in the interview (visit 6), the student reported that the visual material and the topic that the teacher explained in the class, referred to his possible styles of clothes and fashion wore in his context and people around him:

Researcher: ¿El tema visto en clase corresponde a su cultura?

Student 1: Si. Ehhh [sic] si porque vimosss [sic] como nos vestimos en Colombiaa [sic] y los diferentes estilos de ropa que podemos comprar en almacenes.

The previous answer supported that students could identify different styles of clothes that people wore in the students’ town. Moreover, the culturally relevant material that we used in our classes were photocopies, flash cards, posters, board games, descriptions, songs and others; these materials allowed students to recognize the importance to know cultural aspects from Colombia and identify with them (transportation, food, clothes).

In the following extract drawn from field notes (visit 6), the teacher presented typical clothes and accessories from Colombia and he asked for their names in English. Those accessories were shown by the teacher using real objects with the purpose of contextualizing the topic of the clothes in the classroom:

Researcher: What is it?
Students: It’s a hat, es un poncho, it’s a shirt.

Some students answered in English and others students answered in Spanish. The teacher reinforced the vocabulary showing posters from those objects related to our culture. Example: earrings, necklace, pants, shoes, under wear and socks. Moreover, students identified and recognized that some clothes were the same in different places around the world (jeans, t-shirts, ties) and other clothes are only from Colombia (poncho, sombrero volteado, carriel, machete). The following pictures drawn in the journal (visit 6) shows how students related the topic of the class “clothes” with their cultural identity taking into account different aspects to wear clothes such as weather, costumes and life styles.

The previous activity reflects different kinds of clothes drawn by the same students, focusing on customs, traditions and life styles of places where they
belong to. Students also showed likes and dislikes in relation to clothes because they drew and painted them with different colors such as yellow, pink, green and brown and students did not draw some clothes that they did not usually wear in their typical lives like ties, hats and slips. It was also argued in our field notes (visit 6) that male students did not draw accessories and clothes belong to female students:

Researcher: Male students reported that they did not like drawing skirts, necklaces, bags and panties because they were not women and other students reported that they were not gays.

To conclude, our data analysis also revealed in the interview (Visit 6) that students identified the topic with their context because culturally relevant material showed by the teacher allowed students to observe different kinds of clothes worn in Colombia. Example:

Researcher: ¿El material utilizado por el profesor se relaciona con tu cultura?

Student 2: Si porque nos nos [sic] mostró fotografías reales de las formas de vestirse en Colombia.

The teacher chose one of the pictures from the board and he described a person according to his clothes and style. Later, students chose other pictures from the board and they described them orally using vocabulary such as clothes, colors and adjectives. Examples: She is wearing a blue shirt / he is wearing small pants. After students finished those exercises, the teacher asked them to write some sentences on the board to check grammatical structures explained in class. The following excerpt taken from interview (visit 6) showed how two students claimed that culturally relevant material pasted on the board helped them to recognize different clothes styles from Colombia, facilitating them to describe in a successful way people from the posters, review vocabulary and write short sentences using present continuous.
¿Qué viste de tu cultura en clase?

Student 2: Las prendas de vestir que utilizamos en las diferentes partes de Colombia.

Student 3: A [sic] las prendas de vestir que nos podemos vestir en Colombia.
DISCUSSION

The main research question of the study called for an examination of the response towards the instructional use of culturally relevant and highly visual material of fifth grade English Foreign Language students in a Colombian public school. We have looked closely at fifth grade students' interpretation to consider what is afforded by the combination of the use of culturally relevant material and the real context of the students in their English classes. The findings from the present study begin to answer some of the questions in our current understanding of the use of culturally relevant material and its impact in fifth grade students of a public school from Santa Rosa: (1) The importance of culturally relevant material to give instructions in English avoiding L1, (2) Meaningful Instructional Material Fosters Student Engagement and Enthusiasm, (3) The importance to design culturally relevant material to implement in a foreign classroom, (4) The role of the teacher as a model and the use of examples into the classroom and (5) The use of culturally relevant material to foster identity in our country.

The Importance of Culturally Relevant Material to Give Instructions in English Avoiding L1

The main arguments of using culturally relevant material to give instructions in English avoiding L1 have been that the cultural material encourages learners to use the L2 and when the teacher uses L1 deprives the learners of input in the L2 (Krashen, cited by Prodromou, 2002). Similar situations have been documented when giving instructions in English through the use of culturally relevant material which reduces learner anxiety (Auerbach cited by Hawks, 2001) and creates a more relaxing learning environment (Burden 2000; Philips: 1993).
In other words, it is a means of bringing the learner’s cultural background knowledge into the class to design the lesson and material to contribute the understanding and explanation of topics. The use of CRM facilitates the task of explaining the meaning of abstract words and introducing the main differences in grammar and pronunciation of L2 through body language, gestures, movements and showing culturally relevant material (visual material) in all activities to reinforce and emphasize the topics proposed by the facilitator.

Culturally relevant material like print materials in the home language can be used throughout the classroom in a variety of ways. Post some song lyrics, poems, rhymes and other materials familiar to the children in the home language whenever possible. Children who are dual language learners benefit greatly from visual cues that help them function in the classroom and know what to expect as they move through the class (Prodromou, 2002). One simple but powerful way to help accomplish this, is by displaying photographs to accompany the daily schedule, classroom rules, helper chart and other organizers used in the classroom. On the daily schedule, display pictures of children in that classroom participating in each activity listed. For example, we posted a picture of a fruit (watermelon) and a drink (white coffee or aguapanela) on the board under the word “breakfast”. This helped children to make connections and know what comes next during the class even if they may not yet understand the words that I as facilitator was saying. Children can also infer and develop associations skills because they connect what they know to what they are learning.

In addition, photographs, drawing or symbols can also provide visual context for children who are dual language learners. For example, we pasted cards with a drawing of a “watermelon” next to the word “watermelon” or a drawing of a “cup” next to the word “cup of coffee”. It helped children make the connection between the written word and the symbol. Moreover, this activity also facilitated to the students to substitute a simple picture in place of a written word, allowing them to learn to “read” the pictures and increase comprehension.
By looking across student reflections, we found that students demonstrated their understanding of the instruction in English by writing a short description of a Colombian celebrity. Students did a correct use of the verb to be, the use of the article a/an, the adjectives, and the possessive. Moreover, the students did not need the teacher to prompt them to write about this celebrity. They spontaneously offered the information using their previous knowledge of this character, as well as their knowledge of English to express their ideas in writing. Moreover, students chose posters with characters which were on the board; students watched similarities, characteristics and features in relation to style, clothes, gestures, that both people (students and characters) shared. Students wrote the paragraph using the model given by the teacher. In that sense, through culturally relevant material children (fifth graders) discovered what they know about themselves and the world. It allowed them to explore their likes and dislikes, their passions, and their hobbies. Pica (1986) has argued that…

developing the four skills; children can hear their own voice, to communicate in their own words, and to be themselves. Children’s voice is about encouraging them to communicate their personal thoughts, feelings, ideas, and emotions in their culture when they feel connected with what they are learning, they can develop more easily their skills (p.6).

In relation to communicate feelings, ideas or opinions with other people into the classroom, students and teacher focused on the importance of the culturally relevant material to give instructions avoiding L1. Taking into account the use of L2 in the explanations and exercises done in class, we focused in the Kathleen’s theory in relation to connect culturally relevant material with our culture in which we are involved; Kathleen (1994) also refers to “Twentieth-century culture is as a site of learning rather than a fixed body of knowledge between learning and culture” (p. 125). In other words, we consider that students can contextualize their culture associated with twenty first-century in relation to cultural issues. Finally, they
understood the instructions given by the teacher in the class; exercises and explanations because the teacher used language at a lower level than the language being taught. Moreover, students were not confused because the teacher used short instructions based on clear examples from our real context. It is very important to notice that students used the same set of words that teacher used in his examples. (Pictures and reading).

Meaningful Instructional Material Fosters Student Engagement and Enthusiasm

Taking into account the findings of our data analysis, students showed engagement and enthusiasm in the foreign language classes. Students acted in an effective way showing interest and enthusiasm in the exercises. Deci (1975), claims that students show enthusiasm when they are engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward or when learners do activities without money, grades or presents. In that sense, students reflected and acted by means of an intrinsic motivation. It helped the facilitator and students develop strategies the four skills that enabled them to bring their own information, in which students created their own reading and written production in the activities. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation allowed students to arise a better self-esteem; family values (love, acceptance, respect for wisdom); tasks based teaching (community, identity); peer evaluation (self-knowledge); content based teaching and workplace ESL (cooperation) and cooperative learning and group work (manipulations, strength, learn from mistakes.

Taking into account the ways that students were motivated in the classroom, they could express and made their own ideas freely and openly, they drew some symbols which they identified in their houses or neighborhoods. Students created short oral sentences about their interests in Halloween, clothes, food and means of transportation. Prodromou (1992) suggests that authentic material which is understood like real language, produced by real speakers for a real audience, allows the learner to develop autonomy. It can be thought of as primarily a matter
of taking responsibility for one’s own learning. It is a goal, but more importantly it is an ongoing process requiring both individual and collective effort in the classroom context (Edge & Wharton, 1995).

When students did the jigsaw, they identified vocabulary with relation to Halloween. By conducting a learners’ needs analysis allowed students to be engaged in the lessons due to the fact that they were designed with topics of their interests. We observed that students were enthusiastic in the moment they had to build this activity because they participated on the organization of this jigsaw (la cabeza va aquí, el brazo encaja en este lado, mire la capa del esqueleto). Games are essentially recreational time out activities, whose main purpose is enjoyment; language study is serious goal-oriented work, whose main purpose is personal learning (Cotterall, 1995). Children in general learn well when they are active; and when action is channeled into an enjoyable game they are often willing to invest considerable time and effort in playing it. If we design our games and culturally relevant material in such a way that they are productive of language learning they become an excellent, even essential, part of a program of children’s learning activities.

The design of our own games, activities and materials allowed students to be engaged and enthusiasm in the classroom. Fred Newmann (1992) claims that students try hard to learn what the class offers. They take pride not simply in earning the formal indicators of success (grades), but in understanding the material and incorporating or internalizing it in their lives” (pp. 2–3). According to this definition, an engaged student is the one who is intrinsically motivated to learn. That is, motivated from a desire for competence and understanding, or simply from a passion for learning, rather than a desire for a good grade, a teacher's approval, or acceptance into a good college. We could observe this behavior in the students, when they developed activities without any reward. They showed engagement because they felt interested in the culturally relevant topic.
Researchers have also found that student engagement results in other, less obvious, benefits. As Stipek (1996) suggests, students are more likely to approach tasks eagerly and to persist in the face of difficulty. They are also more likely to seek opportunities for learning when the extrinsic awards are not available—for example, after formal schooling has been completed—positioning them to learn more over time than their disengaged peers (p.99).

The Importance to Design Culturally Relevant Material to Implement in a Foreign Classroom

Our data suggests that an important advantage of teacher-produced materials is contextualization (Block, 1991). A key criticism of commercial materials, particularly those produced for the world-wide EFL market is that they are necessarily generic and not aimed at any specific group of learners or any particular cultural or educational context. Moreover, the design of culturally relevant material in our research helped the teacher to find individual needs from students. Modern teaching methodology increasingly emphasizes the importance of identifying and teaching to the individual needs of learners. English language classroom are diverse places not only in terms of where they are situated, but also in terms of the individual learners within each context. Teacher-designed material can be responsive to the heterogeneity inherent in the classroom. This approach encompasses the learners’ first language and cultures, their learning needs and their experiences (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

In that sense, we guided our research with the above theory due to the importance to contextualize the culturally relevant material of fifth graders students from Santa Rosa de Cabal. We developed materials that incorporated elements of the learners’ first language and culture, or at least provided opportunities for acknowledgment and use alongside English. In addition, we prepared materials to provide opportunity to select activities at exactly right level for particular learners, to
ensure appropriate challenge and levels of success. We confirmed the previous theory because students contextualized the topics with their culture through material design presented by the teacher and by students (descriptions, photographs and drawings). In that sense, the design of material allowed students know vocabulary of common topics of their environment (food, transportation, clothes) thus contextualize it.

As participants of the research, we encouraged our students to privilege the process of design (i.e. the process of creating what a pumpkin, a table food and clothes meant and how to represent these exercises in their culture) over the production (i.e. making sure the activities adhered to their own context). We also emphasized that designing and producing are not always separate. The process of cultural material refers to a movement from the identification of a need for materials to their eventual use in the classroom; identification by teacher or learners of a need to fulfill or a problem to solve by the creation of materials; exploration of the area of need/problem in terms of what language, what meanings, what functions, what skills etc; contextual realization of the proposed new materials by the finding of suitable ideas, contexts or texts with which students can work.

In such manner, we as facilitators focused on the design of CRM to satisfy the needs and learning style of students. For that reason, we planned activities involving students through all the sessions facilitated by us; we found that students took this CRM to design their own activities and tasks. Some of them reported that they felt motivated with those tools because all the material was created according to students' context, facilitating students to be in contact with their culture. Leech & Svartvick (2003) wrote in their case study the following:

The most effective materials are those which are based on a thorough understanding of learners' needs, their language difficulties, their learning objectives, their styles of learning, etc. They also illustrated that all teachers teach themselves. It means teachers teach specific group of learners; they teach themselves and this has powerful implications when it comes to the materials they are to teach with. Teachers produce their own effective materials and help them
to teach themselves. Conducting tests and evaluating them are vital to the success of any materials. Teachers know that learners are the users of materials, and we have to need their opinions and listen to their feedback (p. 283-287).

Students’ answers from the interview (visit 3) revealed that students agreed on the importance of CRM showed in the class because students recognized and related the vocabulary from the picture with their typical topics from their country. For example, on line 23 student 1 identified food that he usually eats at home. He noted that this typical food was his favorite food from his home. On the other hand, student 2 introduced his answer by recognizing the topic with different examples of food from different places from Colombia.

We supported the previous activity by Prabhu’s proposal (1987) about material production in relation to provide a range of possible inputs facilitating a good use of different aspects of the language: writing, listening, reading, and speaking. Moreover, Prabhu suggests two possible ways of categorizing such resource options, Semi-materials. These are strategies such as listening comprehension, writing activities, reading skills exercises, vocabulary development work and role-play. And Meta-materials; they are essentially pedagogical procedures. For example, dictation is a meta-material. Other examples would include role-play, gap-filling, summary writing, jigsaw listening, drama techniques, etc. Taking into account this kind of materials, the teacher can see the importance to design the new material to implement in the classroom. Moreover, the teacher decided on the nature of input of the activities planned by the sessions and he applied the procedure to execute them. In this way, the teacher had control on the content of the teaching event.

The Role of the Teacher as a Model and the Use of Examples into the Classroom

Clearly the purpose of teaching teachers is to affect practice and create pedagogical change. We as teachers in our course routinely made connections to classroom practice and work with students. For example, we often considered in
adapting the topics planned (places and food) in real situations guided and modeled by the facilitator, to student understood effectively the messages of each class and made clear interpretations from the topics to their real context. In this way a learner talked about her own learning into the classroom, she revealed an understanding of the importance of seeing the teacher as a model and designing learning environments for exploration rather than learning long grammatical structures in English. For example, Daniela commented the value of the material used by the teacher to explain the topic: “A través de las fotografías conocí lugares que nunca había visto, las fotografías eran reales”.

Many course participants used their answers (from the surveys) to give voice to their increasing awareness of receiving and using culturally relevant material in the class. They also expressed that becoming aware of knowledge diversification made them comfortable and excited about a better learning of a second language. For that reason, we as researchers know that teachers could use more CRM in their settings. W agreed with a number of studies reviewed by Miller (2008) when he referred that teachers need support about culturally relevant material to continue with implementing learning in English foreign language classroom (p.138).

Other perspective from our data analysis is that the teacher can use several kinds of strategies to communicate with students taking into account new applications of information and communications since culturally relevant material, such as magazines, cards, games, pictures, newspapers, jigsaws, graphic organizer, puzzles, posters and others have created and allowed many new communication possibilities for school.

McDonough (1993) claims that teachers and students recognize the importance of using materials, since the teaching process is made easier and materials may be used to explain exemplify or practice the content presented to students (p. 9). Materials can represent a source of motivation for students when
these materials change the dynamics of the class routines through the possibility of manipulating objects, accessing audiovisual material or promoting interaction with others. Interaction helped to students to understand examples from other students and teacher. Students worked with various modes to interpret their tasks, they took ownership of those tasks. The work was started by the teacher, later was individually produced, but at the end students relied on one another and their explanations, exercises and productions supported.

The teacher used several examples to involve students’ comprehension of the topic and enjoyment of the activities. Through singing, chanting rhymes, giving oral and writing examples, use graphic organizers, using culturally relevant material, body language, gestures; teacher induced to students learn better and get fun activities. These materials were used by the teacher to explain new topics and guide students with the execution of new tasks and exercises. The teacher also used board examples which allowed students to be involved and absorbed in the class facilitating them good comprehensions or production work.

The Use of Culturally Relevant Material to Foster Identity in our Country

Firstly, the materials should be contextualized to the curriculum to complement the syllabus in a foreign language classroom increasing students’ identity in their own context (Nunan, 1988). It is essential during the designing stages that the objectives of the curriculum, syllabus or scheme within the designer’s institution are kept to the fore. This is not to suggest that materials design should be solely determined by a list of course specifications or by large inventories of vocabulary that need to be imparted, but these are certainly among the initial considerations. In other words, when an institution takes culturally relevant material as an essential component in the teaching process, it is not only to instruct grammar, spelling and vocabulary but also it is to expose students to their real world which they are sharing and growing with their classmates.
Our findings revealed that students identified the topics (clothes, food and transportation) by recognizing them to their culture and their context. We observed it through observation analysis, because the topics were explained and reinforced through CRM showed by the teacher allowing to students interact among them into the classroom.

Moreover, when students developed tasks and activities using visual material, they could observe the importance of CRM as for real pictures to get clear meanings of the topics. Students mentioned that visual materials such as pictures, photographs, posters and drawings were clearly and understandable, through them students practiced vocabulary to describe the situations that the teacher was teaching. Students observed that the teacher used those materials to reinforce and give examples about different topics that referred to Colombia.

Materials that we used in the activity mentioned before were contextualized to the experiences, realities and first languages of the learners to increase their cultural identity. An important part of this involves awareness on the part of the teacher-designer of the sociocultural appropriacy (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998) of things such as the designer’s own style of presenting material, of arranging groups, and so on. It is essential the materials designer knows about the culture-specific learning processes of the intended learners, and for many groups, this may mean adjusting the intended balance of what teachers may regard as more enjoyable activities and those of a more serious nature. Materials should explicitly link to what the learners already know, to their first languages and cultures, and very importantly, should alert learners to any areas of significant cultural difference.

In addition, materials should be contextualized to topics and themes that provide meaningful, purposeful uses for the target language. Wherever possible, these should be chosen on the basis of their relevance and appropriateness for the intended learners, to ensure personal engagement and to provide motivation for dipping further into the materials. For some ages and stages the topics may well
be “old faithfuls”, such as money, family and holidays. Part of the mission for the materials designer is “to find new angles on those topics” (Bell & Gower, 1998) and having done that, to develop activities which will ensure purposeful production of the target language or skills. When producing materials for one-off use with smaller groups, additional student engagement can be achieved by allowing students to “star” in the passages and texts that have been designed specifically for them.
Culturally Relevant Material

IMPLICATIONS

These preliminary research findings about the use of culturally relevant materials have implications for other areas that are instituting teaching and learning based on English language learners. Some of the points have been made previously in the professional development literature but have not yet been put into practice (Clair, 1998). For example time, curriculum and syllabus, English language level and gender.

The research “The instructional use of culturally relevant and visual material of fifth grade English foreign language students in a Colombian public school” suggests that implementing and designing culturally relevant materials in the classroom will require significant investments of time by the facilitators. Teachers need time to understand the uses, impacts and goals of the materials in students learning and their implications about the teaching and learning dynamic in culturally diverse classrooms. Teachers need to examine and discuss their own beliefs and attitudes about teaching, student learning, and assessment. In other words, teachers need to take into account students’ likes and dislikes, age, learning styles, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and so on. Teachers need to develop a shared vision of what students should know and be able to do in a particular subject at a particular grade level using culturally relevant material and how teachers can share material, methodology, experiences and strategies to involve the all class into a specific topic for ensuring that students have the ability to use these materials in order to have a successful class.

Implementation of culturally relevant material also requires significant investment by teachers and school districts. The failure of foreign education programs to adequately prepare elementary and secondary teachers to instruct about the empowerment of the use of materials, its design and impact in the culture and context of the students increase the burden on schools to offer in-
service training to teachers who are implementing a better education with these students. For example: “ELI’s program from UTP in 2008 developed conferences about the use and design of materials into the English classrooms”. Raising the use of the culturally relevant material implies helping teachers redouble their efforts to support students (Clair, 1995; Crawford, 1993; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996; Zeichner, 1993). Even students who have been succeeding in language support programs need additional assistance to use material to complete the assignments and continue their English language development.

To create successful learning development, the teachers must recognize the importance of letting students set their own learning goals and participate in the design of their knowledge (Renyi, 1996). Students and teachers have deep understandings of the teaching and learning process in their classrooms in cases where outside observers may only scratch the surface. Therefore, teacher and students involvement in planning the class is critical. Effective learning development must be a two-way process with both parties, teachers and students bringing knowledge to the sessions and learning from one another.

To effectively implement culturally relevant material, teachers and students must also use all the technological resources they possess. Our findings revealed that students were involved in the sessions because they felt in a more authentic context in the English classes due to the use of real material from their culture and the participation of designing the material by the teacher and the same students. In designing their own materials teachers could make decisions about the most appropriate focus for the materials and activities. And this could be changed over the course of the program. By taking more control over materials production, we could choose from the range of possibilities, including topics, situations, functions, games, skills, activities or a combination of these principles, as starting points to develop a variety of materials that focus on the developing needs of our group of learners.
This study is admittedly limited in that it only surveyed and looked at a small sample of culturally relevant material in the classroom. It was not completely surprising, though perhaps disappointing, that teachers and students were only in contact two hours per week, lacking effective practice activities to develop learning strategies competences. In order to acquire a L2, it is necessary to have enough exposure to it. As Lightbown & Spada (1999) suggest as a result of extensive research, “one or two hours a week – even for seven or eight years – will not produce very advanced second language speakers. This drip-feed approach often leads to frustration as learners feel that they have been studying for years without making much progress” (p. 165).

Moreover, we did not follow exactly teachers’ resource books because the institution only had one of them. In that sense, this book had adopted the traditional grammar-translation method in relation to foreign language teaching, it had been used into the English class and the students had the idea that to learn well the grammar is to learn a foreign language well because students were accustomed to use the book as a unique tool to learn English, students were not exposed to role plays, songs, reading exercises, visual material and share information with the partners about their likes and dislikes of food, sports, hobbies and others. The traditional grammar-translation method pays less attention to the actual use of language in the real society. Nowadays more and more people have realized that the aim of acquiring a language is to communicate. So teachers should renew their teaching idea. The aim of EFL teaching is to cultivate students’ communicative competence, including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence.

And we wonder: how can teachers apply foreign language teaching in a public school, without having the necessary strategies and methodologies to teach a target language? Clearly, more attention should be paid to a new research and current literature before making assumptions about a successful education in our country.
CONCLUSIONS

In our discovery process initiated with fifth grader participants has begun to reveal that our beliefs and practices to teach English as a foreign language through culturally relevant material can be implemented with different ways of working with English language learners. To begin this work, researchers had to identify the problem to research and develop ways of working and learning together. The first visits helped us to refine our instructional practice so that it more directly addressed the goal of including English language learners in culturally relevant material implementation. The implications for using those materials and contextualizing the topics in our culture could be implemented in different ways in our classroom. However, did culturally relevant material affect students’ attitudes to connect their learning with their culture? This kind of material allowed to give appropriate instructions? If not, what supports would be required? These questions remain to be investigated. Nonetheless, the primary accomplishment of this project was developing the conditions for growth that possibly is a prerequisite for change the teaching of English.

Moreover, the purpose of this research was to show to readers that culturally relevant material provides basic and comprehensive information to assist students in the development of an effective learning. All the discussion about the existence of testing the necessity for cultural awareness in education, the use of culturally relevant material in the English teaching and the effect that students’ cultural background has on their perceptions of the new language learning environment, was reinforced in a literature studied in relation to give so much attention to the teachers’ reactions to a culturally diverse classroom environment. Therefore, this study focused on investigating how teachers can use culturally relevant material in Colombian classrooms. After analysis of the data, five categories emerged: (1) The importance of culturally relevant material to give instructions in English avoiding L1, (2) Meaningful Instructional Material Fosters
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Student Engagement and Enthusiasm, (3) The importance to design culturally relevant material to implement in a foreign classroom, (4) The role of the teacher as a model and the use of examples into the classroom and (5) The use of culturally relevant material to foster identity in our country.

The data organized in the five categories listed above revealed that the researchers' personalized definitions of classroom interaction appeared to influence the ways in which they conducted their classes. Further, a number of cultural biases were revealed by us as different point of views in our classroom. Example: we knew a lot about the different cultures that our students had in our classes. The data also showed that time, evaluation of the students' performance, and selection of pedagogical materials may be relevant and important subjects for consideration when dealing with multicultural groups of students. Finally, our perceptions of different cultures were always confirmed by our reactions in our classrooms. Many times the way in which we interacted with students from different cultures and the use of culturally relevant material to reinforce and contextualize the topics in the classroom seemed to prove our beliefs and awareness of the needs that students from different regions and cultures from Colombia might have to use those materials in their contexts.
REFERENCES


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