RAISING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH SPEAKING TASKS IN FIFTH GRADERS
CLASSROOM PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the intercultural communicative competence has been regarded as an important element in EFL education around the world, being the subject of study of many authors such as Byram (2002), Kramsch (2002), Meyer (1991), Gomez (2010), Barletta (2009), and Alvarez & Bonilla (2009). Intercultural education has started to be considered along with linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences, as mentioned by the “guía 22” in the Colombian context as an integral part of teaching the English language.

The purpose of this study was to raise intercultural awareness through speaking tasks in young learners, in a primary public school in Pereira, Colombia. The project involved 35 fifth graders whose ages ranged from 8 to 10. Data was gathered through the use of classroom observations, and journals, then it was analyzed in and on action reflection to draw the conclusions.

The results revealed that it was possible to foster intercultural awareness in young learners, however, authentic material needed to be adapted or created, a careful lesson planning considered, and appropriate content for the age of learners to fit their cognitive processes, in order to develop the skill of recognizing similarities and differences between cultures presented in specific pieces of language.

As a conclusion, including contents related to cultural aspects are highly engaging and motivating for learners, besides it generates a sense of tolerance and respect towards others’ ways to express themselves. Furthermore, the use of Spanish in the EFL classroom is not necessary for students to understand and interpret meaning. The reported results can help in future research on how to develop the intercultural competence.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper, we attempt to show the readers an implementation of a classroom project that deals with intercultural practices in an EFL primary public school in Pereira, Colombia. The purpose of this project was to raise intercultural awareness through speaking tasks by including adaptable materials in the classroom to foster interaction among learners, at the same time some reflections were done in order to understand cultural similarities and differences between the English and the Spanish languages; moreover, the project sought to raise a sense of tolerance and respect among young learners in regards to the different ways people conceive and interpret the world around them.

The rationale of the project was to contribute to how EFL teachers can raise intercultural awareness in primary classrooms by implementing specific speaking tasks within a set context. Acknowledging the use of ICTs and adapting suitable authentic material as an important tool to engage participants, and to have them interested and motivated, it is more possible to ensure that students grasp a sense of intercultural awareness.

Significant theoretical definitions such as culture, intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, speaking task, were taken into consideration for the development of this classroom project. In terms of related studies, three relevant projects that deal with intercultural competence were compared to this project. Although the studies were carried out in different contexts from this one, they were useful at analyzing how different techniques and methods may work in the development of intercultural competence.

This classroom project was conducted at a public primary school in Pereira, Colombia. The participants included were 35 fifth graders, two preservice teachers. The data was collected
through classroom observations, journals, surveys, and videos; then it was analyzed by in and on action reflection.

The results were categorized in three main areas: professional growth, students’ responses, and linguistic outcomes, stating one strength and one challenge per each one. The results were presented, described in detail and supported by evidences gathered during the implementation. Based on the results, some limitations and pedagogical implications were suggested for further research on the field. Finally the conclusions were stated.
2. **JUSTIFICATION**

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has commonly been framed within the communicative competence, which according to Guia 22, is a set of abilities an individual must develop to become a proficient user of the language, consisting of a linguistic competence (ability to produce and interpret utterances based on grammatical knowledge, lexis, phonetics, syntax, etc.), pragmatic competence (it is the functional use of linguistic resources in diverse settings), and a sociolinguistic competence (being aware of the cultural and social conventions that are implicitly tied to the language), (translated from Guia 22, pages 11,12). Special attention has mostly been given to the development of linguistic skills, and not paying close attention to teaching the sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Another frame for language teaching has been intercultural competence (IC) considered by the last two decades as an area of interest among authors such as Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002), Meyer (1991), Kramsch (2002), and Cooperias (2007). The term is defined as the learner’s ability to interact successfully with speakers of different cultures, acknowledging their own culture as a basis to compare and contrast the other culture, and thus avoiding stereotypes, showing respect for how others see and perceive the world around them. This is to say, that EFL should incorporate the teaching of intercultural practices that are present in today’s globalized world, where a competent language user must be respectful and tolerant towards others’ ways to express themselves and interpret reality.

The intercultural competence has changed over time until it came to focus on culture in the foreign classroom. In the 70s the communicative competence began to consider sociocultural aspects and strategic competences in the classroom in order to understand how language is acquired, (Hymes, 1972 cited by Cooperias 2007). Eventually, Meyer (1991) argued that foreign
language learning is no longer defined in terms of the communicative competence but rather in terms of interculturality. In 1997, Byram quoted by Cooperias (2007) mentioned the importance of considering the intercultural skills in the foreign classroom, stating that the native speaker (someone who speaks a language as his or her first language or mother tongue) was no longer the model to follow but that of the intercultural speaker (IS, someone who has the ability to manage communication with people from other cultures and other languages, granted the IS considers his or her own perspective and takes up another). Later on, when the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) was established in 2001, new concerns in language teaching arose, but it was until Byram et al (2002) created the first practical framework for the application of the intercultural dimension in language teaching that will be used for the implementation of this project. This framework, led the path to many authors who investigated in the field, especially in the European countries due to mobility needs.

The IC has not been widely developed in EFL classrooms, given the fact that teachers have a limited notion of culture and its teaching within the communicative approach (Barletta, 2009). In the same line, Wright (1996) cited by Barletta (2009) states the absence of systematic methodology to help learners acquire knowledge, attitudes, awareness and new insights. And lastly, the most relevant problematic according to Barletta (2009), is that teachers in Colombia have no opportunities to travel abroad for longer periods of time to get experience in the target culture, for this reason there is no clear view of what culture really means. However, Byram et al (2002) argue that it is not necessary to travel abroad in order to teach intercultural competence, as it is most concerned in developing skills and no the transmission of factual information. As a result, the main objective of this project is to contribute to fill in the threshold in how to implement specific speaking tasks that promote interaction within context embedded scenarios, raising
learners’ intercultural awareness in Colombia’s primary schools; even though, preservice teachers may not have any expertise in the target culture.

Despite the fact that a study on fostering the intercultural competence was conducted in the Colombian context by Gomez (2010), there is much more to explore since the study was done in a university in Bogota, and not on primary students. The study found out that language was learnt by participant in a more memorable way by studying literary texts, while being aware of the intercultural dimension. Although the intercultural competence has not been implemented in Colombia’s primary schools, similar results might be expected if done so. Therefore, there seems to be a gap on what methodologies or strategies will work successfully to develop the intercultural competence in primary students that allows them to interact in a globalized world. The “Guia 22” Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages for all the levels in the Colombian education, states that the world is characterized by the intercultural communication and points out the necessity of a common language to access the international society with its rapid increase in technological breakthroughs. Defining interculture as the ability to relate with others, the sensibility and possibility to overcome stereotyped relationships, etc., decreasing the ethnocentrism and allowing individuals to appreciate and respect the value of their own world, and to develop respect for other cultures. (Translated from Guia 22, pages 8-13).

This project will contribute to enhance the practices of language teaching and learning in regards to intercultural awareness by having learners to interact in realistic speaking tasks, such as greetings and farewells, meeting people, festivities, ordering food, and shopping, to promote students’ interest and motivation for learning the English language while becoming conscious of intercultural differences. Moreover, by implementing this project, it is expected to overcome the
misbelief that it is difficult to address intellectual concepts at primary levels, as Rose (2003) points out, intercultural awareness is essential in language learning at all levels. Bearing in mind that teachers must help young learners to understand their own culture first if they want them to identify with other culture, (Byram et al., 2002). The way a language is presented marks the difference from one culture to the other, in this sense, learners will awake their curiosity for discovering the world and will become tolerant, open minded and aware towards others’ cultural backgrounds, beliefs and ways to conceive the world.

On the other hand, Colombia’s policy makers might reflect on how effective the application of the standards of the “Guia 22”, are being implemented in schools. Barletta (2009) commented on the Basic Standards of Foreign Language Competencies, saying that interculturality in Colombia needs to be incorporated in order to offer a better view of how we are presented to other cultures and how we perceive them and what interactions we want to participate in. Regarding this, Byram et al (2002) comment that it is difficult for learners to identify their own cultural features, reason why, it is the teacher the one in charge of bringing those differences to the classroom in order to boost the learner’s ability to make effective comparisons, resulting in a deeper understanding of one’s own culture, being able to decentered and take up the others’ perspectives on their own. By conducting this project of the intercultural competence, there will be an impact on students’ lives, teachers’ professional development, and researchers. Contributing to the Education law in Colombia that states as one of its ends, “the study and critic comprehension of the national culture, and the ethnical cultural diversity of the country, as the basis for national unity and of its identity” (Translated from the Guia 22, page 7).
3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 Teaching objectives:

To develop as future researchers and increase the teachers’ professional development in language teaching and learning related to intercultural practices

- To gain expertise as researchers in the process of finding, analyzing and reporting conclusions about the intercultural teaching through speaking tasks in greetings, farewells, and meeting people.
- To select and adapt material required to enhance the planning of intercultural lessons

3.2 Learning objectives:

To recognize the commonalities and differences between the two cultures through interactions with others.

- To become aware of how people use specific language items in order to meet people in the students’ culture and the English culture.
- To produce short conversations that reflect real life interactions among English speakers, such as, greetings, farewells, and meeting people.
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Overview

The following chapter aims at contextualizing the importance of developing the intercultural communicative competence in English lessons as a foreign language (EFL) which take place in the Colombian context. In the first place, the term culture (C) must be defined as the starting point to understand intercultural competence (IC), and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Then the chapter continues to explore how the Colombian government itself has given certain significance at raising awareness on an intercultural education. Finally, some alternatives on how to teach the ICC are presented.

4.1.1 What is Culture

The concept of culture has been changing over time, Tylor (1871) cited by Fandiño (2014), defined culture as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, costume and other capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of a society. Regarding the field of language teaching Halverson (1985) cited by Fandiño (2014), makes a distinction between a big C defined as MLA (music, literature and art of a country) and a small C defined as BBV (beliefs, behaviors and values). Byram et al (2002) state that cultural learning carries on throughout life as individuals go from one section of a society to another, from one social group to another, or whenever they move into new social groups with their own beliefs, values and behaviors.

There has been a fundamental focus of language education on intercultural language, acknowledging an interrelation between language and culture, from this concept, culture learning is a process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, attitudes
required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other countries, a
dynamic, de-velopmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively,
behaviorally, and affectively (Paige et al., 2003 cited by Kiet, 2009). In the same fashion, Agudelo
(2007) states something similar but he goes beyond providing a wider perspective of culture
learning, saying that culture is not a complete construct but instead a continuous, dynamic, and
unfinished human process, culture seems to be invisible in our daily routine and it is observable
when we are exposed to contexts in which cultural factors such as beliefs, behavior and language
are challenged, either by direct intercultural experiences or by learning experiences that provide
us with cultural awareness.

The processes of culture learning may continue to change as technology facilitates
communication and the way people socialize in a globalized world. Carla (2011) cited by Fandino
(2014) says that nowadays culture is conceived as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions,
cognitive constructs and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization.

4.1.2 What is Intercultural Competence (IC)

Byram (1997) cited by Cooperias (2007) defines intercultural competence as the speaker’s
ability to interact with people from different languages or countries drawing upon their knowledge
about their own culture and that of the others, taking into account their attitudes of interest in
otherness and skills in interpreting, relating and discovering. Uso & Martinez (2008) argue that it
refers to the knowledge of how to interpret a spoken or written piece of discourse and produce
within a specific sociocultural context in which knowledge of sociocultural factors are involved as
for example rules of behavior in the target language as well as cross cultural awareness that include
differences and similarities in cross-cultural communication.
Furthermore the ability of the speaker to interact successfully will depend on establishing and maintenance of human relationships. These relationships will depend on attitudinal factors, aspects as knowledge and attitude that are directly influenced by intercultural communication. When defining the intercultural competence, linguistic aspects are left aside or are not considered, focusing mainly on culture and the relationships between cultures, referring to interculturality.

Byram (1997) highlights both competences, IC and ICC, the ladder as the interaction that takes place between people from different cultures and countries in an FL context, the participant’s awareness of another culture is bound to their ability to use the foreign language adequately. Consequently, the distinction between these two competences lies on that the former (IC) can and should be acquired by people from all walks of life and involve in any kind of trade, while ICC deals with FL teaching and learning, so the focus is mainly on linguistic aspects.

4.1.3 What is Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Language cannot be isolated from its culture. Every time a grammar aspect is taught there are some characteristics related to culture that should also be considered. Byram et al (2002), argued that the model to follow in EFL classrooms, has always been the native speaker like accent and the target culture. Although this is relevant, during the last years this conception has been changing. Nowadays, the best model to pursue is not the native speaker like, but one that is able to overcome stereotypes and prejudices of the target culture based on the learner’s own culture, allowing the intercultural speaker to communicate effectively.

As pointed out by Meyer (1991), language learning has been defined in terms of acquisition of the communicative competences in an EFL classroom. Foreseeing the linguistic, sociolinguistic,
and pragmatic points of view. Instead it must be defined, in terms of intercultural competence, which is the capacity of a speaker to understand and to be sensible when confronted with actions, perceptions and expectations of a foreign culture. In contrast to what Alvino (2008) stated, in his article about “Culture in the Classroom”, language proficiency remains at the core of the intercultural communicative competence. In other words, teaching the intercultural competence cannot leave aside the teaching of the communicative competences that a student needs to develop.

In the same fashion, Alvino (2008), concedes high importance to the intercultural competence when he states: “it promotes new communication strategies in someone else’s terms, transforming one’s habitual view of the world”, which leads learners to face or deal with how they perceive, conceptualize, and express the world.

To summarize, Byram et al (2002) claimed that the intercultural dimension in language teaching aims to help language learners to become intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complex and multiple identities. This means, the IS (intercultural speaker) is able to interact with people from different background cultures that communicate in English, avoiding the stereotyping that accompanies perceiving someone through one’s own identity, and not leaving aside the importance that must be given to language learning proficiency. As Kramsch (2002) mentions the intercultural speaker is a tolerant and open minded person who is able to interact with other cultures taking into account cultural differences. Therefore, in order to promote intercultural speakers, teachers should implement the development of cultural awareness.
4.1.4 Components of the intercultural competence

Byram et al (2002) propose that achieving an important proficiency as an intercultural mediator, must be analyzed and recognized in terms of different components such as “knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values”, which were divided into 4 categories. Knowledge is considered the first component, it is knowing how a specific culture is made up, raising awareness on how specific social groups with their own identities behave linguistically to avoid misunderstanding. However, as it would be impossible to predict all the communicative events that learners or mediators will be exposed to, teachers have the responsibility of developing skills for students to be able to compare the events with their own culture. Furthermore, the learner will be able to overcome stereotypes and interpret what the speaker is trying to communicate. On the other hand, the intercultural competence aims to awake the curiosity and openness towards other cultures’ values, considering the importance that must be given to the own cultural values and overcoming those situations by having a positive attitude towards others perception of the world. Moreover, the “Basic standards of Competences in Foreign Languages”, seek for learners to construct their own interpretation of others’ identities and appreciate the value of the English-speaking culture, thus considering only one culture.

4.1.5 The intercultural competence in Colombia

Since new Standards have been taken into account considering the CEFR, the issue of addressing an intercultural teaching has become a more serious concern in EFL classrooms in Colombia. However, Barletta (2009) analyses the fact that those new projects of bilingualism do not give any special role or place to the intercultural practices, and she goes even further by saying
that the cultural component is relegated to occupy an insignificant position in the standards. On the other hand, Byram et al (2002) state that it is necessary to think about how we want to represent ourselves in interacting with other cultures and how we represent other cultures in the foreign language classrooms. Perhaps there are some considerations that can help in bringing an intercultural environment into EFL scenarios. Agudelo (2007) mentions the acknowledgment of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) as the result of the Free Trade Agreement between US and several Latin American Countries, the opening of new markets and the internalization of various institutions have led to the implementation of projects that allow to use transaction language or lingua franca, English. In Medellin, Colombia there is a project called “Medellin, the most educated” in which Medellin’s government is committed to the process of internationalization.

4.1.6 How to teach the intercultural competence

There are several ways the intercultural competence can be taught, and in this section it is worth to highlight that the importance of the intercultural speaker is that he or she can analyze and interpret the target culture, based on their own, making comparisons through activities that allow role-plays. Byram et al (2002) suggest that those kind of activities are very useful for activating learner’s schemata about other cultures. Where students pretend to be visitors to their own country and must interact with the culture they live in. Also, the teacher may encourage learners to reflect and analyze the behaviors and customs of their culture in order to become aware of the differences with the target cultures. Additionally, students will be more prepared to communicate with other intercultural speakers, tolerate the differences and handle the situations they may face when
coming into contact with the target culture or its speakers. Furthermore, the teacher’s sole task is to help the learners ask questions and interpret the answers, therefore it is not a requirement for the teacher to have expertise or master the target culture.

In a similar way, Byram et al (2002) argues the intercultural dimension can be taught even if the teacher has not left the country, stating that the main aim is not teaching the transmission of information about a foreign country, but rather interculture is most concerned in helping learners understand and reflect on how interaction takes place, how social identities are part of all interaction, how their perceptions of other people and others people’ perceptions of them influence the success of communication, and how they can find out for themselves more about the people whom they are communicating with. Hernandez & Samaca (2006) state that, by teaching culture in Colombia explicitly and systematically, learners will be able to develop a sense of respect and tolerance that will familiarize them with other cultures, discuss them properly and develop a critical understanding, as they claim that Colombian people as members of groups with a high mixture of ethnicities, background, and gender are more likely to be knowledgeable, tolerant and respectful.

4.1.7 How to teach children and how they can learn about interculture

In order to develop the intercultural competence with young learners, it is necessary to understand some practical approaches on how children learn and to consider the role of the teacher. According to Brown (2002) children’s intellectual development is most concerned with the functional purposes of language and do not focus on the explanation of grammar rules. Given the fact that young learners present short attention spans, lessons must be interesting, lively and fun to
capture students’ attention spans for longer periods of time, even though activities are not supposed to last more than 10 minutes. Another consideration is to include the use of students’ senses by using sensory aids to keep them engaged, and making good use of body language to increase understanding of what is being said. In addition, here are also some affective factors to have in mind regarding children’s perceptions of themselves and how others think of them. Consequently the teacher must be supportive and patient towards their personalities and learning styles, building students’ self-esteem. Also, learning must include meaningful purposes in language use and the implementation of authentic language that is context embedded, such as story lines, familiar situations and characters, and real life conversations while making interrelationships among the various language skills.

The material should be adapted to accomplish young learners’ cognitive needs or capacities to raise awareness of interculture, Byram et al (2002) recommend some methods that can be used to teach interculture, as simulations and role-plays, thus activating the students’ schemata and background knowledge about other countries and cultures. This experimental learning will develop self-awareness and perceptions of other countries. The language teacher will engage students in series of activities that allow them to discuss and conclude from their own experience of the target culture of what they have heard or read, provide factual information related to life-styles current in the culture(s) and patterns usually followed by member of these cultures, but the most important is to encourage comparative analysis with learners’ own culture. As Byram & Risager (1999) cited by Alvarez & Bonilla (2009), state that teachers act as mediators between cultures, being responsible to help learners understand other people and their cultures. Meaning that students take a critical position not only to make judgments on the target culture, but also on the analysis and understanding of their own culture.
4.1.8 The role of the teacher

According to the Byram et al (2002), the role of the teacher is to develop on learners some skills, attitudes and awareness of values, and knowledge of the particular culture or country, aiding students at asking questions and interpret answers; recommending, the use of sources of information such as using authentic texts that include audio and various written documents and visuals as maps, photographs, diagrams and cartoons and at the same time ensuring that learners understand the context and intention, activities that involve understanding, discussing and writing in the target language. Kramsch (2002) proposes a dialogical approach in EFL as an appropriate pedagogical procedure to promote the negotiation of meaning when learners are exposed to literary discourse. Allowing learners to look for familiar texts or other items from their own culture to compare and contrast, given the fact that it is more important that students acquire skills of analysis than factual information.

In a similar way De Mejía (2006), points out that teachers need to be able to help their students to become aware of the value of conceiving the world through different perspectives; thus, language educators are mediators between cultures. In this sense, they need to be open minded and neutral agents who construct cultural experiences with students.
4.2 Speaking task

4.2.1 What is a speaking task?

According to Breen (1987) a speaking task is a structured activity that deals with any language function that occur in certain discourse situations, it has a specific objective, a context and a detailed procedure. Its focus relies on understanding and negotiating meaning to perform a task successfully; in other words it is a process where learners are guided to achieve a determined communicative outcome. Prabhu (1987) cited by Nunan (2004) points out how students are keen to learn when they are concentrating on particular language forms, instead of language structures.

In the same line Lee (2000) describes a speaking task as an activity that has an achievable objective by the interaction between participants in a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction focused on meaning exchanged; the author also says that “it is a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans”.

Brown (1994) cited by Cunningham (1999) defines speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking.

4.2.2 Speaking task procedure

According to Scrivener (2005) one of the most important and challenging stage in the lesson is when students try to do the speaking by themselves. For this reason, in order to complete this stage successfully the teacher must consider that learners may need to get input from possible
structures, phrases or vocabulary, listen to examples of competent speakers performing the same task, and to rehearse complex parts or all of it.

Scrivener (2005) proposes a basic speaking task sequence for the teacher to guide students on developing the task, these are: set the task, allow the learners to plan the speaking, rehearse the speaking, do the task, the teacher provides general review or feedback, students add/correct/revise the task to improve it next time, and lastly students will redo the task.

4.2.3 How to organize learners in speaking tasks

Scrivener (2005) advices that for getting a speaking activity to work well, the correct physical arrangement is essential. Often teachers after setting the speaking task, leave students sitting shoulder to shoulder lines for pair conversations that require a different sitting arrangement that permits students to interact easily. Moreover, Scrivener (2005), points out that the way in which the organization of the students is set, will be dependent on the type of the speaking task. Therefore, teachers may consider when having students involved in interactions that speakers actually need to make eye contact with those they are speaking to, hear clearly what the other person is saying, and be reasonably close together to avoid misunderstanding.

4.2.4 Teacher’s roles in a speaking task

Harmer (2003) states that during speaking activities there are three particular roles of relevance adopted by the teacher: prompter, participant, and feedback provider.
As a prompter the teacher helps learners when they struggle feel frustrated on not knowing what to say next, offering discrete suggestions without disrupting the discussion. The teacher as participant could role play a speaking task to animate students to produce language, being careful not to participate too much to dominate the speaking and draw all attention on him/her self. And teacher as a feedback provider, need to be tactful over the corrections in the middle or at the end, to help students with misunderstandings, hesitations, the content, and the language used in the activity.

### 4.2.5 Speaking tasks and intercultural skills

When students work together on a task, they are able to make a distinction on how people communicate in other culture different from their own. Cogen (2001) in his study about task based and multicultural literacy showed that when students are at the reporting stage they get to a consensus of comparing and contrasting the target culture and the culture where they live.

Thornbury (2005) presents the sociolinguistic knowledge about values, believes, and behaviors of a culture may affect interactions among speakers who come from a different cultural background. The author includes both, extra linguistic and linguistic knowledge, as part of the competences a speaker must develop to demonstrate intercultural awareness. For example, knowing how people in a given culture greet when meeting others by shaking hands, embracing, kissing, or bowing is extra linguistic, while knowing what to say when they meet is linguistic.
5 LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted regarding the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) for enhancing learner’s ability to interpret the world, being able to interact as proficient intercultural language users. Two studies will be presented to support the purpose of this project, and parts from a third study will be cited to reinforce the topic. The first study was conducted by Gomez (2010), who explored the intercultural awareness students acquire by reading and reflecting upon literary texts. The intercultural skills developed, allow learners to interact successfully in different daily life situations given a specific context. Although there are few studies related to speaking tasks and intercultural competence, it seems that there is a strong connection at the time students are involved in real life interactions which generate awareness of the similarities and differences of how people interact in a determined context, if not explicitly, implicitly. In the second study, Oradee (2012) uses three different communicative activities (discussion, problem solving, and role play), to develop speaking skills. The third study by Alvarez & Bonilla (2009) wanted to increase the intercultural awareness whilst teaching the language skills, through collaborative work and dialogical experiences.

Gomez (2010) carried out a study that aimed at promoting the ICC through the use of authentic literary texts. The study was conducted in Bogota, Colombia, with 23 advanced EFL university learners whose ages ranged from 18 to 22. The information was collected and analyzed using four methods: a questionnaire on what expertise students had on ICC, class observations, interviews done after class sessions and journals written by students. The study concluded that students were able to interpret and understand authentic literary texts while developing their
communicative competence, and at the same time they raised awareness of intercultural aspects. Moreover, participants were able to go through a process of meaning negotiation and constructed knowledge in a more personal, significant and relevant way. In a related study carried by Alvarez & Bonilla (2009) in a university in Bogota, Colombia with advanced university students of the Languages Program, similar results were found in the participants who raised awareness of intercultural aspects, when coming into contact with authentic material and reflecting upon the features of culture observed in communicative interactions in different cultures. Also, the participants were able to observe other people’s behaviors to understand how others perceive the world and how stereotypes and prejudices may affect the way interaction and communication are modelled.

The other case study by Oradee (2012), explores the implementation of three communicative activities to study and compare the speaking skills of 11th graders, and also to analyze the students’ attitudes towards the teaching of the speaking skills. The study took place at a secondary school in Thailand, with students whose ages ranged from 15 to 18 years old. The methods for data collection were a learning log, a semi-structured interview and a teacher journal, and a pretest-posttest. The findings evidenced that the students’ English proficiency after using the communicative activities were significantly higher than before. The students’ attitudes towards the speaking activities improved.

Although the studies were conducted in different contexts and with different participants from the one we will implement this project, similar results might be expected since the communicative activities will be used to foster interactions among students. Those interactions,
will reflect the intercultural skills students develop as they are being exposed to various real life tasks. In the studies mentioned above, the learners participated in interactions, built meaning and grasp awareness of intercultural practices. This can shed light on how to develop and implement the ICC through authentic literary texts of English and real communicate events, while considering further exploration of culture and reflection of the interactions in the foreign language to successfully awake that intercultural awareness. (Alvarez & Bonilla, 2009)

6 METHODOLOGY

In this section, the context and participants involved in this classroom project are presented. Some characteristics such as age, gender, profile of learners, and the setting to implement the project, are described thoroughly. Moreover, the procedure, and the principles selected by the practitioners to raise intercultural awareness are explored in detail, including the methods to assess intercultural interaction. Finally, a reflection stage is incorporated to shed light on the results and challenges that practitioners had to face in terms of their professional growth, students’ responses and linguistics outcomes.

6.1 Context

This project was conducted at a co-ed public institution called “Tecnico Superior”, located in Pereira Risaralda, Colombia. The school belongs to a middle socioeconomic level, and the school has an average of 6 classrooms, one laboratory, 2 bathrooms, 1 sport field, and 1 administrative office. The schedule starts from 6:45 a.m. and it finishes at 11:45 a.m. Its pedagogical model is based on the cognitive, humanistic, and social constructivism approaches;
its didactic is based on significant learning. Students are assessed through a model of competences, which means that assessment is conducted holistically in three main areas, “ser, saber, hacer”. The average number of teachers for primary are 5 and the average number of students per classroom is 36 for an average of 180 pupils. There are some didactic and technological resources such as stereo, T.V, computers, video bean and posters. The project was implemented in 5th graders. The English curriculum assigned by the school is adapted from the standards of “Guia 22” for primary (levels A1 and A2) according to CEFR (Common European Framework of References). The English subject is taught with an average of two hours per week, twice a week.

6.2 Participants

The participants involved in the project were 36 5th graders and two preservice teachers. A short profile of the students and the preservice teachers is described throughout this section.

6.2.1 Students

The target population in this project were 36 5th graders whose ages ranged from 10 to 12, consisting of 12 girls and 24 boys who came from a middle socio economic status. According to the in service teacher, the majority of the students were very participative and collaborative, this is due to a process she had done of modeling student’s attitudes and behaviors with the support of parents. Most students had a good English level, some had taken courses at English language institutes, and others were highly motivated and put a lot of effort in learning; however, some students have difficulties while interacting with others in the target language as some were very shy or felt embarrassed by their partners who were more advanced. Students were most familiar
with basic vocabulary related to colors, numbers, days of the week, months, etc. Student’s preferences included music, games, TV programs, colors, and stirring activities.

6.2.2 Preservice teachers

There were two pre service teachers guiding the project, they were students of the “Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa” program at the UTP (Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira) enrolled in 10th semester. Both of them developed the project, designed the lesson plans, assigned, adapted, and created material for successful completion of the tasks. One of the pre service teachers was in charge of implementing the project and also did in and on action reflection; while the other one made the observations of the whole implementation and reflected in and on action.

6.3 Instructional Design

This section aims at contextualizing the reader on the procedures of the proposal for enhancing the awareness of the intercultural competence through speaking tasks. A brief and general description of the systematic process on each of the stages: planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection, are given. The description is based on theories from experts on the fields of intercultural competence and speaking tasks to improve language learning such as Scrivener (2005), Byram (2002), and Cameron (2001).

6.3.1 Development and implementation

The implementation was done during the whole guided practicum, the two pre service teachers selected, designed, and evaluated the process. The duration of each session was 1 hour per week assigned over a period of 12 weeks, for a total of 12 hours. The main aim was to develop the students’ intercultural awareness having students to interact in speaking tasks. Time
management for implementing the project varied, it was either at the beginning or at the middle of the session, considering that a speaking task took an average of 20 to 30 minutes, and the rest of the class time was focused at achieving the objectives and competences given by the institution.

The task in the preparation stage offered students enough input related to language items and vocabulary, and it also included audios or readings samples that reflected the language items specified before. Afterwards, in the core activity stage, students rehearsed and practiced the speaking task, while the teacher went around helping students and took notes to make general observations in order to provide feedback on students’ performances so that everybody was at the same pace. To reinforce the core activity, students practiced different dialogues, including cloze text activities, writing short texts based on models, and comparing charts as part of the follow up stage.

The possible anticipated problems we might face at this stage could be: the students might not be able to produce in the target language, students may not be contextualized geographically into the English speaking countries, there might be disruptive behavior that will not allow pre-service teacher to implement the project, there might be students with special learning needs, the in service teacher may not facilitate the lesson by constantly interrupting when students get involved at various interactions. The anticipated solutions for these problems could be: plenty of input will be given to students and time to rehearse, in the initial sessions students will be shown a world map where they must point out where they are and where the English speaking countries are, authority in disciplinary issues will be displayed from the beginning and though out the classes by setting rewards for good expected behaviors or assign extra tasks for non-expected behaviors, at the first session especial cases will be identified in order to consider the pedagogical
implications, to let the in service teacher know that sometimes there will be interactions among students that may seem disruptive.

6.3.2 Design

The tasks were planned based on, Cameron’s (2001) task model for young learners, Scrivener’s (2005) procedure for a speaking activity, and Byram’s (2002) suggested materials for teaching the intercultural competence. The speaking tasks were divided in three stages as mentioned by Cameron (2001): first, preparation stage, in this section leaners were prepared to be able to complete the core activities successfully, it included pre-teaching of language items, or activation of vocabulary. Second, the core activity stage, dealt with practicing several times the speaking conversation at different paces and tone of voices, and students performed specific actions as clapping, pointing, jumping, etc., according to the task’s specifications. And third, the follow-up stage, that built on successful completion of the core, this included assignments of dialogues, cloze text activities, and writing short texts based on models. These tasks had meaning and purpose for learners’ lives, had a clear language learning goal, had a beginning and an end, and last it engaged learners actively by allowing them to interact with their peers. (Cameron 2001: 31)

Cameron’s stages for speaking tasks were contrasted with the way Scrivener’s (2005) states leaners’ speaking stages for a task, by making connections between these two authors there was a wider view of what was going to be done in each of the stages. Scrivener defines the stages as: set task, plan the speaking, rehearse the speaking, do the task, receive feedback, add\correct\ and revise, and redo the task. From the series of activities mentioned by Scrivener to enhance
communicative practices in the classroom, picture difference task, role play, speech acts, were used.

Finally, to complement the planning, Byram’s (2002) manual for teaching the intercultural competence was considered as it suggests some materials: authentic texts that includes audio recordings, a variety of written texts and visual aids such as maps, photographs, diagrams, and cartoons. The activities were focused on having learners to understand, identify, and compare the differences commonalities between the two cultures.

The planning consisted of 8 tasks that followed Cameron’s stages: preparation, core activity, and follow up. The pre service teachers were in charge of adapting and providing the material that included key language items students needed to acquire in order to perform the different tasks. The key items were related to greetings, farewells and meeting people.

### 6.3.3 Assessment stage

Although our project was about speaking tasks, assessment was focused on interaction and the intercultural awareness. According to Richards (2008), activities such as conversations, group discussions, and speeches require a different criteria for assessment that must be adapted based on the task’s demands. When designing the assessment criteria, the CEFR’s (2001) guidelines for qualitative aspects of spoken language in the grid of interaction for levels A1 and A2 were taken into account. The instruments the pre service teachers used to assess the criteria depended on the specific tasks: role play, surveys, and student A and student B cloze text activities.

The assessing of the intercultural awareness was based on Byram’s (2002) portfolio where students kept record of the assignments they had done. These records reflected the customs and conventions used by people to greet, farewell, and meet people in the American, British, and
Colombian cultures. The following criteria was designed by and for the pre service teachers to assess student’s interaction and intercultural awareness.

Assessment criteria for meeting people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can ask and answer questions about personal details. A1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on repetition, rephrasing and repair. A1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. A2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord. A2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intercultural Awareness**

| Can assimilate the similarities and differences between the target cultures  |   |   |   |   |   |
| and his or her own culture.                                                  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Can recall the most important facts he\she has learnt about both cultures.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Can awake curiosity and tolerance of the target cultures.                   |   |   |   |   |   |

### 6.3.4 Reflection

This section aims at improving the teaching and learning practices by analyzing the information collected and reflecting on what went well, what did not go so well and what will be done different next time. From the two pre services teachers, one made reflections on action, while the other one was in charge of taking field notes and reflecting in action and on action. Schön (1983) defines the capacity to reflect in action while doing something, and on action after you have done it, and it is an important feature of professional training programs in many disciplines.
### 6.3.4.1 Journal

A journal was used to make reflections during and after each session to re-adjust any activity that may not be suitable for the learner’s age or level and most importantly to help the preservice teachers analyze objectively what was observed in order to report results. The reflections portrayed three major areas: professional growth, students’ responses, and learners’ linguistic outcomes. In terms of professional growth, both pre service teachers reflected upon material design, lesson planning, and classroom management regarding grouping, and the use of L1 and L2. In the same line, they used the assessment instruments created to measure the leaners’ speaking performance related to the linguistic outcomes and the intercultural awareness.

### 6.3.4.2 Observation

The pre service teacher in charge of the observations reflected in and on action on students’ responses, engagement, interest and affective factors by taking notes to evidence if they had acquired the objective of a given task or if they had had difficulties understanding and completing the core activity.

### 6.4 Resources

The public institution’s resources as the classroom, stereo, computer lab, board, were used for the implementation of the project. The designing, adaptation and cost of the material depended strictly on the two pre service teachers, these included: online resources such as videos, songs, short readings, conversation dialogues, handouts, and some of the ideas proposed by Byram on the material that should be encompassed.
6.5 Ethical considerations

The Ethical considerations for this classroom project that were considered during the planning, implementation, analysis, and reporting of data were informed consent, protection of subjects, and reciprocal from the institution. The access to the schools was granted through an alliance between Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira and Instituto Técnico Superior, for the students of the Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa program to do their practicum and so be able to implement their thesis project.

6.5.1 Informed Consent

As part of following the protocol for implementing the project the preservice teachers asked permission to the in service teacher and the students for the implementation of the thesis project on raising intercultural awareness through speaking tasks, letting them know in advanced that there were going to be regular observations, audio and video recordings that will be kept confidential for the interested parties only, and will not be disclosed to others. Data was collected through the means of two instruments: direct observations and journals, the obtained information was reported and analyzed objectively, not allowing personal biases to interfere in the process of concluding the most relevant findings.

6.5.2 Protection of Subjects

When analyzing data and drawing conclusions, one of the utmost aspects is the protection of subjects, keeping their anonymity, thus when reporting data, participants will be referred as “a student” instead of their actual name.
6.5.3 Reciprocal from the institution

All the parties involved in the implementation of this project benefited in various ways. First the student improved their speaking skill and became more conscious of intercultural practices between English and Spanish speakers, being able to recognize differences and similarities in both cultures. Second, the in service teacher and the institution may have certain considerations for the teaching and learning of English in terms of intercultural aspects. And last the pre service teachers developed and improved in their teaching practice and the process of implementing this project, gaining expertise in the area of classroom research and all that it involves.

7 RESULTS

7.1 Professional growth

7.1.1 Challenges in selection and adaptation of material

One key aspect to consider for a successful achievement of the aims of the lesson, is a careful selection of the most adequate material to maximize the fulfilment of the expected objectives, therefore it was especially challenging to select and adapt material that best fit the purpose of raising intercultural awareness in 5th graders. When searching for content or material that included some similarities and differences between formal and informal American, British, and Colombian forms to greet people, there was no source that covered our needs thoroughly, nor were there any catching activities for young learners that included intercultural aspects. Due to this, it was one of the most demanding and most time consuming tasks, looking for material that
was most suitable at reaching the aim of the lesson and that it was attractive and appealing to engage young learners.

The pre service teachers had to look for and gather information from different sources such as videos, books, web pages, and personal experience, to adapt and create appropriate material that was in accordance to the goal of the lesson. For instance, an information table that contained a clear sequence on how to best give and reply to a specific greeting was designed, it included some of the following data: formal American (How are you? – Fine, thank you, and you?), informal American (hey? – hey!), formal British (How do you do? – very well, thank you, and you?), informal British (Alright? – Alright!), formal Colombian (Buenos Dias – Buenos Dias), informal Colombian (Que hubo? – Que hubo etc.!). It was also necessary for pre-service teachers to record their own audios that illustrated the real life greeting conversations, for students to become aware of similarities and differences; as Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) mention, it would be impossible to predict all the communicative events that learners or mediators will be exposed to, so teachers have the responsibility of developing skills for students to be able to compare the events with their own culture. This is to say that the pre-service teachers provided students with the most convenient material for them to be able to develop the skill of recognizing similarities and differences between cultures; even though, at times the aim was just to use greetings instinctively and learners were not asked to mention if any specific greeting was formal for American or informal for British among others, learners were aware of the distinctions as they shouted “American for friends”. (See appendix 1).

The adapted material was a crucial element as it also was the way to present it to students. Despite the fact that material design and adaptation was initially a challenge it became a strength
since preservice teachers had a first initial session experience of implementing the project at another public institution with 4\textsuperscript{th} graders, although it was only one time that it was done, it shed light upon the final product before submitting it for implementation through in and on action reflection, coming to the conclusion that there was the need to improve the material and to consider a prudent time frame to analyze the impact of the new chosen or adapted material to accomplished the desired intention. For this reason the practitioners considered catchy and engaging activities to make the topic more interesting, some of these were: cloze text activities, listening to audios to select responses from checklists, matching, role plays, and participation in short greeting speaking tasks.

Technological devices such as video projector, laptop, and speakers were used to best contextualize learners by showing videos and images, activating students’ background knowledge to things that they were already familiar with. Moreover, the information on the slides regarding greetings was presented with a contrast of colors and allusive images related to the topic to help ease understanding of countries and how people from those countries greeted one another. As Byram et al (2002) point out, students will be more prepared to communicate with other intercultural speakers, tolerate the differences and handle the situations they may face when coming into contact with the target culture or its speakers. Considering the previously mentioned, the classroom atmosphere was created in a way that allowed students to experience a real communicative event and therefore students had a higher chance at completing the task.

7.1.2 **Strength in lesson planning**

Despite the fact that lesson planning was time consuming and a demanding process, it was a strength, given that the aims of the lessons were grasped and there was a good pace along the
activities. The pre service teachers kept in mind certain considerations in order to have a smooth sequence among the topics, making a transition between the aims of the previous lesson to the next ones; therefore, at the beginning of every class there was a short review of the previous lesson and a core activity to reinforce what students were expected to do, this helped students to assimilate the target language required for the speaking task. For this reason, the purpose of the lesson was on using the language rather than forms, as Brown (2002) states, children’s intellectual development is most concerned with the functional purposes of language and do not focus on the explanation of grammar rules. (See appendix 2)

All of the main objectives on every lesson were linked to the main objective of the project as the most relevant consideration in lesson planning, because there was the need to contextualize learners and make them conscious of their intercultural competence in both languages, Spanish and English. This was done through videos, audios, and information sheets; also, the adaptation and application of the activities had to be engaging in order to make students inter-culturally aware of similarities and differences. As a starting point preservice teachers considered in the contextualization of students a more explicit explanation to get insight on the concept of intercultural competence to have students focused on specific language items. In a similar way Uso & Martinez (2008) implemented a first stage of an intercultural project, where the teacher explains learners the concept of intercultural competence in order to make them aware of paying attention to the importance of the target culture and the target language. Furthermore, there was a relation between the activities planned to the objectives of the lesson that best suited the learners’ levels, interests, needs, and likes. This was evident since in every lesson all the activities were carried out successfully within the time framework planned. There was an interaction or an activity strongly bound to the main objective of the lesson that students required to perform in order to
understand the purpose of the lesson. For instance, an information sheet of the topic was given to every student and they had to interact in pairs acting out a short conversation related to the topic. The teacher had pairs of students at one time in front of the class to point to specific formal and informal ways to greet in American and British, after that some students were chosen randomly to say a greeting and another student answered accordingly with the slide on to aid their performance, while other students looked at the information sheet given previously. (See appendix 3)

7.2 Students’ responses

7.2.1 Challenge in raising intercultural awareness

The majority of students had difficulty understanding intercultural practices as most had not reflected consciously stating differences or similarities between cultures; however, systematically as learners were exposed to listening and speaking situations on how to greet, farewell and meet people in the target language, they were able to make unconscious comparisons between their own culture and the target one.

Therefore, as a primary instance there was the need to contextualize learners with the concept of interculturality within their own context, regarding this Byram et al (2002) comments that it is difficult for learners to identify their own cultural features, reason why, it is the teacher the one in charge of bringing those differences to the classroom in order to boost the learner’s ability to make effective comparisons, resulting in a deeper understanding of one’s own culture. In the same line Brown (2002) states, learning must include meaningful purposes in language use and the implementation of authentic language that is context embedded; because of this, it was challenging to make students aware of intercultural practices by setting a realistic context that was closer to
their background knowledge. For this reason, the pre service teachers looked for different customs in terms of typical food, music, and the geographical location of Pereira, Risaralda, Quibdo, Choco, and Rioacha, La Guajira, for students to start to assimilate cultural differences and how one must respect and tolerate others’ ways to be and express themselves. The location of the previous cities was shown to students in a Colombian map, to then present the location of U.S.A, England, Spain, and Colombia in a world map to contrast people’s accents, greetings, farewells and how to meet people. Byram et al (2002) mention that the teacher must encourage learners to reflect and analyze the behaviors and customs of their culture in order to become aware of the differences with the target cultures. This is was evidenced once learners experienced commonalities and discrepancies in their own culture, they were more adequate to recognize them in the English language culture.

At the beginning most students were not able to identify any similarity or difference between American or British accents. When learners were exposed to audios were people spoke in American, British, Spanish from Spain and Spanish from Colombia, the majority of students immediately recognized the Spanish accents, unfortunately they did not distinguish from the English accents. As students were not aware of English accents it was demanding to get them used to identify the variations in intonation.

On one side students were able to differentiate among the formal and informal ways to greet and farewell, when participants were asked to reflect on how to give specific greetings or farewells and how they change from one place to another, some students had problems expressing their answers and looked confused. At the moment students were asked whether greeting formally or informally in American or British was the same or different, most students shouted that it was
the same, although one student said that is was the same but different. This means, that there are many ways to express an idea that might change according to the addressee. Byram et al (2002) point out that the teacher’s sole task is to help learners ask questions and interpret the answers. Thus, the pre service teacher emphasized reflective questions at the end of the sessions for students to assimilate and become aware of intercultural practices.

7.2.2 Strength in getting student’s interested and engaged

Throughout the whole implementation learners were very active and engaged participants. There was a positive motivation and genuine interest from learners given that they were willing to participate at all times, shouting responses, doing collaborative work, and seemed to enjoy and have fun with the sessions. One of the main reasons for this was the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as video beam, computer, speakers; as well as the use of facial expressions and body language from the preservice teacher to emphasize on meaning.

The previous was especially helpful, since Brown (2002) highlights the fact that as young learners present short attention spans, lessons must be interesting, lively and fun to capture their attention spans for longer periods of time. This was proved because learners’ attention was high and they were eager to participate in the English class by raising their hands, shouting responses, and sharing with peers. Furthermore, learners developed all the speaking tasks successfully and continued to practice among themselves even when they were not asked to do so, as in one of the first greeting sessions, where students greeted the teacher in various ways. Brown (2002) considers to include the use of students’ senses by using sensory aids to keep them engaged, and making good use of body language to increase understanding of what is being said.
The adapted material such as images, audios and videos shown where people spoke in English and Spanish captured students’ interest because they were enthusiastic, commenting at all times about what they saw or heard. According to Brown et al (2002) The language teacher should engage students in series of activities that allow them to discuss and conclude from their own experience, also he/she should provide factual information related to life-styles current in the culture(s) and patterns usually followed by member of these cultures, but the most important is to encourage comparative analysis with learners’ own culture.

Students who were uncertain of what they were supposed to do, shared with those who knew or were more advanced and so they could do what was expected. The pre service teacher had quitting students to participate by elicitation to have a better rapport and to make them feel more comfortable and part of the lesson. According to Brown (2002) the teacher must be supportive and patient towards students’ personalities and learning styles, building students’ self-esteem. The preservice teacher took advantage of the advanced students to model some of the tasks, but also sought to include less participative students to keep them motivated. Moreover, Ahmed & Abdallah (2013), point out that integrating culture into language teaching programs has a motivating effect in the language learner and learning processes in an EFL classroom.

Including intercultural aspects in the EFL classroom can excel learners’ interest and participation, as it opens new opportunities for practicing the language. The majority of participants were challenged at all times and wanted to use the English language as they felt they were actually using the language with a specific purpose similar to their native language. This was evidenced in the final assignment where students were asked to role play a real communicative situation in an English speaking context, proactively students chose pieces of language that were
more appropriate according to the degree of formality, students were enthusiastic about the task creating material, decorating the classroom and producing language that was not taught or that they had not been exposed to, such as how to make an invitation, ordering at a restaurant, and placing a telephone call. (See appendix 4)

7.3 Linguistic Outcomes

7.3.1 Challenge in understanding the mechanics of cloze text activities in speaking tasks

Students’ outcomes were evidenced throughout the class development including some of the recorded interactions they performed, and other assignments contained in the portfolio they were asked to keep, such as cloze text activities that were challenging for them. (See appendix 5)

At the beginning learners had some inconveniences carrying out the cloze text activities, most probably because it was their first time doing something like this, it seemed as if they had never done any activity that involved exchanging of information and completing the cloze text according to what the other is saying in a conversation. After the preservice teacher gave the instructions on the dynamics of the activity, students looked confused and tried to do the task without realizing that they did not know exactly what they were supposed to do. Then the preservice teacher called everybody’s attention and modeled the activity with a student, at that moment participants knew exactly how to perform. Hammer (2003) points out that the teacher could role play a speaking task to animate students to produce language, being careful not to participate too much to dominate the speaking and draw all attention on him/her self. This means
that learners will be more capable at performing a specific task after they have received enough input and examples on how to do it.

When learners knew what to do, some had difficulties completing the cloze text because the pronunciation was not accurate and so they could not understand what to write. Also, it was a great deal to have learners work together in a speaking task or organizing them in pairs because some had a higher level than others.

The interactions were role played in front of the class following the cloze text activity. Despite learners’ level, they were able to complete the tasks even though their pronunciation was not the best, for an instance, many of them needed to read from their papers to do the interactions while others did it from memory. From then on, every time this type of activity was introduced participants already knew what they had to do and felt more confident at it, creating a routine.

This type of activity led learners to continue to use some of the seen greetings or farewells, it was very surprising for preservice teachers to realize that students were using different ways to greet or farewell without being asked, this resulted from the expected response needed at the cloze activity, as for example the teacher greeted students in various ways “hello, what’s up, how do you do, etc.” and learners responded accordingly. Cloze text activities helped leaners listen and communicate with the other more attentively thus learning the English language in a way that was not familiar to them and that they had coped with.

7.3.2 Strength in developing speaking skills

Every time a new topic was introduced, students had to develop a specific speaking task, at the beginning it was challenging to get students used to these type of activities, but once they understood them, they started producing new pieces of language by themselves, as it was
evidenced when contextualizing students geographically, one student said: “What color the sea?”, and then the teacher produced the utterance correctly “What color is the sea?”. In the implementation of this project students’ motivation was high because they wanted to speak in English with their peers and to be chosen to present their interaction in front of the class.

In order to have successful speaking tasks, it was necessary to provide enough context embedded input, for students to be able to produce accurate spoken language; furthermore, the topics needed to catch the students’ attention, so they were easily engaged in the development of the task. According to Scrivener (2005) one of the most important and challenging stages in the lesson is when students try to do the speaking by themselves. For this reason, in order to complete this stage successfully the teacher had to consider that leaners needed to get input from structures, phrases or vocabulary, and pronunciation by listening to examples of competent speakers performing the same task, and to rehearse complex parts or all of it; reason why, at the beginning of every session there was either an audio or a video that prepared learners for further stages in the session, also slides, games and songs were presented in order to have leaners identify features of their own language and of the target language.

Learners were also engaged in different speaking activities where they had to interact with peers, negotiate meaning, and decide what parts of the culture they wanted to represent. For instance, they had to do a role play where they pretended to be visitors in an English speaking country, so they had to get involve in an interaction with someone who was familiar to them or someone who was not familiar, and according to the degree of the relationship, they chose the pieces of language that were more appropriate to perform such interaction. Byram et al (2002) suggest that role plays are very useful for activating learner’s schemata about other cultures. This
was evidenced in our project since learners were taking advantage of the previous information shared in classes to create their own conversations taking as a basis the most appropriate pieces of language according to each interaction.

8 Limitations

In this classroom project there were some limitations relevant to mention that could have affected the results of the implementation that can be considered for further research. First, students’ background knowledge of the English language and social studies were crucial for obtaining the expected outcomes. The participants in this classroom project had been exposed to the English language for four years with pre-service teachers from the UTP (Universidad Tecnologica de Pereira), allowing them to have some knowledge and command of the target language, this was essential as all the contents to raise intercultural awareness were done in English. The in-service teacher had taught learners about cities, departments, and customs in Colombia in the social studies subject, helping the pre-service teachers to contextualize learners geographically to realize some similarities and differences within their own culture.

A second limitation for developing the intercultural competence is that learners’ abstract thinking is not fully developed to understand complex terminology. For this reason it is necessary to set a context, simplify the way the topics are presented, and teach the basic concepts of respect and tolerance, so that students may not make any judgements on intercultural practices.
9 Pedagogical implications

One of the first pedagogical implications is that EFL teachers need to be familiar with intercultural practices, how to teach it and how it is assessed, considering the learners’ age, level, likes and needs. The role of the teacher is fundamental to allow learners understand the intercultural competence within a specific topic and context, using body language, facial expressions, catching materials and to provide reflective sessions to contrast cultures.

Another aspect that needs to be considered at the very beginning of implementation is to have a close relationship between the in-service and pre-service teacher to share knowledge and information about participants’ background knowledge, any disciplinary issues, any students with special needs, and any gaps that students may have in regards to their own culture and the English language.

10 Conclusions and contribution to the field

The main purpose of this classroom project was to raise intercultural awareness using different speaking tasks in fifth graders, as well as widening the scope of teaching the intercultural competence with young learners, in a Colombian public school.

Throughout the implementation of this project it was evident that the use of the English language, content-based lessons and abstract concepts used by the pre-service teacher, was not an impediment for learners to understand meaning. Supporting this idea Halliwell (1992) mentions that young children are able to understand what is being said to them, even before
they understand every single word, this is due to children’s ability to grasp meaning based on intonation, gestures, facial expression, body language, action and circumstances.

Despite the fact that the EFL teacher may not have experience in the target culture, it does not hinder to successfully teach intercultural practices as the sole task of the teacher is to make students aware of skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge of cultures of study, by guiding them at asking questions and interpreting answers. Moreover, the topics, and materials must be relevant to the students’ context, taking as a basis the learners’ background and realities to foster a significant comparison among cultural practices that focus on language functions.

It was also concluded that the inclusion of intercultural material in EFL teaching, is a motivating factor and has a greater impact on how learners understand and perceive interculture, on the grounds that it challenges them to use the target language for communicative purposes, allowing learners to create new language items that may have not been taught.
11 References


Barletta, M. (2009). Intercultural competence: Another challenge. Profile 11 journal. 11(2)


Appendixes

Appendix 1 - Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GREETINGS: How to say hello?</th>
<th>AMERICAN</th>
<th>BRITISH</th>
<th>EXPECTED ANSWERS</th>
<th>COLOMBIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>Hello, how are you?</td>
<td>Hola</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s up?</td>
<td>Alright? = Are you ok?</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>Que hubo?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How’s it going?</td>
<td>Ya’ alright? = Are you ok?</td>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>Como te va?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s happening?</td>
<td>Hiya = Hi</td>
<td>Fine thanks, and you?</td>
<td>Que pasa?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you doing?</td>
<td>Alright mate? = alright friend?</td>
<td>Good morning,.....</td>
<td>Como estas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>How do you do?</td>
<td>Very well thanks, and you?</td>
<td>Todo bien?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning, afternoon, evening!</td>
<td>How are you doing today?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Buenos Dias, tardes, noches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAREWELLS: How to say goodbye</th>
<th>AMERICAN</th>
<th>BRITISH</th>
<th>EXPECTED ANSWERS</th>
<th>COLOMBIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take care</td>
<td>Good bye</td>
<td>You, too</td>
<td>You too, bye</td>
<td>Se cuida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See ya (you) later</td>
<td>bye-bye</td>
<td>ok, see ya (you)</td>
<td>Nos vemos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take it easy</td>
<td>Cheers</td>
<td>Ok bye</td>
<td>Chao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotta go</td>
<td>im off</td>
<td>Me too, bye</td>
<td>Hasta luego</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to go</td>
<td>im leaving</td>
<td>You too, enjoy</td>
<td>Me tengo que ir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a good one</td>
<td>Have a lovely day</td>
<td>Same to you</td>
<td>Me tengo que ir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a nice day</td>
<td>Good night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 – Sample of lesson plan

**LESSON PLAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of the class:</th>
<th>Class Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, April 8th, 2016</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aim:**
At the end of the lesson the learners will be able to:

- use wh words and verb to be to ask and answer simple questions.
- recognize geographically Colombia, USA, England, Spain.
- recognize and identify intercultural practices and how to tolerate others’ differences.
- be aware of what is the intercultural communicative competence

**Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN):**

**Estándar General:** Participo en conversaciones cortas usando oraciones con estructuras predecibles. Mi vocabulario se limita a temas y referentes cercanos y conocidos.

**Estándares Específicos**

- Identifico objetos, personas y acciones que me son conocidas en un texto descriptivo corto leído por el profesor.
- Identifico elementos culturales como nombres propios y lugares, en textos sencillos.
- Uso adecuadamente estructuras y patrones gramaticales de uso frecuente.
- Mantengo una conversación simple en inglés con un compañero cuando desarrollo una actividad de aula.

**Indicadores de logro:**
- Reconozco vocabulario relacionado con adjetivos, formas, colores y los asocio a la historia.
- Identifico nombres propio de ciudades en Colombia y su ubicación.
- Entiendo y uso la estructura del verbo to be para presentarme y hablar de mí mismo.
- Participo en conversaciones guiadas por mi profesor comprendiendo las estructuras gramaticales pertinentes.
- Aprendo de memoria frases usadas en el salón de clase y las uso cuando me dirijo a mi profesor.

**Assumed Knowledge:**
Vocabulary related to numbers, adjectives, colors, location of certain cities in Colombia.

**Materials:**
Boards, flashcards, markers, video projector, speakers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME</th>
<th>PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY</th>
<th>ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS AND PLANNED SOLUTIONS</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm up</td>
<td>T. greets ss and asks them to change their sitting arrangement into a circle. Then T. writes big on the board respect and tolerance to reviews ground rules with students. Using the video projector, T. shows different images with two different words in each one, SS have to choose which one of the words is the appropriate word to describe the image.</td>
<td>Ss may get confused with the location of the cities. Teacher will support everything with images</td>
<td>Ss remembered all the ground rules, and and the two key concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit students previous knowledge</td>
<td>T. shows a map of Colombia with some highlighted regions and their customs. T. ask some questions on how to call someone from choco, guajira y Pereira. Some questions about their typical dish, their clothing. T. speaks in Spanish making questions about the three different cities with the purpose of making ss aware of differences and similarities among people.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using their previous knowledge, Ss identified most of the words, they were very attentive and engaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Colombia’s map</td>
<td>T. shows in the video projector a world map and elicits from ss where is Colombia, USA, Spain, and England located. Then T. and ss practice the pronunciation of the countries. T. asks students how to call someone from Colombia, USA, Spain, and England and practices pronunciation with ss, and ss write on their notebooks.</td>
<td>Ss. may not recognized the difference between American and British’s accents.</td>
<td>Although Ss were very participative, the Pre service teacher made a mistake when saying that Choco and La guajira were cities instead of Regions, mistake that was corrected right after the In service teacher let me know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reflection</td>
<td>Ss listen to different people from the previously mentioned countries, and ss guess where are they from, what language do they speak and how to call them.</td>
<td></td>
<td>It went well since Ss had some background knowledge about the countries mentioned, they identified the location of each one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. World map</td>
<td>T. gives ss a handout with the flags of the countries mentioned, ss are asked to paint the flags following the T.’s instructions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ss identify easily which people were speaking English or Spanish; however, they did not recognize immediately which people were form England or USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Painting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-9:50</td>
<td><strong>Matching</strong></td>
<td>Ss will do a matching exercise identifying the flag, the name of the country, how to call someone from that country. Assignment to be collected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50-10:00</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>It won’t be enough time to develop this activity. Instructions were very clear and all the Ss carried out the activity without problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXTRA-CLASS WORK, ANNOUNCEMENTS, THINGS TO CONSIDER:**
To find information on how people greet in English.

**REFLECTION SESSION:**

- **What went well?**
- **How do you know that?**
- **What didn’t go that well?**
- **What would you do different next time?**
Appendix 3 – Identifying greetings
Appendix 4 – Final role play
Appendix 5 - Portfolio

STUDENT A (AMERICAN)

*Good morning
  - Good morning
*How are you?
  - Fine thanks, and you
*What is your name?
  - My name is Javier
*I am ............ Nice to meet you
  - Nice to meet you, too
*What do you do?
  - I am a student
*Have a good one
  - You too, enjoy

Write in front of the sentence if it is American, British, or Colombian

1. What’s up? = Nothing: American
3. How are you? = Fine thank you: American
4. Alright? = I’m Alright: British
5. Buenas tardes = Buenas tardes: Colombian
6. How do you do? = Fine thank you: British
7. Take care = you, too: American
8. I have to go = me too, bye: American
9. Have a lovely day = you as well: British
10. Cheers = cheers: British
11. What’s your job? = I am a doctor: British
12. What’s your name? = American
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRITISH</th>
<th>AMERICAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRIENDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>FRIENDS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good bye</td>
<td>Gotta go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bye-bye</td>
<td>Have a nice day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm leaving</td>
<td>Take it easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good night</td>
<td>Take care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm off</td>
<td>I have to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheers</td>
<td>See you later</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRANGERS</th>
<th>STRANGERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a lovely day</td>
<td>Have a good one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm leaving</td>
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</tr>
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