# ACHIEVING CONTINGENT INTERACTION IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

# ON THE BASIS OF CULTURAL AWARENESS.

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Title: Achieving Contingent Interaction in the English Classroom on the Basis of Cultural Awareness.

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Key Words: Oral interaction, contingent interaction, cultural awareness.

Description: The teaching of English as a Foreign Language has generated a concern for the development of communication in the classroom within which the promotion of oral interaction is usually paramount. However, what constitutes contingent interaction is sometimes not clearly understood and some of the activities that take place in the EFL classroom seem unlikely to generate meaningful opportunities for the development of this kind of interaction. At the same time, the recognition of English language as a means of facilitating cultural learning represents a significant change in position adopted by English teachers about exchanges. That is why this research was developed to foster contingent interaction on the basis of cultural wareness, because raising cultural awareness implies moving away from a focus on language and into a wider field.

This project describes an action research experience carried out in a female private school in Bogotá. The study was developed with a sample of students of nine grade. The data collection techniques used in this research were: surveys, field notes and video recordings. The data analysis was organized and classified by categories to highlight the purpose of the research as it emerged during the process of analysis, based on the theoretical constructs: Oral Interaction by Ibarra (2002), Contingent Interaction by Van Lier (1996) and cultural

awareness by Quappe and Cantatore (2007) and others. The paper has four chapters: The first one "Introduction" is devoted to the contextualization of the problematic situation, the second one, "Theoretical Framework" builds a bridge between the development of students' oral interaction (Contingent Interaction) and the cultural awareness as a pivot, the third one "Methodological Framework" shows the main findings from the four activities which were conducted in a period of fourteen weeks, and the last one "Conclusions" answer to the question what do the findings mean?

In the current research, the English language was understood as a resource to access to other cultures, but it is not the essential or the only one to get cultural awareness. The inclusion of contingent interaction which influences the cultural awareness, not only can change the students' exchanges scheme, but also modifies the preconceptions of the teachers' role as a controller of the whole interactions in the class.

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# INTRODUCTION

"In the process of a foreign language acquisition, semiotic resources are required. Those allow the expansion of reality, because language is at the same time a part of reality, a shaper of reality, and a metaphor for reality". (Halliday, 2003, p. 35). Accordingly, oral interaction takes a privileged position inside communication because as Ibarra (2002 p.45) says: "We use language with the immediate purpose of communicating the way we perceive, give meaning and understand the world. We also use it to build social relationships that allow us to interact with each other. Furthermore, students should develop their communicative competence interacting with others and creating a real atmosphere in the classroom".

English language acquisition and learning in a non-native English speaking country is a complex process because there are not sufficient opportunities for practicing the target language. However, taking into consideration the recent policies established by the Ministry of Education in the Colombian Basic National Standards, it is necessary to create better educational conditions for the development of cultural communicative competence in a foreign language. However, one of the most difficult tasks teachers may face is getting students to interact in English. This is the situation lived by a group of students, all of whom have previously studied English for nine years in a private school (four hours of English per week). Moreover, this population has a special condition: They have the opportunity to travel abroad, interact with foreigners in their trips or even here.

However, in the English classes during a semester, researchers observed and set their attention in the fact that the students have difficulties with the communicative skill mainly when they have to interact without preparing texts previously or memorizing them. They did not feel prepared enough to do it. It means, when they have to present a topic to explain in front of their partners, they were requested to memorize it or explain it in their own words. This kind of situations was not significant for them so they had difficulties to memorize and explain. In some other cases, they were asked to participate in situations during the class without the chance to have a previous preparation. In these cases, they felt unsecure and lacked vocabulary. This lack of vocabulary produced more nervousness at the moment to talk, so they avoided doing it.

Based on this observation the researchers decided to apply two surveys. These surveys had as main goals to know how students see the English class, what kind of activities they preferred and what students wanted to learn in English. In the first survey, it was noticed that the students appreciated and wanted to develop the oral interaction more than the other skills (writing, reading and listening). (See Annex A)

To confirm the former information, preliminary data was collected in order to find out, which were the most common activities that students develop in class, and also to identify the relevance of oral interaction. The students say that: "Classes are developed copying from the board, dictations without corrections, watching videos, oral projects; KET evaluations with emphasis on listening, writing and reading; they expressed that the unique moment they interact is when the teacher asks them to do it, moreover when there is an

opportunity of oral work, it is based on expositions by memory. Oral projects were usually assigned by the teacher based on specific topics (grammar context or communicative situations without a natural context). These projects were intended to reinforce their English knowledge. This kind of process was supposed ideal based on the IRF (Initiation-response-follow up) exchange interaction where the teacher initiates a conversation or set a situation to which students are expected to answer in order to receive a feedback. (See Annex A)

Taking into account these aspects the researchers wondered if the students need other ways of interaction according to what their lives ask for. Thus, the results helped the researchers to find that the English classes give them some elements, however they are not sufficient or meaningful for their particular real context, and due to fact the oral interaction has a relevant position in their goals. Besides this, English is a must for people who have a better life project in mind, since it is the most used language all around the world because of its accuracy; it is also needed to interact in most of the countries when going abroad.

Keeping in mind that these students have the chance to travel and live outside, they feel it is mandatory to speak very well English in order to have a good interaction, to improve their life quality and their work opportunities. If a person is a foreigner in a non-native language country, it will be necessary to use English as a second language in most of the cases. It implies the necessity to speak it very well to avoid misunderstandings and rejection from the native speakers, since native speakers usually are very demanding about the use of their language. Furthermore, a previous knowledge of the foreign culture,

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besides the language, helps to avoid uncomfortable situations considering that each nation has its own beliefs, values and customs.

This knowledge and cultural awareness is not implicit in each person. It is necessary to acquire it during the learning processes and, to get the guide of teachers is essential since they have already developed these aspects in their lives. They are not only showing the cultural differences but also a better way to interact in such different context. Teachers are responsible to develop that cultural awareness in their students and reinforce why it is important a good interaction in a foreign country.

Taking into consideration all these aspects, the **scientific problem** is stated as the need of enriching oral interaction in the students of a private school, having in mind the context they belong to. That is why this project has as main goal to foster contingent interaction in the English classroom using cultural awareness as axis. Contingent interaction offers the chance to interact in more real contexts allowing the development of the communicative competence. "Contingency as a dual concept combines elements of predictability (new-ness the unexpected)" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 174). It means that the students might have more opportunities for using the language in communication, because through this type of interaction in which participants make connections between themselves and others and connect what is known to what is yet to be known is the kind of interaction crucial for learning. It could happen in any classroom given that classrooms are by nature "…a complex system in which events do not occur in linear causal fashion, but in which a

multitude of forces interact in complex self organizing ways, and create changes and patterns that are predictable, part unpredictable" (Van Lier, 1996 p.148).

In contingent interaction, there is no certainty  as regards the direction the talk will take, for it depends on the local, moment-to-moment positions and contributions of each of the participants. Besides, cultural awareness is a useful issue to have students interacting with topics they feel attracted to. Effective communication in a diverse environment may require critical thinking. It may require students to study their surroundings and think critically about how to communicate effectively in situations, which can vary from culture to culture. It is very important to be aware of your culture when interacting with others.

As we build our cultural awareness, we also build bridges to trust, respect and understanding across cultures, fostering productive interactions and agreements. This requires identifying adequate theories about it, conducting meaningful activities and enriching this theory by cultural awareness as a pivot and analyzing data of the interaction activities applied to the population quota as it is shown and explained in the methodological framework.

In addition to the Contingent Interaction and Cultural Awareness theories applied to this project, it was necessary a third theory to complement and enrich this research since it is directly related to the processes conducted in classes. Its name is Action Research.

This project includes it because Ernest Stringer (2007), in his action research interacting spiral, describes action research as a "simple, yet powerful framework"

consisting of a "look, think and act" routine. During each stage, participants observe, reflect, and then take some sort of action.

The "look, think, act" routine is just one of the different ways in which action research is focused. It is read as a continually recycling set of activities. As participants work through each of the major stages, they will explore the details of their activities through a constant process of observation, reflection and action. At the completion of each set of activities, they will review (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions).

The data collection techniques used in this research are: empirical methods: surveys which are questionnaires designed to get information on specific aspects (in this project they were used to observe and reflect about the English classes and establish students needs and opinions on their learning processes), participating researchers' field notes in which researches described what they did during the project development in order to observe the processes and set conclusions and recommendations, and video recordings of what students did to observe their advances during the project development.

A common phenomenon in class when learning a second language is an apparent lack of motivation or low performance which in fact, hide the anxiety students present at the moment to talk. That is why it is needed to promote oral interaction as it has been studied by Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009, p. 39) who in her thesis emphasized in the anxiety when speaking the foreign language and she also provided teachers with strategies for reducing it. Since Contingent interaction and Cultural awareness help to overcome this

anxiety, they count as useful strategies in the learning process of a language for reducing language speaking anxiety stemming from students' fear of negative evaluation from their peers and perception of low ability. On the other hand, Rosado (2012, p. 155) examines both contingent and non-contingent interaction and claims the benefits of contingent interaction for the development of communicative competence in EFL. In this study, contingency was related to mistakes: mistakes, which indicated an emerging communicative need. On the other hand, interaction realized in the IRF pattern-are very effective in eliciting information students already know or are familiar with. Whereas Herazo (2009, p. 47) based his study on samples of oral communication exchanges that occur in Colombian EFL secondary school classrooms in Monteria and discusses their effectiveness for developing meaningful oral production in both student-student and teacher-student interaction. In other words, he claims that unauthentic communication usually provides a variety of language use roles for the teacher, relegating students to passive members of the languages exchange.

With regards to cultural awareness, Gomez (2009, p. 12) proposes some activities which can be used by teachers to promote language learning through the Internet as well as to promote intercultural exchange of pupils. Interculturality empowers communication, not only among students themselves, but also among students and teachers with a variety of exercises that range from the writing of personal blogs to the participation in collaborative projects on the web. Meanwhile Kriauciuniene (2009, p. 8) proposes the need to adapt teaching methods and materials to raise learners cultural awareness. The aim of the research is to reveal how intercultural competence could be developed in foreign language

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teaching/learning classroom and how it can be improved. Bacca (2012, p. 75) presents the significance of intercultural exchanges in relation to otherness in a country far from the French culture. She emphasizes that in fact, learning a foreign language goes beyond a communicative competence that remains Know-how. Meanwhile the present project pretends to achieve contingent interaction in the English classroom on the basis of cultural awareness.

The students, teachers and researchers agreed about the importance of oral interaction in classes as one of the most desirable skills that English learners want to develop. Taking into account the particularity and benefits of the context where the current research takes place, the contingent interaction could be the appropriate one because of its specific characteristics: "Contingent interaction seems to be related to the concept of conversation. In Van Lier's terms, conversation is aimed at the construction of communicative symmetry, or equal (or at least almost equal) distribution of rights and duties in the talk" (1996, p. 175). For that reason, it is important to consider the contingent interaction on the basis of cultural awareness because the learning of the language becomes more meaningful when it is recognized within a culture. Brown (1994, p. 165) describes the relation between language and culture as follows: "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." All in all, culture and language are inseparable (cited in Jiang, 2000, p. 328) and that is the main reason to support and justify this research.

With the above **research question** set as follows: How can contingent interaction influence cultural awareness in the EFL classes?

Likewise, the object and the field of study that worked on this project were: Oral interaction in EFL classes and Contingent interaction in EFL classes in a private school on the basis of cultural awareness.

In the same way the following **general objective** was developed: To determine how can contingent interaction influence cultural awareness in the EFL classes and **specific objectives**: To identify suitable theory about contingent interaction and cultural awareness; To implement meaningful and enriching contingent interaction activities using cultural awareness as pivot; To analyze data of the activities applied to the population.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the process of learning a new language, students in the classroom have to face not only academic goals but social aspects too. Taking into account that these factors should be integrated, the researchers built a bridge between the development of students' oral interaction (contingent interaction) and the cultural awareness as a pivot.

### Oral Interaction

In the interaction, at least two individuals participate in a spoken or written exchange in which the expression and understanding alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. They can be talking and listening to each other simultaneously, even

when strictly respecting the right to speak. The listener usually is already predicting the rest of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact, therefore, involves more than learning to understand and produce spoken utterances. Usually it is attached a great importance to the interaction in the use of the language. (Long, 1983, pp.126-141)

Several authors have suggested different theories to define and help promoting classroom interaction, Ibarra (2001, P. 42) for example, talks about the relationship between interaction and communication. He says that language is used with an immediate purpose of communication in the way world is perceived, given meaning and described. And this is also used to build social relationships as you interact with others, Nunan (1996, p. 60) says that real discourse tends to be spontaneous and in order to overcome the unpredictability, routines are used for interaction, idioms and expressions are used when talking spontaneously.

In addition, Bygate (1987, p.87) suggests that oral interactions can be analyzed in terms of such conversational routines (Which are considered predictable). Among those he mentions: asking for the opinion of another person, asking for the other party the information or the language he or she has forgotten, in response to requests for clarification from the listener (s), for example, restate, repeat, giving examples or analogies, indicating uncertainty about understanding, so requesting clarification, expresses appropriate agreement reserves the speaker's point of view, take turns or stops when necessary to express any the above. When students talk in a safe and comfortable environment, they can interact better in real life situations. It means it is necessary to set this environment for them

during the class. It will help them to propose a special atmosphere for a natural conversation instead of an artificial situation. The act of speaking is not an isolated action. This is built every day by the interaction with people.

It implies that, rather than speaking, students should be able to process, transform and eventually share information with others. That is what researchers mean by interaction. Researchers and teachers can provide students the opportunity to interact with each other, by the use of prior knowledge, indicating real situations based on cultural awareness, which they may be involved. (Long, 1983, pp.126-141)

The concept of interaction has gained greater recognition in recent decades. A pioneer in this field is Long (1983, p. 133), who stated in his interaction hypothesis that opportunities to form it were conducive to language learning. This means that any interaction implies a kind of negotiation between speakers since they have to find the right answers to each interaction. It is not just an ask-answer situation without any exchange of knowledge. There are several reasons that support this hypothesis. It is the assumption that students receive information on their production during the interaction and have the opportunity to modify their oral language production, during the same one. (Long, 1996, P. 141)

The European Framework for learning, teaching and assessment of languages and in particular, the Spanish adaptation by the Cervantes Institute and was released in 2002 says that "communicative language competence student or user has of language is operated with performing various language activities, also called communicative activities including

comprehension, expression, interaction or mediation (in particular interpreting or translating)" (De Europa, 2002, p.25)

It is clear that during an interaction between two speakers there must be mediation among them to take this one to an end. In any case, despite how important it is (methodologically and didactically), and considering interaction as an independent communicative activity, it is believed that when it comes to speaking, especially in relation to classroom tasks, it is needed to take into account both expression and communicative situations themselves, as any other in which one partner can adopt the roles of sender and receiver. (Long, 1983, pp.126-141)

Regarding the interaction, new technologies contribution must not be forgotten. Classical oral and written communication join the new forms of digital interaction, e.g. interaction with the digital media reader, as well as forums and chats, whose fundamental difference is the asynchrony between the first and the second ones. It describes a form of interaction that helps participants to improve their second language development and make more fluent exchanges of information. (Long, 1983, pp. 126-141)

**Contingent Interaction**

One type of interaction, which characteristics appear to contribute more successfully to develop language, is called by Van Lier (1996, pp.148-175) "educational conversation" or contingent interaction. In contingent interaction, there is no certainty onto the direction

the talk will take, as it depends on the local positions, moment by moment, and the contributions of each of the participants.

Relating the concept of contingent interaction to the way proficiency grows, it is possible to say that it is in contingent interaction where "language provides affordances that engage learners" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 171); that is, where learning opportunities are created and learners take advantage of them. In this way, the complex set of processes that underpin foreign language learning might be more effectively activated.

This kind of interaction could be related to the concept of contingent teaching; Van Lier's (1996, 148-175) says that it refers to teaching that assists performance through the pacing of help based on the child's contributions to the interaction. It falls also within the conception of human development as the transformation of participation in sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 2003).

The notion of contingency appears to be a major factor in effective teacher-student interaction. Contingency refers to the way in which the teacher (or other adult) judges the need and quality of assistance required by the learner, on the basis of moment-to-moment understanding.

Contingent interaction (Mercer, 2001; Van Lier, 1996, 2004) includes two closely interrelated aspects: dialogue and conversation. The key to this idea is to think of education as a process of reciprocal understanding that teaching involves talking. Within the interactive dynamics based on a conversation, desires, intentions and behaviors of

participants are highlighted over an exchange that is combining the various individual contributions on a shared construct. Extrapolating the basis of conversation in everyday life situations in the classroom exchange means, to the teacher, dynamic class sessions so that, even with preset targets, follow the guidance that is acquiring the exchange, adjusting it to the needs and issues that emerge from students, deciding moment by moment what is the best path to follow. The contingency, as it has been identified (Carter, 2004), appears to be a determinant to engage and involve learners in the learning process because it is a conversational process in which:

- It refers to family content to connect them with new content – it is created, because it is based on the continuous collection of student's interventions, an expectation to new content, meaning that the learning process is a continuum and a constant connection between self, shares and new knowledge.

According to Coyle (2000), and with respect to contingency, the following dialogic movement can be given, in the last ones are highlighted:

1. Monologue: the expert controls the speech as an information transmitter.

2. Dialogue: the expert controls the speech in its interaction with the less experienced, is the IRF sequence ('initiation, response, feedback')

3. Explorative Contingency: transactional instructional discourse in a two way process imposed by the most expert: teacher-learner, learner-learner.

4. Conversational contingency: co-constructive transformative interaction of events through a non-contingent tax speech, self-monitoring of the learner.

It is important to understand that the achievement of a contingent conversational speech is only possible within a symmetrical interaction. However, symmetry must not be confused with equality (Van Lier, 1996). This symmetry refers to the creation of a common context with a balanced distribution of rights and obligations which lead to reach a common shared ground in which factors as respect and affection also affect it. It is understood, therefore, that it is impossible to develop a proleptic contingent speech if it is not taken into account the importance of creating learning communities, whatever the educational field in which teaching practice is developed. For the construction of a context of this type discursive procedures have been identified and successfully tested (Vilà, 2004; Esteve et al, 2003). In addition to the form previously submitted, they form a protocol to act as a "tactful" teacher, establishing a climate conducive to learning empathy and co-construct teaching.

At this point, it was focused on the co-construction of explicit knowledge from a role model based on the experiences of students. Comenius project for initial and continuous training of teachers shows four explicit phases is (plus a pre-phase corresponding to the pre-structuration, which sets out the objectives to be achieved and the best-suited means to achieve).

Phase 1: Starting from personal experiences. At this stage, previous or recent experiences are activated in trainees from guiding questions of the type presented above.

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Phase 2: Structuring ideas and thoughts that arise in the first phase as well as individual and group reflection through joint elaboration (between teacher and learners) of mind maps from the verbalization of experiences.

The method proposed for this phase is: Let students think individually, then in small groups, and finally, the teacher collects as conceptual map all the results of the small group discussion. This phase should be no longer than 15 minutes and must be fixed in writing (individual, small group and large group reflection) so it must show a continuum and, above all, of the contribution of class group to individual reflection.

So that the two phases are actually suggested successful:

a)       Open questions should be used to create easier connections with previous experiences: What do you mean by...? What does it mean for you..., what would you do if...., how would you define...?  In order to make questions meaningful for the learner and a reaction, it is necessary to adapt the concepts to which reference is made in the initial question to the knowledge level of the student. (Esteve; Carandell & Keim, 2003)

b)       It is recommended to follow some actions at the moment of collecting students' contributions:

- Constant verification between what students verbalized and the collected information (Is what you wanted to say?)

- Approval of all interventions, although "a priori" do not bring anything special or deviate a little of the planned activity.

- Leave the participants seek logical groupings of disparate ideas that come up, always from personal criteria.

- Gesturing and walking pretty much around the group and looking directly into the students' eyes is recommended (many authors consider gestures and glances essential for "tactful" teaching) (Van Manen, 1999).

- Use of 'us' versus ' I' (importance of discourse markers for 'group identification') (Vilà, 2004)

- Name pupils / students with the name of the social group to which the teacher or expert belong ('doctors', 'veterinarians') (Vilà, 2004, 57-70)

Through these procedures and pedagogical action developed in these two phases, it is intended to be shared, contrasted and developed ideas and knowledge in a systematic and effective way. Now, in order to get an effective group reflection for each of the participants it is important that, first of all, students must be conscious about their initial reflection as well as other perspectives or ideas that make them advance in their individual reflection. Besides, and this is in the socio-affective aspect, the less experienced will feel "involved", "heard", and part of the group as soon as identify their own ideas and thoughts. Thus, it favors that group members see themselves how their reflections are shared by equals and at the same time are considered as 'potential experts' (Donato & McCormick, 1994).

Also, and this is particularly important, it helps the student to hint it in a bidirectional knowledge methodology and construction which takes into account the significant information they can contribute with. Consider these first reflections are clearly from their own experiences and, as seen from the studies on the processes of initial training, they stand as the starting point of any approach to theoretical areas (Korthagen, 2001).

For teachers, these first steps will help to establish a relationship of "symmetry", which leads them unquestionably to be identified as members of the group, while maintaining the authority of expert. This relationship is enhanced if the trainer or teacher speaks of his own experiences, which generally coincide with those of trainees.

**Cultural awareness**

The development of cultural awareness could be a new topic for teachers who recognize that learning a language has grown culturally and cross-culturally to be cultural equipping students to enjoy a good communication in the global community (Robatjazi, 2008, p 263). Both students and teachers have to develop the ability to acquire new knowledge about other cultures and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills. Therefore, students have to work with their own culture and the culture of others, it means, "with the ability to analyze and accept others" (Byram & Esarte - Sarries, 1991, p.13). As Kramsch says, "In practice, teachers teach language and culture, or culture in language, but not language as culture". It reinforces the fact that language acquisition must not exclude the cultural awareness since language is a reflection of the culture, a clear show of what individuals are and do.

It requires consideration of both the language skills and cultural awareness on this basis, the speaker has the opportunity to develop the ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures. Therefore, ways of thinking, feeling and acting in different living communities are more or less close to each other because they share, for example, language or some elements of their lifestyles. Obviously the most elements living communities will share simplest communication will be among them. In every circumstance, cultural communication has different characteristics, according to the proximity or remoteness of individuals. ( Von Foerster, 1994, p.95)

However, it is not intended to give multiple recipes for any cultural situation; it might be useful to consider a number of criteria to achieve a more effective communication on the basis of cultural awareness. Humans have been socializing in a particular linguistic community in which they acquire communicative competences. If people come into contact with foreigners who speak a different language, it will be necessary to establish a well-balanced level of respect about values, beliefs, customs and other aspects with the intention to interact in a better way. That is, it is essential to have a common language to communicate each other. This proficiency is a necessary, but not sufficient for optimal communication.

According to Von Foerster, (1994, p. 95), for effective cultural communication is necessary, first, a new communicative competence and, even more, some knowledge of the other culture. Interpersonal communication is not just a verbal communication, nonverbal communication (spatial, tactile, etc.) is very important. That is, it is not enough to know a

language, it is necessary to know also, for example, the meaning of a partner gestural communication. It must be remembered that communication is not a simple exchange of messages with an unquestionable sense. The same speech may have different reading levels that only people who know the culture can achieve it. For example, to fully understand the movie Forrest Gump, starring Tom Hanks, it was needed some knowledge of American history and culture. Of course, the film could be seen without this knowledge, but the references in the film were lost in many sequences. Then, it is necessary, therefore the broadest knowledge possible of the culture of the person they are interrelated. The ignorance of the "other" dehumanizes.

It is not only necessary to know other cultures. Communication also implies an awareness of own culture. On many occasions, communications are filled with values that people transmit without being barely aware of it. It involves not only to communicate with other cultures but also to make the effort to rethink the own culture.

An essential requirement for cultural awareness is that there is some interest in other cultures than apart from their own one. Of course, there is an anecdotal or directed interest to confirm own values. It is about seeing what speaker can learn from other cultures. In contrast to efforts, typical of colonialism, modifying the non-dominant cultures to make them as close as possible to the dominating, currently seeks to know them as they are. This change of view towards other cultures is also reflected to the culture itself.

First, participants must be aware of their ethnocentric viewpoint and start rethinking many of the values hitherto that substantiated what has been called the "cultural identity",

those values that are based precisely on the denigration of foreign culture to glorify it. This awareness must set language itself as the everyday language legitimizes a social reality sometimes discriminatory.

When it comes to terms with people from very different cultures, it can produce what has been called a "culture shock". In this cultural clash occurs not only a misunderstanding of the others behavior, but also shows a series of negative emotions: distrust, discomfort, anxiety, worry, etc. To overcome this culture shock it is needed the cultural awareness. It is not a mere exchange of information. Cultural awareness means also being able to share feelings. That is, we must be able to create empathy. It is the ability to feel the emotion that another person experiences. Having the ability to empathize is essential in many relationships. If in a family members have no empathy with each other, it is likely that family relationships are more easily damaged. Empathy is also necessary for better understanding of "the other". It is not just to feel what he or she feels, but through increasing our understanding emotions.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

**Methodology**

It is an action research project because, as Ernest Stringer (2007), in his action research interacting, describes action research as a "simple, yet powerful framework" consisting of a "look, think and act" routine, during each stage, participants observe, reflect, and then take some sort of action.

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The "look, think, act" routine is just one of a number of ways in which action research is envisaged. It is read as a continually recycling set of activities. As participants work through each of the major stages, they will explore the details of their activities through a constant process of observation, reflection and action. At the completion of each set of activities, they will review (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions). As experience will show, action research is not a neat, orderly activity that allows participants to proceed step-by-step to the end of the process.

For these characteristics, the action research was the most appropriate method to apply in this study. Firstly that it is carried out by classroom teachers rather by than outside researchers. In this study the teachers are the same researchers, so they could interpret, act, reflect and improve the different classroom actions from the point of view of those who take part in each situation (it involves teachers and students); secondly, it uses a very direct and simple language to explain the classroom situations that were analyzed far from the technical and specialized language used by conventional research; thirdly, the project takes the form of an ongoing cycle in which the teachers-researchers reflect on, return to, and extend the initial inquiry.

**Context**

It is a female private school that belongs to a religious community. The school is divided into two locations: One for pre-school and for primary and the other one for high school. The institution is organized according to the educational laws, and it has its own curriculum. The School Institutional Project (PEI) is called "An integral proposal: We

educate in love for service". The mission is to guide students to face the challenging goals that society offers them. At the same time, the school vision aims at improving the students' academic and spiritual aspects to face the new world.

This school PEI takes into account the principles of the constructivism model. The studies plan has its fundamental knowledge areas established by the Ministry of Education via Law 115 (De Educación General, 1994). It includes the development of the different areas. One of them is "The Foreign Language" (English)

The teaching process follows the communicative approach method; it is studied based on the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In this institution, there are four hours per week to develop the English classes. Each day one different skill is worked.

**Participants**

Participants for this study were two female EFL teachers (participants- observers) from a private school in Bogotá and their 120 female 10th grade students divided in four groups. From each group, five students were selected at random, for 20 students as a sample for the data analysis. This number of students represent a meaningful percentage of the total population.

The students are between 14 and 16 years old. The students showed interest and desire to express themselves in English but when they had the opportunity to interact or talk in front of their classmates, they prefer not to do it because they feel not prepared enough.

However, they are students who have the opportunity to travel, to interact with foreigners not only via Skype but also face to face with native people in their trips, and here. The difficulty is when they have to interact because they only say isolated words and prefer to be quiet during of the conversation.

**Implementation**

For the analysis of the information, it is important to emphasize that there are two types of time along the research. The first one, which is related to the duration of the whole process, it started in February 2011 and finished in May 2014. The second one is related to the pedagogical intervention developed: The observation reported in this study was conducted for a period of 14 weeks between October 10$^{th}$ 2012 and October 1$^{st}$ 2013, for a total of 4 activities reported.

Entire English classes with these activities were observed and recorded for subsequent transcriptions. Teachers' notes were taken during the development of the classes to complement data from recordings. The data from the four activities comprises the corpus for this study. From the recordings of classes text transcriptions were made, and then compared with both teachers' notes, as a complement to enrich and to make the triangulation of the data. Standardization of coding was achieved by discussion with the research tutor and when doubt existed about the type of code to use, relevant authors were revised to clarify  it. The analytical coding was the appropriated one for  this research, because of its characteristics. (Mason, 2002, p 51)

The four activities were designed to enrich cultural awareness and fostering the contingent interaction, they were thought on the basis of degrees of cultural awareness proposed by Quappe & Cantatore (2007, p.1-2). The first step was a diagnosis stage where the four language skills were evaluated with activities related to specific celebrations such as New Year's Day, Halloween, Christmas Day, Birthday, etc; the students were asked to contrast these celebrations in our country with other cultures. This activity was developed in 4 weeks from October 10$^{th}$ to October 31$^{st}$. Its name is: My way is the only way.

The second step, which is called: I know their way but my way is better, was divided in four basic activities: Souvenir, picture, t-shirt and poster. Students had to bring a souvenir that could have been acquired by them in one of their trips or received from someone who had traveled (around Colombia or abroad), present a picture of a trip here or abroad, design a poster about another culture and draw on a t-shirt the most representative aspect for them of our country. This activity started based on IRF exchange interaction with questions about culture (e.g.: Would you like to live in the country you show in the poster facing other customs, habits? Explain) then the contingent interaction emerged between students. This is the first moment where teachers began to lose protagonism. The activity took 5 weeks: From July 19$^{th}$ to August 22$^{nd}$.

Finished this stage, the third step was a stand exhibition about different countries. It is called: My way and their way. Previously the countries were selected by students, some of them were: Japan, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, India, etc. They had to present the most important aspects from each country as: Flag, food, music and some historical issues

among other ones. It also included the presentation of a magazine created by them. During each class, a stand was exhibited and students, teachers and guests (teachers of different subjects) had the opportunity to ask and interact with the organizers of the corresponding stand. (The third activity lasted 5 weeks: From August 30$^{th}$ to September 27$^{th}$.)

The final step was the English Day Celebration. For the present research is called: Our Way. In that activity the whole community school participated. 27 students from sixth to eleventh grade led by two 10$^{th}$ grade students staged a show in which traveler students crossed 15 countries asking questions and discovering what aspects we as tourists must know about culture: customs, habits, regulations, rites, etc of each country.

To close the event, the audience was involved in a contest through 30 key questions about cultural aspects they could appreciate in the show. Notwithstanding the show was performed in one day: October 1$^{st}$ 2013, it implied weeks of extra-rehearsals.

**Data Analysis**

As the core of this study was to get some understanding of how contingent interaction could influence cultural awareness the in the EFL classes, the data analysis was organized and classified by categories to highlight the purpose of the current research as it emerged during the process of analysis. That is, to focus on the contingent interaction in the sense of cultural awareness fosters it what could enrich the process of language learning.

**Results**

In order to present and discuss the results in an organized manner, the following two categories were proposed: The changing process on interactions and Cultural sensitivity. Through the immersion in the data, it was possible to identify patterns among them, which generated categories internally consistent, but different each of the others.

These categories were created by the researchers, they are "buried" in the data, based on theoretical constructs of the present research. The category the changing process on interactions and its subcategories were supported on types of interaction according to Van Lier: "The IRF exchange is the familiar sequence of teacher-student-teacher turn taking in the classroom, and the contingent interaction can be usefully thought in terms of improvisation or scripting of interaction: contingent interaction is improvised not scripted" (1996, p.98). Respect to the second category "Cultural Sensitivity" and its subcategories were inspired on the definition given by Bennet: "Developing cultural sensitivity means to develop capability to recognize and to accept differences between cultures' perception of the world" (2004, p.147).

Results presented below when looked at quantitatively and qualitatively tell an interesting story. What kinds of interactions were being performed along the process? What was the quality of the interactions? How was the role of teachers being changed? In addition, most importantly, how contingent interaction influenced the cultural awareness creating opportunities for learning?

33

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │     Categories      │
                          └─────────────────────┘
              ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
┌─────────────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ The changing process on         │   │   Cultural Sensitivity          │
│ interactions                    │   │                                 │
│   (Van Lier,1996, p 174)        │   │   (Benett, 2004, p.147)         │
└─────────────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────────────┘
              │                                         │
      ┌───────────────┐                         ┌───────────────┐
      │ Subcategories │                         │ Subcategories │
      └───────────────┘                         └───────────────┘

┌────────────┐   ┌────────────┐   ┌────────────────┐   ┌────────────────┐
│ Types of   │   │ Quality of │   │ The ignorance  │   │ Cultural shock │
│ interactions│  │ interactions│  │ and            │   └────────────────┘
└────────────┘   └────────────┘   │ rejection of   │
┌────────────┐   ┌────────────────┐ one's          │   ┌────────────────┐
│ Frequency  │   │ Changing role  │ own culture    │   │ Cultural Balance│
│ of         │   │ of the teacher │ └──────────────┘   └────────────────┘
│ interactions│  │ in the         │
└────────────┘   │ interaction    │
                 └────────────────┘
```
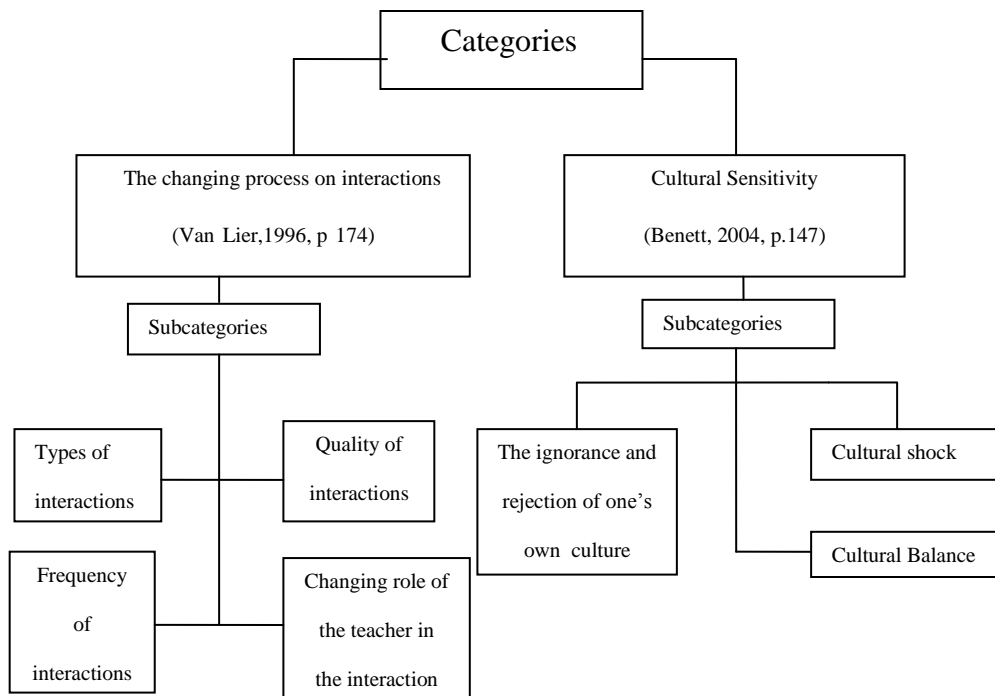
**The changing process on interactions**

In what follows, it was abstracted from the full transcript data four subcategories, which are: Types of interactions, quality of interactions, frequency of interactions and the changing role of the teacher in the interaction process. Through the results, it was possible to observe the four subcategories interrelated but evident along the four activities applied.

Based on the diagnosis activity (My way is the only way) in which readings and videos showed traditions, beliefs, and customs of other cultures with the purpose of contrasting them with the proper one, the researchers could identify clearly what kind of interaction was happening in EFL classes although culture started to emerge through purposed activities.

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"The IRF exchange usually takes place in teacher-student interaction and has been described as a closed rather than an open discourse format due to the fact that it limits the learner's participation to one turn (the second turn of response)" (Van Lier, 1996, p 153)

**Table 1 extract 1**

| |
|---|
| *T: Do you find differences and similarities in the way you celebrate birthdays and people of other cultures celebrate them?* |
| *S₁: Yes, in Mexico is like here in Colombia but in India no is different.* |
| *T: And what is the similarity of our country with Mexico?* |
| *S₁: That the 15 years old are celebrated in Mexico like here in Colombia.* |

More than 85% of exchanges in the classroom with the first activity (My way is the only way) were non-contingent or IRF exchanges: students only answered when the teacher asked, they didn´t go beyond.

**Table 2 extract 2**

*Video "Brat-camp" (Camp for teenagers with behavioural problems)*

| |
|---|
| *T: Do you agree to have this kind of camps for problematic teenagers here in Colombia like in the USA? Explain.* |
| *S₂: No, I think they are extremely horrible.* |
| *T: Why?* |
| *S₂: because in my opinion is too hard, for example to be quiet during a whole day.* |

The first activity (My way is the only way) was a diagnosis that in terms of the Action Research proposed for this study is called the look stage. Through this implementation, it was possible to apply the second and third steps of Action research interacting spiral "think and act". According to the results obtained with the first activity, it was necessary to reanalyze and modify the next activities. In the first stage although it was involved cultural awareness, the students continued with traditional interactions IRF exchanges.

With the second activity: "I Know their way, but my way is better", the behavior of the students began to change about the type of interactions. The contingent interaction started to give its first sparkles. "Contingency suggests dependency and uncertainty since the content and the direction of conversation is co-constructed by the interactants during the course of the conversation." (Van Lier, 1989, p 489)

**Table 3 extract 3**

| |
|---|
| *T: Explain with clue words your t-shirt.* |
| *S11: I drew the Colombian's flag but for me the yellow represents the typical celebrations, the blue represents the wealth of our resources and the red the happy hearts of all Colombian people.* |
| *S8: Cartagena because for me is the most beautiful city of our country for its beauty and history. If I had to recommend a place to know about our culture and history to a foreigner, I would recommend Cartagena.* |

Contingent interaction started with exchanges in which the teacher moved away from controlled language presentation and practiced to provide personalized opportunities

that allowed students to convey their own ideas and experiences. The contingent interaction began to emerge with the second activity between the second and the third week.

**Table 4 extract 4**

| |
|---|
| *T: Why did you choose this picture?* |
| *S20: Because I am in the most beautiful place of my trip. I am in Dubai. It was the first time that I traveled there and this trip was the present that my parents gave me for my 15th birthday.* |
| *S18: What was the most strange and fantastic of your trip in Dubai?* |
| *S20: The Muslim religion because of course they dress very different and I had to be careful with my own clothes, not too short and our guide told us that 40 years ago Dubai was nothing but if you travel there you can see a very rich empire, luxuries, extremely beautiful hotels, buildings.* |
| *T: What was the most impacting tradition in Dubai for you?* |
| *S20: Our guide said to us that to recognize a poor family of Dubai, is when the groom gives a ring, a bracelet and a chain made of gold to the bride, when they're going to marry. This was very impacting for me.* |

In this section, the exchanges were developed in a more realistic way because the teacher and students are sharing true information and are interested in doing, moreover there is equal distribution of turns in talk. "Symmetry refers to a sense of balance in the discourse or the interaction: equal opportunities for taking turns, for changing topics, for asking questions, and so on" (Van Lier, 1996, p.175)

**Table 5 extract 5**

| |
|---|
| *S13: Why did you paint a poster about Japanese culture?* |

| |
|---|
| *S: Because I like so much this culture, as you can see the tittle of the poster is written in Japanese, and I drew with manga art the Japanese festival.* |
| *S15: What is the best of that culture?* |
| *S: The religion because through it they respect to the people, the nature, the values and the animals.* |
| *S: Would you like to learn Japanese?* |
| *S: Yes, I am learning in this moment with my brother, he wrote me the title of my poster. Here says "Japan" in Japanese language.* |
| *S11: What is your poster about?* |
| *S: The drawings that I drew are about the Japanese Festival that in our culture can be interpreted as the birthday celebration.* |

The improvement of the contingent interaction was more evident through the 3rd activity "My way and their way", because the students began to involve their own cultural experiences in their exchanges. "Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with knowledge or people from other cultures" (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007)

The findings from this research give some light of the type of interactions which seems to foster speaking, generating opportunities in the context of cultural awareness. Contingency is dual, combining elements of predictability (Know-ness, the familiar) and unpredictability (new-ness, the unexpected), therefore working with the cultural students' experiences, unknown aspects for them about different  cultures and countries created the need for asking and answering to emerge new knowledge to reconfigure and expand into old and new learning.

**Table 6 extract 6**

| |
|---|
| *One student leader of the stand: Who has traveled to Germany?* |
| *S6: Me, I have traveled twice.* |
| *Osls: What did you learn from that culture during your trip?* |
| *S6: That German people are well educated, don't like the physical contact, the life style is high quality.* |
| *S: To what époque did you travel? In winter or summer or when?* |
| *S6: I stayed there in Christmas time.* |
| *S9: And did you like to celebrate Christmas in Germany?* |
| *S6: No, I prefer here in Colombia because people in Germany go to bed early, they don't share with the neighbors this especial moment.* |
| *Osls: Did you know that people in Germany speak at least 5 languages, because this is the ingredient of high-level of culture?* |

When the real and closer cultural experiences of the students were taking into account, the interactions got a better performance, however it was relevant to continue exploring the details through the "look again, reflect and re-act" routine as a continually recycling set of activities, so the second stage gave lights to implement the third activity, and the third one made the same process with the fourth one.

Contingent interaction was more evident in instances in which the teacher provided opportunities for meaningful communication, but this kind of interaction took a relevant position when students could talk about their own cultural experiences or they wanted to

know about customs, beliefs, regulations, etc of different cultures and countries around the world.

**Table 7 extract 7**

| |
|---|
| *S3: For me, when I traveled to London and thinking now it's difficult to find one cultural aspect that could identify the city. In my opinion it's multicultural city.* |
| *S: Yes, me too. However they have a strong patriotism about the royal symbols.* |
| *S5: I also noticed that people are very kind with the tourists. I lived that when I visited the different touristic places.* |
| *Guest teacher: As you have traveled there what could be your recommendation for me to visit that country?* |
| *S1: Teacher you must take care of gardens, flowers, animals, and the nature in general because for example it is forbidden to step on the grass.* |
| *One student leader of the stand: Teacher, respect to the language in British English there are differences with American English, you must be careful because for example in British you say lift in American is elevator; you say in British river Thames but in American Thames river. So teacher you must be respectful with British English.* |
| *T: Another recommendation is that you cannot talk loudly by phone although you are in a public place. The silence is a symbol of respect to the other person.* |
| *S: Which places would you recommend me to visit in UK?* |

The main findings of this category having in mind the four sub-categories can be summarized as follows:

In the first and at the beginning of the second activities the interactions were non-contingent. They were IRF exchanges.

Due to the characteristics of the IRF exchange, the interactions were short, simple and with a low fluency level; it was evident a huge worry to respond to the teacher utterances by answering correctly with the major accuracy of the language.

Contingent interaction started to be more evident in the third week of the second step (I know their way but my way is better), when the students felt more involved because they had the opportunity to express themselves about their own experiences respect to what they have learnt of culture through their trips. At the same time, the quality of the interactions improved because they felt more confident and felt that they were really communicating and using their own words to refer to a reality that was tangible for them and, students who had not participated before risked this time. The interactions were longer, fluid and students were less worried about grammar mistakes (See tables 4, 5, 6, and 7)

The exchange (See tables 6 and7) exhibits contingency features as it allows for more authentic language used by the students. They are interacting by exchanging information which resembles a real life type of communication. Out of the typically controlled context, students show more interest in communicating what they want in spite of mistakes they make in the process. The accurate grammar is gradually emerging.

The changing of the type of interactions influenced the quality and the frequency of interactions. (See table 8)

Table 8 presents some quantitative data about the number or quantity of sample population interactions by week in each one of the activities.

Table 8

| Activity | Week | Frequency of interactions of sample population |
|---|---|---|
| 1<br><br>My way is the only way | 1 | From 5 to 7 |
| | 2 | From 4 to 8 |
| | 3 | From 9 to 11 |
| | 4 | From 9 to 11 |
| 2<br><br>I know their way but<br><br>my way is better | 1 | From 7 to 10 |
| | 2 | From 12 to 13 |
| | 3 | From 12 to 15 |
| | 4 | From 15 to 17 |
| | 5 | From 17 to 19 |
| 3<br><br>My way and their way | 1 | From 20 to 22 |
| | 2 | From 22 to 25 |
| | 3 | From 25 to 27 |
| | 4 | From 27 to 29 |
| | 5 | From 27 to 29 |

Contingency was not related to accuracy. For that reason students felt more confident and many students who never talked, because they felt afraid about mistakes, started to talk or telling them about themselves.This aspect help to improve the number of interactions per class. The class finished and the time was not enough, because many students couldn't participate to interact between them.

The role of the teacher was not central anymore because of the contingent interaction and the students' personal desire of sharing knowledge of other cultures and the own one. (See tables 5 and 6)

**Cultural Sensitivity**

This category was fed with 3 subcategories: The ignorance and rejection of one's own culture, cultural shock suffered by students and cultural balance. In respect of the first subcategory, the students began to realize their ignorance of the own culture and a way of rejecting it mainly with the first and the second activities. In the third week of the second activity (I know their way but my way is better), the students didn't laugh when a classmate showed a picture, an object or a poster of Colombia with the t-shirt they took a new position on their own culture and began to value it positively. Through the activity with the poster, they developed a greater cultural awareness and interacted more enthusiastically acknowledging their own culture, and they got familiar with the culture of other countries. The students started to recognize more cultural issues with their own and their partner's experiences.

**Table 9 extract 8**

| |
|---|
| *T: In the video, we could see an amusement park called Europa Park. Did you like it?* |
| *S: Yes,* |
| *T: What amusement, natural or theme parks do you know here in Colombia or abroad, and which ones do you prefer and why?* |

| |
|---|
| *S3: I have traveled to different countries, so I know parks in USA like: Magic Kingdom, Universal Studios. In Aruba, I know a natural park that I do not remember the name now. In Germany, I know a theme park too. Here in Colombia, El Salitre, but I like more parks abroad they are better and more interesting.* |
| *S: I have traveled to USA too and I know parks in Orlando and Miami as: Magic Kingdom and Universal Studios I know parks in Colombia as Parque del Café, Parque El Salitre, Mundo Aventura. Without doubt, I prefer parks abroad. They are very beautiful and funny. I don't like here in Colombia.* |
| *S: I know Chicamocha Park and I liked because there are extreme activities like canotaje, rafting, parapente, etc. I have never traveled abroad.* |

The majority of students laughed when the last student (See table 9) mentioned a Colombian park and always happened the same when other students mentioned National Parks because they have never traveled abroad, instead they never laughed when students mentioned parks abroad.

It was clear that the students showed certain type of rejection for their own culture hence for the students who had never traveled abroad. They were in the first level or degree of cultural awareness. "My way is the only way-At the first level people are aware of their way of doing things, and their way is the only way. At this stage, they ignore the impact of cultural differences." (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007)

**Table 10 extract 9**

| |
|---|
| *T: What is your opinion about this camp in USA? Would you like one like this here in Colombia?* |
| *S6: I didn't like it. I didn't know about this kind of camps for students with behavior problems however I wouldn't like here in Colombia. I prefer the educational system of Colombia and not of USA educational system.Here is better.* |
| *S7: I didn't like the camp. It's better Colombia than USA in education. The girls and boys there are* |

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| *more difficult in behavior. We don't need a camp like that, here in our country.* |
| :--- |
| *S: I think that it's a good way to punish the boys and girls with problems about behavior but I didn't like a camp like Brad Camp here in Colombia.* |

Through this video, it was possible to observe that although at the beginning the students showed appreciation for the American culture, they changed their minds and started to value their own culture. "Culture shock is a more or less sudden immersion into a nonspecific state of uncertainty where the individuals are not certain what is expected of them or of what they can expect from the persons around them." (Pedersen, 1995, p.198)

**Table 11 extract 10**

| *T: What similarities or differences did you find between UK and Colombia through this video?* |
| :--- |
| *S20: I found just differences. The examinations are harder, strict there. Here the system helps too much to students. However I prefer study here than in UK. I'm happy here in my school.* |
| *S17: In my opinion there are similarities and differences, the similarities are the quantity of examinations and the order like here in the school to present an evaluation each day in a determinate time. The differences are: 3 different examinations for English language, the grades. I prefer study here in Colombia, but if I had the opportunity to study there I would like too.* |

**Table 12 extract 11**

| *T: OK Girls, Could you please show us your pictures and tell us where was it taken and why did choose it?* |
| :--- |
| *S: My photograph was taken in a Cruiser in Greece; I choose it because I liked so much that trip because I was with my family.* |
| *S14: My picture is in USA in Boston I brought it because I was 10 years old and it was my first trip* |

| |
|---|
| *to USA.* |
| *S: This picture is in La Dorada, I was in the pool and I was in the farm of a friend Juana and I chose it because I was very happy those holidays.* |
| *S: My picture is in Cali, at the zoo. I chose this picture because I love animals and as you can see I am with a snake.* |

The phenomenon occurred during this presentation; it was that everybody smiled when the students showed pictures of Colombia, in addition the interaction between students was focused on the two girls who brought pictures about foreign places. The majority of them showed more interest to know about the new places or things their partners had learnt or known abroad.

Even though students continued showing some apathy for their own culture, they started to feel more interested to know new issues of different cultures, and this conducted to discover that the rejection of their own culture was due to the ignorance and lack of knowledge from other cultures. "Increasing cultural awareness means to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences." (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007)

**Table 13 extract 12**

| |
|---|
| *S11: I want to present you my poster about Amish culture. I chose this one because I knew about it for my mom she told me many things but to know more I searched on Internet.* |
| *S: Why in your poster just appear women of this culture?* |
| *S11: Because I wanted to show in one way that I'm in disagreement with the role of the women in this culture. The women just have to develop houseworks and they cannot do different activities.* |

| |
|---|
| *S15: Would you live like a woman of this culture for one day?* |
| *S11: Yes, we must respect customs and beliefs of each culture, and if we see the role of women from another point of view, the women are very useful in the familiar role, but of course that I would live like a woman of this culture for one day.* |
| *S: What other aspects could you tell us about the Amish culture?* |
| *S11: That they don't use any device or technological resource, and that they use horses and no buses as a means of transportation.* |
| *S14: Would you live without any device?* |
| *S11: I consider it an amazing experience. To live without internet, phone or any kind of communication isn't the worst. We consider it terrible because our culture have made us subordinates of the technology, it not think in our ancestors, they could live without mobiles, internet and they survived.* |
| *S: Would you dress like a woman of the Amish culture?* |
| *S11: If I lived for one day in Amish culture, YES I would wear women clothes, I would do it without any problem because it isn't against my beliefs!* |

A further finding of this study was that the inclusion of cultural awareness influences the students' exchanges. Even though students had previous knowledge and personal experiences related to cultural awareness (See Annex B) the initial interactions were IRF however when they had the opportunity to talk based on their own cultural experiences and to know different cultural issues, the exchanges changed into contingent interaction, but the most impacting situation was that the students went beyond culture. They asked for more information to their parents, foreign friends and searched on internet, then they shared and questioned to their partners to discover and contrast with the different points of view.

**Table 14 extract 13**

| |
|---|
| *S₁: What was the most difficult of being Colombian when you lived abroad?* |
| *S: That Colombian people are related with drugs. I missed the culture, the Colombian people, the food, and of course the customs of my family. (The student lived in Kansas for 1 year)* |
| *S: I think that the first one is the language, the customs, the desserts as: Arequipa and bocadillos, however I felt good there (The student lived in Antigua "UK" for two years and a half.* |
| *S: Would you feel proud of being Colombian when you lived there?* |
| *S: Yes, of course.* |
| *S: Yes, when I lived there and here too.* |
| *S₄: Would you like to live there again or you prefer live here in Colombia?* |
| *S: I prefer live here in Colombia. United States is very organized and has many beautiful things I liked it but I consider better our country to live.* |
| *S: If I could I would live there, but I would come back to Colombia 1 or 2 times by year. I still have friends there. I came back because my mom didn't like to live there and she says that the studies level in academic part is better here.* |

In this point, the cultural awareness involved the students and for that reason, it involved their ability of standing back from themselves and becoming aware of their cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. "Increasing cultural awareness creates valuable new skills and behaviours." (Quappe & Cantatore, 2007)

**Table 15 extract 14**

| |
|---|
| *T: Why did you decide for the thing to things you show in your t-shirt?* |
| *S₁₂: I drew an accordion because I love the Vallenato is the most representative musical rhythm of our country and I feel proud of my country so I painted an accordion.* |

| S: I painted a guacamaya and a wax palm because in my opinion they are two things very typical of our country and the different and beautiful colors of Guacamayas are like the happiness and the different carnivals we celebrate. |
| --- |
| S11: You say that Vallenato is a music representative of Colombia but don't you like that Pop of Shakira and Juanes too? |
| S12: First of all I respect all kind of music, but for me Shakira is not an ambassador of our country, she looks like Spanish or American person, maybe Juanes keeps some essence of Colombian person but I maintain my opinion about Vallenato as the most representative. I`ve Traveled abroad and though you can listen to Shakira and Jaunes there if you listen a Vallenato it sounds different. Shakira and Juanes sound like Mariah Carey, Cristina Aguilera, etc but they don't listen like typical of Colombia. |

The participants realize that we are not all the same, and that similarities and differences are both important in becoming culturally aware. "We are generally aware that the first step in managing cultural diversity is recognize it and learning not to fear it." (Quipped & Cantatore, 2007)

**Table 16 extract 15**

| S: Why did you draw on your poster the flag of Korea with musical notes? |
| --- |
| S: Because I would like to live in South Korea and I like the music of my country. |
| S20: What are the similarities and differences between Colombia and South Korea? |
| S: For me the huge difference is the technology and order in all things: streets, education, and business. And the similarity is the food; Colombian food is delicious and Korean food too. I go to Korean restaurants here in Bogotá because I like so much the food. |
| S19: Have you traveled to Korea or why do you about this country? |
| S: I haven't traveled there but my father traveled there by business so he tells me and I have some friends by internet, and I look for on internet to know more. |
| S: Do you know or recognize the difference between Korean, Chinese and Japanese ayes? |
| S: Yes, the Korean has the eyes bigger, The Japanese medium size and the Chinese smaller and |

| |
|---|
| *their eyes are "rasgados."* |
| ***S15:*** *If you had to choose to marry between a Korean and a Colombian boy which one would you choose and why?* |
| ***S:*** *A Korean man. (Everybody started to make comments because they felt surprised about their partner's answer.)* |
| ***S:*** *I like Colombian men, but for me the Korean are sexy and more intelligent.* |
| ***S18:*** *What is your favorite singer or band of South Korea and What kind of music do/does they or he/she play?* |
| ***S:*** *I like three bands but my favorite one is called Siambul, they play like Pop music.* |

The Stand activity (My way and their way) was extremely motivating about the knowledge of other cultures. Culture had a dominant place upon the language. Even though the first and the second subcategories were observed in this activity, these were less and less frequent each time, and with a reduced number of students who stayed in these subcategories. It was more evident in this step and in the last one, the third subcategory "the cultural balance."

First Subcategory: "The ignorance and rejection of one's own culture" was more evident when they compared Colombia with Switzerland and Denmark because, for instance in Switzerland everything is recycled and here for some students it is the opposite. On the other hand, Denmark because it is a country where there is not corruption, the education is free so some of them consider Denmark like an ideal place or country to live.

Second subcategory called "Cultural Shock" it was notorious in respect of:

- The women's role in India.

-  The concept of tattoes in Japan because the person who has tattoes is considered like a criminal.

- The similarity with Greek people about superstitions

- In addition, the Celebration about Death in Mexico.

With all the other countries presented, a cultural balance was observed because the activity helped the students to note that, despite all the students are from the same country, there is a great cultural diversity and the same happens in respect of other countries.

**Table 17 extract 16**

*S: I find similarities between England and Colombia that most people use the courtesy titles as: Mr., Mrs. or Miss and their surname; here in Colombia we have the words Doctor, licenciado, professor…*

**Table 18 extract 17**

*S1: The same of the French men is that they are very romantic but it is just fame because they are very practical in marriage or relationships in general. Of course that we can't generalize but I think that here with Colombian young men is happening the same. They're less romantic and now they are more practical about relationships if not look what happens now with marriages or relationships they are short.*

The last activity emerged from the impact the third activity had in the school community, including the other English teachers of the school. This activity is the best sample of cultural balance, and of course of cultural awareness, because the whole community had the opportunity to value, respect and learn key aspects of our own culture and the culture of other countries highlighting that none is better or worse; but the most important aspect concluding is that cultural awareness is more relevant than only learn or know a language. The learning of a language implies the learning of many cultural issues. "We define culture as something that we construct through language." (Kramsch, 2013)

The English language was understood as a resource to access to other cultures, but it is not the essential or the only one to get cultural knowledge or cultural awareness. Cultural awareness got the first place in the English classes and it became more relevant than the same language. This one was the platform that launched as a spaceship the contingent interaction, because it provided rich and varied opportunities for authentic language use.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this research, it has been discussed classroom interaction in terms of how cultural awareness fosters or influences the contingent exchanges generating opportunities to access to previous and new knowledge of our own culture and other ones. First, it is suggested that contingent is not being fostered in the typical interaction pattern-IRF. Contingent interaction has an important relationship with the quality of learning opportunities that, we as English teachers are generating in our classrooms. The contingent interaction emerged when the needs, interests, differences and special conditions of the population were

identified and taken into account (they have the opportunity to travel abroad, interact with foreigners in their trips or even here in Colombia); so teachers and students needed to go beyond the language, they needed a trip through culture, acquiring in first term a cultural awareness, because the participants understood that language is not enough. Language is culture as a starting point for further learning. The recognition of English language as a means of facilitating cultural learning represents a significant change in position from the original stance adopted by us as English or language teachers about exchanges. Raising cultural awareness implied moving away from a focus on language and into a wider field, because all aspects of cultural awareness became a source of content for exploitation inside of the contingent interaction.

If the interactions, continue being focused on providing just corrective feedback from a deficit perspective of learning without thinking  about the conditions of the population, their learning opportunities and their contingent interaction opportunities might be reduced. Those kinds of interactions have a relevant position in the population's goals, or according to what their lives ask for.

Secondly, the research has shown that cultural awareness register in the English language classroom has an important role to play as a resource to generate culture and language learning opportunities. Consequently, attention should be given in language programs to reflect and understand better the potential it has for the EFL classroom. What seems certain is that cultural awareness could be included in EFL classes as writing, listening, reading, and speaking skills are incorporated. Obviously, it is necessary to

continue exploring this "new skill" into the other abilities as it is said in the National Standards. Cultural awareness is related to every aspect of life in a society, not only its language, but its values, behavior, beliefs, customs and it is constantly moving and being shaped over time. It cannot be learnt or reflected in one specific article, reading, magazine, scheme or others. There is no book, activity or workshop of instructions to deal with cultural awareness, no recipe to follow but certain attitudes which could be generated and promoted through different activities as the proposed in the present research, help to bridge the cultural awareness and at the same time to influence, improve and motivate the contingent interaction.

On the other hand, the immersion and the appropriation of the suitable theory about contingent interaction and cultural awareness were the pivot to generate the different activities proposed. To get that the activities were meaningful and enriching, they needed to have a considerable degree of spontaneity and a true exchange of meaning to which both the contingent interaction and the cultural awareness were oriented and in which students were interested.

Nevertheless, the consideration of cultural awareness itself can act as the means by which students develop their English skills. When students are engaged in cultural learning, the contingent interaction emerges, they will naturally compare the foreign values, behavior and customs with their own country's and this reflection can help them to know their own culture better, or modify preconceived perceptions, but mainly help them to develop their critical thinking. The inclusion of contingent interaction which influences the cultural

awareness, not only can change the students' exchanges scheme, but also modifies the preconceptions of the teachers' role as a controller of the whole interactions in the class.

By conducting this research, it is expected to provide some insights into contingency in interaction and how it emerges with cultural awareness in a good balance between both which represents  the positive effects both in the professional development of English teachers and on students' exchanges.

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**Annex A: How has the process been in the English classes**

The teachers ask  the students:

1. "What is the main aspect that they would like to learn in their English class?"

Most of them say:

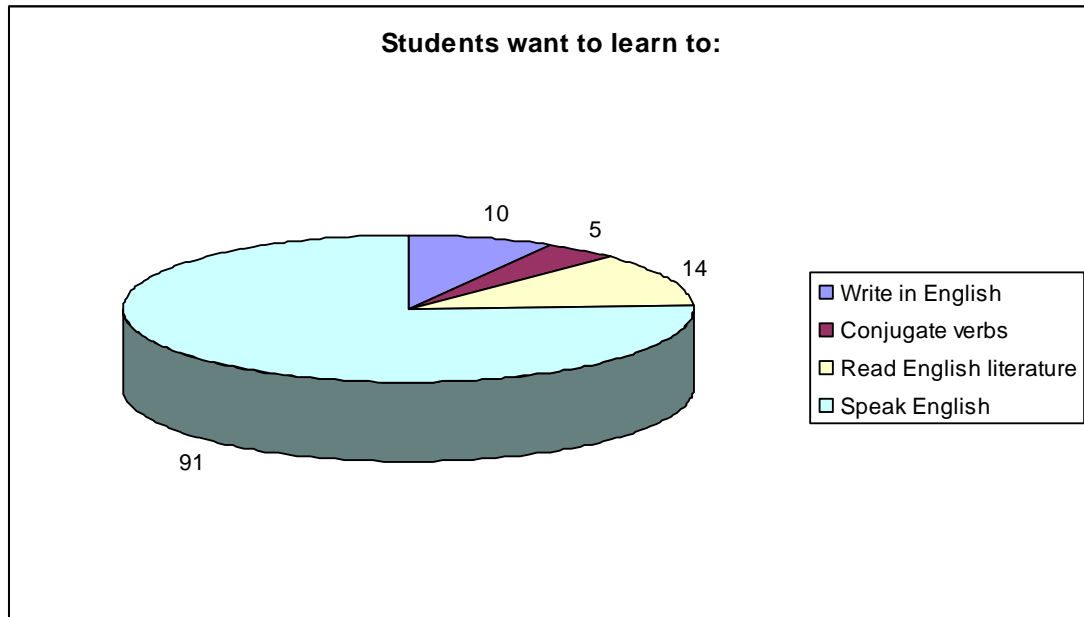I want to learn to:

Write in English                     (10 students)

Conjugate verbs                   (5 students)

Read English literature        (14 students)

Speak English                       (91 students)

**Students want to learn to:**

10    5    14

91

- Write in English
- Conjugate verbs
- Read English literature
- Speak English

Most don't say, "I want to learn to do grammar drills" – or read or write a new language. They say they want to learn to SPEAK the language!  This does not mean that reading, writing and grammar shouldn't be taught. In developing communicative competence, the rules of grammar cannot be discounted. (Cook and Gumperz, 1.982).

But students feel uncomfortable of speaking (mainly interacting) in class, because they consider that their English classes don't offer enough tools and opportunities to interact among them and with the teacher.

2. Descríbeme cómo han sido tus clases de inglés

A. Dinámicas, interactivas, exposiciones, bastante temáticas.     8 estudiantes

B. Proyecto oral dinámico, refuerzo de gramática y lectura.     8 estudiantes

C. Muy buenas, se fortalece vocabulario, explicación gramatical e inmediatamente evaluación, proyección de videos, la profe nos animaba a participar, pequeños concursos.                                                    10 estudiantes

D. Nuestra participación es vital, muy lúdicas no teóricas, diferentes actividades de listening, con la teoría necesaria.                          10 estudiantes

E. Aburridas, monótonas no aprendía nada, los profes se centran en gramática, siempre hablamos en español.                          14 estudiantes

F. Mucha indisciplina, clases muy malas, tediosas, los profesores se pegan mucho al tablero.                                                              14 estudiantes

G. Leíamos o hacíamos resúmenes, ejercicios en el libro, aburridas pues no se incrementaba nuevo vocabulario, clases sin interacción oral estudiante – estudiante o profesor – estudiante, clases muy gramaticales.       17 estudiantes

H. Copiar mucho del tablero, dilatados sin corregirlos no son chéveres, desmotivan al estudiante a que le guste el inglés.                                  22 estudiantes

I. Clases muy teóricas, siempre con un libro de lectura, no se aprende, les falta emoción, poca práctica en speaking.                                      7 estudiantes

J. Buenas pero no nos gustó que la profe hablara mucho en español, falta que nos pongan a practicar charlas entre nosotras, con la profe, con otras personas de fuera (deberían ser más didácticas y de interacción)         10 estudiantes
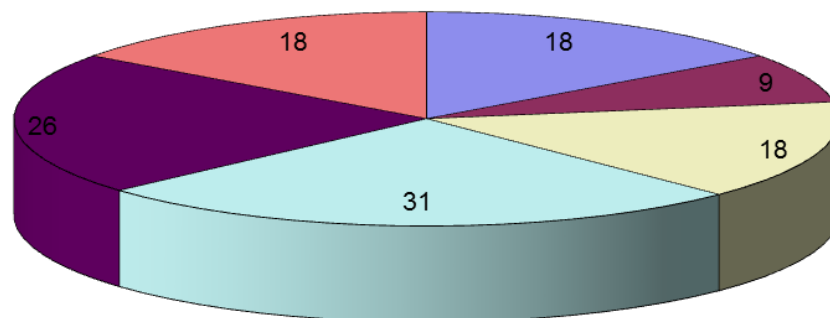

3. ¿Qué tipos de actividades han sido las más comunes en la clase de inglés?

A. Ejercicios del libro, pasar al tablero, exposiciones, copiar en el cuaderno.
                                                                    18 estudiantes

B. Ejercicios de gramática, listening con canciones              9 estudiantes

C. Estudiar los verbos y conjugación de ellos en los diferentes tiempos gramaticales, actividades teóricas y alguna que otra recreativa.     18 estudiantes

D. Ver películas en inglés, proyectos orales, evaluaciones Ket en writing, listening y reading, actividades lúdicas, juegos, exposiciones de memoria, lectura de textos, clases teóricas de gramática.                                        31 estudiantes

E. Obras de teatro, monólogos dadas por la profesora, presentaciones como photo álbum, escritos, role-play, actividades en el cuaderno, actividades individuales para grammar; una vez por bimestre presentaciones orales.          26    estudiantes


F. Talleres, carpeta para corregir evaluaciones o ejercicios mal hechos, gramática todo el tiempo con ejercicios escritos, ejercicios de writing, leer el libro de lectura y otras lecturas.                                                  18 estudiantes

**3. ¿Qué tipos de actividades han sido las más comunes en la clase de inglés?**



□ A. Ejercicios del libro, pasar al tablero, exposiciones, copiar en el cuaderno.

■ B. Ejercicios de gramática, listening con canciones

□ C. Estudiar los verbos y conjugación de ellos en los diferentes tiempos gramaticales, actividades teóricas y alguna que otra recreativa.

□ D. Ver películas en inglés, proyectos orales, evaluaciones Ket en writing, listening y reading, actividades lúdicas, juegos, exposiciones de memoria, lectura de textos, clases teóricas de gramática.

■ E. Obras de teatro, monólogos dadas por la profesora, presentaciones como photo álbum, escritos, role-play, actividades en el cuaderno, actividades individuales para grammar; una vez por bimestre presentaciones orales.

■ F. Talleres, carpeta ara corregir evaluaciones o ejercicios mal hechos, gramática todo el tiempo con ejercicios escritos, ejercicios de writing, leer el libro de lectura y otras lecturas.

4. En una escala de 1 a 5 (1 es el minino y 5 es el máximo) ¿Cuánto tiempo se dedica a la interacción oral en inglés (en cuanto que hablen entre ustedes, por ares, por grupos, con la docente)?

1. Porque lo hacemos individual o si socializamos lo hacemos en español, rara vez hablamos entre nosotros, sólo habla la docente. Todo son exposiciones en grupo pero con libreto preparado, muy poca interacción, nos falta vocabulario y compromiso.                                              13 estudiantes

2. La mayoría de clases hablamos poco y nos aprendemos las cosas, se da más con la profesora y por pares y grupos es por raticos, se hace interacción más que todo con la profesora, es obligatorio, entre mis compañeras no usamos el inglés, da miedo hablar y expresarnos porque nos falta vocabulario o de pronto no pronunciamos bien.                                              47 estudiantes

3. Hablamos inglés pero casi siempre usando un libreto, nos falta improvisar; intento comunicarme en inglés con mis amigas y docentes aunque aún con fallas, por las actividades nos toca hablar más que escribir, con el profesor siempre hablamos en inglés.                                              11 estudiantes

**4. En una escala de 1 a 5 (1 es el minino y 5 es el máximo) ¿Cuánto tiempo se dedica a la interacción oral en inglés (en cuanto que hablen entre ustedes, por ares, por grupos, con la docente)?**
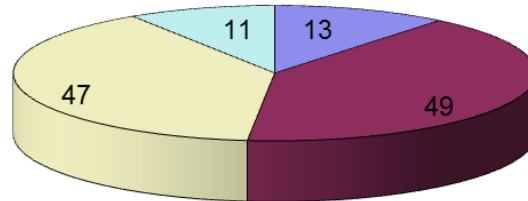


□ 1. Porque lo hacemos individual o si socializamos lo hacemos en español, rara vez hablamos entre nosotros, sólo habla la docente. Todo son exposiciones en grupo pero con libreto preparado, muy poca interacción, nos falta vocabulario y compromiso.

■ 2. Sólo hablamos cuando nos toca o con la docente, ella permite que hablemos en español no nos exige en inglés, sólo hay 1 hora semanal para este tipo de actividad, no se hace ejercicios de interacción real, sólo se habla en exposiciones y de memoria.

□ 3. La mayoría de clases hablamos poco y nos aprendernos las cosas, se da más con la profesora y por pares y grupos es por raticos, se hace interacción más que todo con la profesora, es obligatoraio, entre mis compañeras no usamos el inglés, da miedo habla

□ 4. Hablamos inglés pero casi siempre usando un libreto, nos falta improvisar; intento comunicarme en inglés con mis amigas y docentes aunque aún con fallas, por las actividades nos toca hablar más que escribir, con el profesor siempre hablamos en inglés.
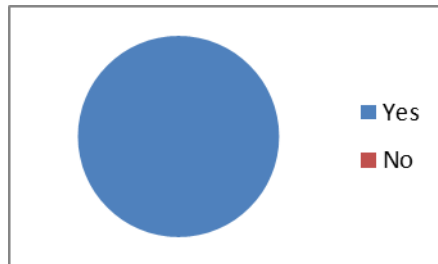
June 7th/ 13

This survey was conducted by 20 students who were selected at random.

The questions were:

**1) Have you travelled abroad?     Yes          No**

*The 20 participants answered in an affirmative way.
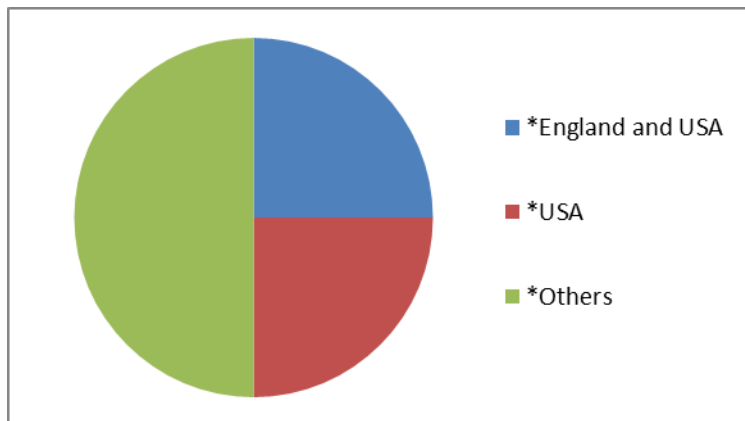


**2) Mention the countries you have visited in your trips.**

*England and USA          5 participants

*USA                              5 participants

*China, Germany, Italy, Haiti, Spain; Turkey, Portugal, Sweeden, Greece, France and other

10 participants

**3) What has been the most difficult aspect when you have travelled abroad?**

*To interact with foreigners because they talk very fast, it's difficult to understand them.   5 participants

*The food      3 participants

*The customs, the language      6 participants

*The language and the interaction in an appropriate way because I don't feel enough prepared to talk or maintain a conversation with a foreigner      3 participants

*To understand and change our behavior in a different culture      3 students
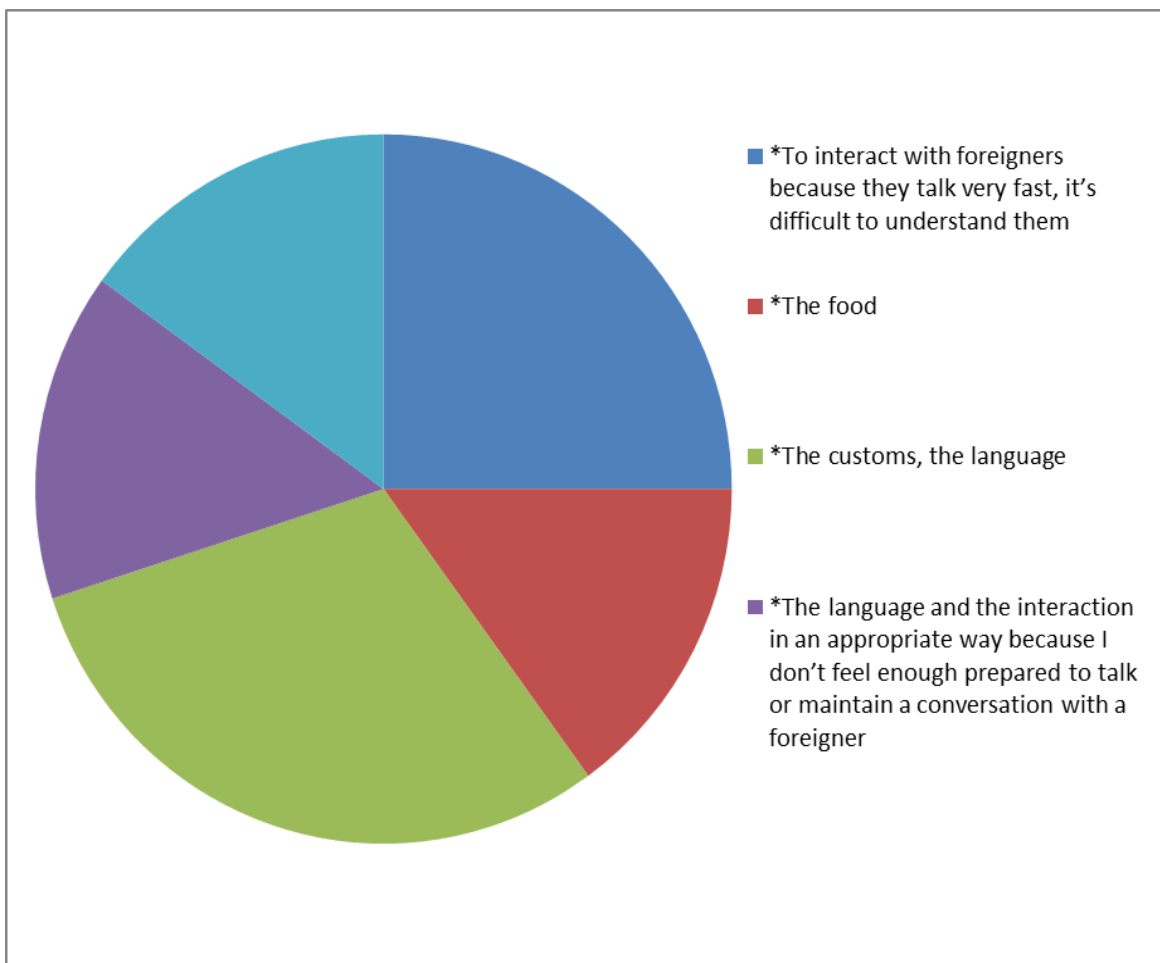
**4) What have you learnt of different cultures through your trips?**

The 20 participants mentioned different aspects such as:

*That the clothes change in the different countries, for example in China the women wear skirts extremely short.

*The hair is sacred for the Arab Emirates women. It cannot be showed to people. It only can be showed to their husbands. I must cover my hair when I travelled there.

*We always listen that English is the worldwide language; however the pronunciation of English language is very different in each one of the countries where I have travelled. For me the most difficult "English" to understand was in New York.

*Although we belong to a specific culture, when we travel we must respect the customs and rules of another country or culture.

**5) Before travelling, did you have knowledge about customs, beliefs, etc. of those cultures?**

*No          3 participants

*A few, because they had read on Internet   12 participants
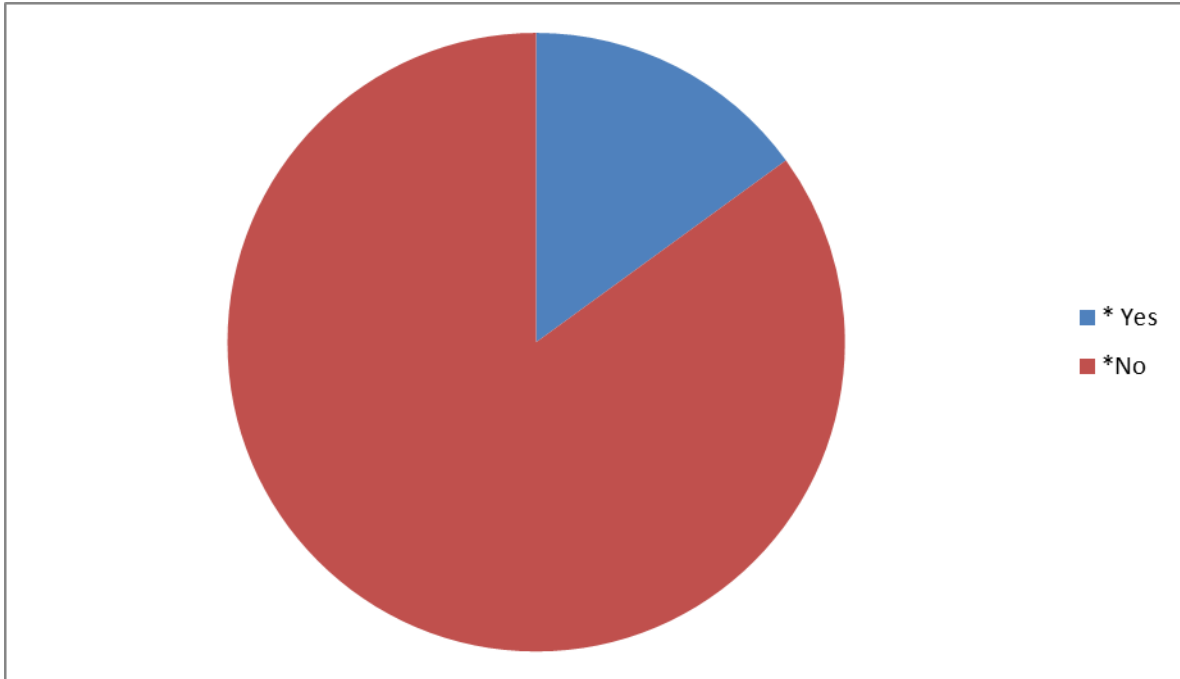
*They knew some things because a relative had told them when they had travelled there

5 participants



- *No
- *A few, because they had read on Internet
- *They knew some things because a relative had told them when they had travelled there
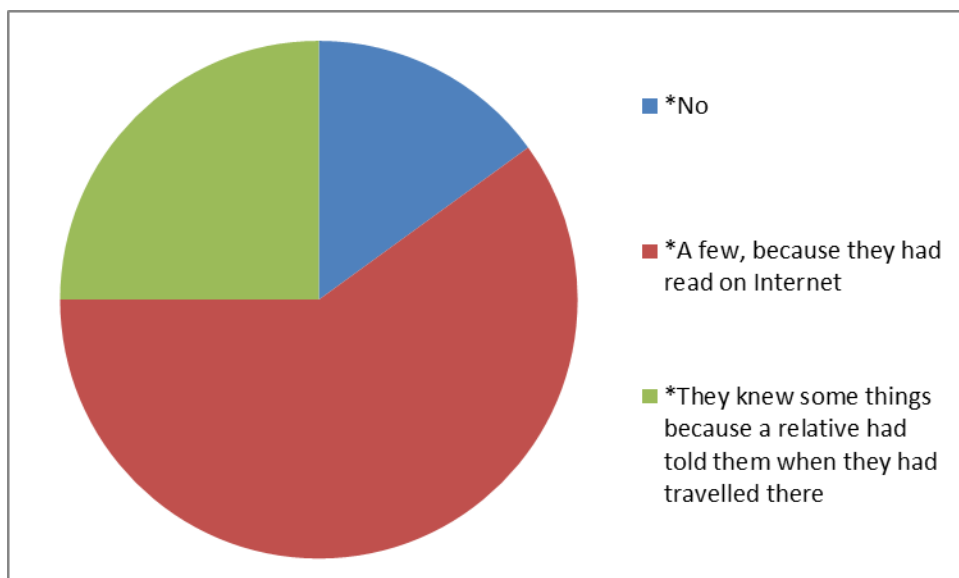
**6) The previous Knowledge you had about those cultures correspond to the reality there?**

* Yes      3 participants

*No      17 participants



        The parents of these 20 students don't know English, although they travel a lot.

They use translators in their business trips but when they travel with their families their daughters (participants of this survey) they are the "official translators" of the whole family.

**ANNEX C: POST- SURVEY**

October 15th/13

This survey was conducted by the same 20 students who were asked in the pre-survey and observed during all the implementation of the activities.

1) **What is the contribution of the implementation of cultural awareness through the different activities developed in classes?**

We could see that cultural awareness goes beyond than the language; many people think that the language is the door to enter, but the true door is the culture.

*To know about the cultural diversity in each country.

*To know important and relevant things in different countries but the most important to respect other cultures and make respect our own culture.

*To discover that we are not alone in the world and to improve our knowledge about culture, not just to improve our English.

*To be receptive about the culture, which includes customs, beliefs, clothes, rules, food, etc. when we travel again or interact with foreigners.

**2) Comments- Suggestions about implementation of cultural awareness in English class.**

*Excellent activities, which open a space to allow us, interact between us and with students of other grades and not just with the teachers.

*The English class changed and it was a class as Socials but with ingredients more interesting because we learnt different aspects to take into account when we travel

abroad.

*Thanks to these activities, now we know how to behave in different countries or with a foreigner.

*To implement "cultural awareness" in the English class. Not only in the Oral activities, is it important to work it, like the last year in all the skills.

*To teach cultural awareness as tips in all classes. A different country each class and taking into consideration the students who have travelled abroad.

*To implement the cultural awareness as other of the skills of the English class, because the knowledge of English is not enough.

*To continue working these kinds of activities because these help us to speak in English without fear, more natural and with more confidence because we could talk between us, and we investigated and knew different and interesting aspects through the students and ourselves who have travelled abroad.

## ANNEX D: STUDENTS' CONCLUSIONS

"Thanks to the different activities we made comparing celebrations of some countries, we could learn those specific celebrations such as: Christmas, New Year's Day and Halloween are celebrated in a different way that we as Colombians celebrate. In other countries is more serious and formal instead in Colombia is happier. The English language that we used in these activities helped us to increase our vocabulary, but the most important was that English was a bridge to learn of new cultures, helped us to appreciate the Colombian culture."

Student 4

"The activities that we developed during the year, give me learnings in culture and in academic part, because we learnt how the behavior is in other countries and we could learn, the language they manage. In spite of the English language is different in some countries, I could understand it and I could understand the different culture that there are around the world and the difference with Colombia." Student 2

"I think that cultural awareness is: the teaching that other cultures can contribute to the own culture to enrich it. When I learnt and saw the different habits, customs, regulations of other countries, I learnt about the world and I learnt to love more my country without disrespecting the other ones cultures. The English language opens that door and for us is a duty to know a few the world, to know about culture and don't be ignorant about it."

Student 8

"The cultural awareness is the capacity and the opportunity that are presented to know what is happening daily in different cultures around the world and with this we can respect, value and understand them Thanks to the activities developed in English classes, we could know different cultural aspects of our country and of other countries, from a different point of view, from our perspective as students but mainly as Colombians, appreciating our own traditions and respecting the different ones. The language is a useful tool, but most the English language that facilitate the interaction with people of other countries, to discover the social differences and grow as complete and competent people."

Student 3

"The conclusion of cultural awareness in English classes broke with the traditional scheme in classes and in the celebration of the English day, because the interaction of knowledge have a prevalent position. The students made awareness of being a global citizen and of the responsibility that it implies."                                Student 15

"For me the cultural awareness has a superior place respect of the English language, because through culture we can learn more to respect, value, love and know how we must behave with foreign people here or abroad, with cultural awareness we can go beyond than just English language, not just grammar, syntax, pronunciation, etc."          Student 6

"Through cultural awareness we could learn the importance of it and that culture and language go hand in hand. It is not enough with know a language. Cultural awareness carry us beyond: to respect beliefs, traditions and different forms of watching the world without losing our own culture, traditions and identity."                      Student 17

"The learning of English is more real with these activities related to cultural awareness because to learn a language is to learn culture and this is we have made in English class. Now we know more about what things we have to take into account when we travel abroad."                                                            Student 18

"My English in speaking has improved and without the necessity of learning something of memory and next repeat it. These English activities along with culture should begin since sixth grade or even since before, because in this way, we learn more and not only English."                                                                   Student 9

"The activities of cultural awareness were "chéveres." We liked them because first, we learnt new things of many countries, including our country and then we could ask and talk between us and, not only as always, was developed the speaking (teacher asked and students answered)."                                                             Student 1

I discovered that through activities that imply culture, it is not enough with knowing a language, in this case English; it is necessary to know about culture because through it we know how behave, in other words, what to do or what not to do when we interact with people of other countries, here or in their countries."                         Student 11

"It is necessary to include cultural awareness in all the English abilities, not just in speaking, for me was better the last year when we could apply activities in reading, writing, listening though I like the activities of this year. I feel more prepare to face my trips abroad

and moreover I can choose to which place goes or better not go if I am in a disagreement with women regulations in that country."                                                    Student 20

"I felt less afraid of speaking in English because I could talk about my trips and experiences with these through the different activities (the photo show, the stand, the poster, etc.). When my classmates asked me I could understand them and I could answer them."                                                                                                           Student 14

"It was OK to learn of other countries through ourselves and through our partners because we could know more about cultural awareness with the questions that we could do and with the answers we gave. The majority of students were interested, so we investigated more through internet and our relatives and foreign friends."                            Student 13