

THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
UNIT DESIGN OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
FOR *ESCUELA NUEVA* STUDENTS

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CONTENT

| | |
|---|----|
| ABSTRACT..... | 6 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 7 |
| STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM..... | 12 |
| JUSTIFICATION | 15 |
| General Objective..... | 16 |
| Specific Objectives..... | 16 |
| CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES | 17 |
| Culture..... | 17 |
| Cultural Awareness | 17 |
| Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) | 18 |
| Escuela Nueva..... | 19 |
| EFL..... | 19 |
| METHODOLOGY | 21 |
| Data Collection Methods..... | 23 |
| Content Analysis..... | 23 |
| DATA ANALYSIS..... | 26 |
| RESULTS | 28 |
| Coding..... | 28 |
| DISCUSSION..... | 33 |
| Standard guidelines for the design of the unit..... | 34 |
| Topics and activities selected for the unit | 35 |
| Achieving the objectives | 36 |
| CONCLUSIONS..... | 38 |
| REFERENCES | 40 |
| APPENDICES | 47 |
| <i>Appendix A. English Unit</i> | 47 |

GRAPHS

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Mind Map showing the categories found in the Basic Learning Rights | 28 |
| Figure 2. Mind map showing categories found in the Suggested Curriculum..... | 29 |
| Figure 3. Venn diagram, triangulation findings..... | 31 |

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to promote and to reflect cultural awareness through an Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) unit design for students of 4th and 5th grades of EFL classes in *Escuela Nueva* schools in Colombia. This paper integrates a qualitative research methodology, and it is developed under the paradigm of critical theory and the *investigación proyectiva* because it is a proposal for EFL teachers. The unit is designed with activities based on the cultural aspects of Colombia and its relation to other countries. The document analysis was implemented to extract the key elements that would be the main support for the unit design, these documents were the Basic Learning Rights and the Suggested Curriculum; in them, there are found the guidelines and topics to be worked on in these rural contexts. This unit can be implemented by teachers who decide to use it as a tool for their EFL classes in *Escuela Nueva* contexts. The results showed that coexistence, similarities and differences, and community make part of the cultural and linguistic basis of the learning of English. In conclusion, the design of the unit is a helpful basis for future researchers who want to continue making their contributions to the field through deeper inquiries, with the intention of creating new material as well as increasing the interest in researching the rural context of *Escuela Nueva*.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, Escuela Nueva, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), English as Foreign Language (EFL).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aims to explore previous international and national research projects in relation to the educational field about teaching English in rural contexts through the promotion of cultural awareness. This study has the purpose of approaching the English language to students from rural contexts, by taking into account as the main instrument the Colombian culture. Therefore, this research project is supported by some studies carried out in Indonesia, Slovakia, and Colombia. Each of these research projects is focused on different umbrella terms inside this research, providing insights for the objectives to be achieved. The present study aims to present a content unit proposal that works as a model to support English classes for students from *Escuela Nueva* contexts, and it would be necessary to search and gather studies that had such relevance for our aim; they are culture, rural context, teaching and learning of English in these contexts, as well as the incorporation, development, and understanding of intercultural processes.

Materials are one of the most important tools to be considered in the teaching of English. According to Mahardika (2018), one of the main functions of the materials is facilitating students in the learning process, and it is beneficial to use familiar items too. This study was carried out in Indonesia with 82 students from the Hinduism Education Department at the Denpasar Campus. It was found that to consider as a "good" teaching material, it is necessary to take into account students' needs and also their engagement through entertainment activities. When analyzing culture as a material for teaching English, it is important to remark that students need good resources to achieve meaningful learning. Furthermore, local culture was used in this study as a means to teach English, as well as an important tool with the objective of creating awareness about the local culture and the recognition of the surrounding reality, nevertheless, the previous

study is quite significant in this research project since its resolution is to promote local culture awareness through an English unit.

Now taking into account an article on socio-cultural aspects by Reid in 2015, in Slovakia. Reid (2015) quoted Kramsch (1993) who declares at the beginning that speakers interpret situations based on their own cultures and it can sometimes lead to misunderstandings towards other cultures, therefore, it is significant to make a comparison between the learner's own culture to others. On the other hand, the purpose of this article is also to tell the reader some series of techniques and strategies that are useful, as well as, they should be taken into account in order to develop an Intercultural Communicative Competence environment in the classroom. The text exposes how at first the Common European Framework of Reference raised the importance of learning culture when learning a foreign language; although, the CEFR is more based on general instruction, and that causes the guidance for teachers to be lost when developing techniques, contents of ICC, and all the relation of cultural teaching. Therefore, Reid (2014) claims that sociocultural knowledge (everyday living, history, values, etc.), sociocultural competences (greetings, accent, idioms, etc.), pragmatic competences (advising, persuading, socializing, etc.), and nonverbal communication (body language, gestures, eye contact, etc.) are the main keys to developing an ICC class.

Ramos, Aguirre, and Hernández (2012) in their study called “A Pedagogical Experience to Delve Into Students’ Sense of Cultural Belonging and Intercultural Understanding in a Rural School” mention the importance of including students’ context in education. The study was carried out in *Guatavá, Santander* (Colombia), the population was eleventh graders between 15 and 18 years old, and the authors argue that including the realities of the students is a powerful

tool because students will feel more motivated, while teachers can include their background and values. At the same time, they highlighted that knowledge could be stimulated when teachers help students to recognize the cultural diversity in which they can find it in their own context.

In another study carried out by Arias, García, Español, and Ciro (2019) at *Institución Educativa Rural Chaparral* in *San Vicente, Antioquia* (Colombia), whose participants were 36 students from 4th grade, action research was applied with a qualitative methodology. The aim of the study was to make students aware of their own culture and identify the factors that allow them to develop a cultural identity, “the recognition of this cultural identity allows the understanding of who we are as a society and the part we play in” (Arias et al., 2019). The information was collected using some interactive techniques such as the ‘patchwork quilt’, document analysis, interviews, observation, and a journal properly created by them.

Some activities that the authors implemented were oral and cooperative-oriented, they were focused on three main topics such as identity, describing the context, and finally talking about their country. The students worked with descriptions of the community and themselves, professions, things that they had in common, desires, festivities, and other cultural contextualization activities. As findings and conclusions, the authors said that it was difficult to manage time in relation to the materials used; as well as how challenging it was, since their library of the school was not equipped with enough materials. They also noticed that the students improved in their ability to control the grammatical structure when writing. In addition, after the implementation of this project, students realized that they had more in common than they imagined, so this study came in handy for everybody.

The last study to include in this literature review is one developed at Universidad de Caldas in Manizales by Zuluaga, López, and Quintero (2009) called “Incorporating the coffee culture with the teaching of English. It was carried out in several rural schools located in the nearby areas of Manizales”. The participants were 3 advisors from the BA program in Modern Languages, 5 pre-service teachers between the ages of 20 and 25 years old, 3 rural schools, and an average of 175 rural school students. The context is *Escuela Nueva*, this is an alternative methodology consisting in a new curriculum based on handbooks and manuals for teachers, the students from 1st to 5th grade are all in the same classroom with only one teacher who teaches all the usual subjects from an urban school (or most of them. English is not included in some cases). Zuluaga et al (2009) quoted Rojas and Vélez (1993) in saying that *Escuela Nueva* is rural-oriented, the teachers develop the guides/manuals themselves and they adapt them to the national curriculum, and to the local needs.

The data in this study was collected through observation, informal talks, audio, video recordings, field notes transcripts, and document reviews, and both students and pre-service teachers had a successful learning process. The authors realized that this type of project helps to solve problems, it also increases knowledge about local culture, and it provides as input the implementation of this project all over Colombia. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of assigning students’ relevant tasks since the use of textbooks and traditional methodologies were not producing a meaningful learning process.

The literature above provided relevant information that satisfactorily supports this study. These previous studies allowed us to have a wider perspective regarding teaching English through culture, how to approach techniques, and the positive impact it would show, especially if

the research is conducted in a rural context. Furthermore, the relevance of our project is noticed regarding the needs that rural areas entail about English language teaching, as well as the social impact of interculturality in civilization.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

English is one of the most spoken languages due to globalization. It is the international language for business, and it is used worldwide by universities with the objective of learning and communicating (Ranpura, 2016). In addition, teaching English along with culture does make a huge impact on learners, no matter the context. For instance, in Colombia, according to *Ministerio de Educación Nacional* (MEN), English has become necessary since its leadership in business, work, and culture (Abdalgane, 2020), has transcended to schools as one of the main subjects to be taught.

Reid (2015) stated that culture is not extra from language, but part of teaching speaking, listening, writing, and reading. In that sense, rural contexts have fruitful customs, traditions, manners to talk in their culture as in Zuluaga, López, and Quintero (2009), Brooks (2001) declares that teaching language with no culture is teaching unintelligibly. Furthermore, the creation of new material is one of the keys to develop knowledge and better interest in learning. As Mahardika (2018) states, teaching material not only works for learning but also provides different techniques for studying.

However, these studies aforementioned are not enough to make clear the model of *Escuela Nueva*, especially in the teaching of a language in a rural context. The findings of some other studies developed, concerning local culture, provide meaningful support about the teaching of English. Nevertheless, the model of *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia is quite different compared to some other countries, even in nearby places, and some aspects of culture could change. An example of this would be the accent, daily activities, and personalities, all of this is importantly related to the geographic location.

Although most of the studies do not provide specific information regarding the lack of creating materials in teaching English concerning a rural context under the model of *Escuela Nueva*, some of them contribute with important information, especially culture being used for teaching English. When researchers are investigating the culture in English teaching, they point out that this aspect is predominantly related to motivation. According to Mahardika (2018), the inclusion of local culture in materials is relevant in students' English learning process, meaningful material decreases the stress level of the students due to familiarization with the educational components. Culture-related materials could be considered as a tool to reduce stress level and could increase motivation in order to embrace students in the process, for them is easier to study when it is taken into account everything that surrounds them.

Notwithstanding, in most of these projects, it is not notably clear the work with interactive materials such as worksheets, which should be an essential tool when you are working with these types of contexts. Hence, it is important that this class of data keeps being collected, in order to contribute relevant information to the field. Furthermore, it is of interest to compare the change of the student's learning process after and before conducting this research project.

This study is focused on the creation of an English unit design, by containing local culture thematic in order to accomplish intercultural awareness on students about Colombia. The idea with this material is to support and at the same time promote the learning of English through local culture with a special design that fits the grades of 4th and 5th from any school under the *Escuela Nueva* model. Furthermore, it is considered the promotion of critical citizens since it is important because the aim of cultural awareness is to make people conscious of their own

differences to respect each other, to avoid stereotypes, and to be tolerant with the insights that each person has different from the others. To go deeper, it is usual to see with English subject that schools under the *Escuela Nueva* model teach only the basic grammar units, and there may be a lack of interest in English because the hours that students take are not enough, as well as there is not enough of training by part of the teacher. Thus, the previous problems required the creation of a unit corresponding to the subject of English since in this context English is not evidenced to be taught in-depth.

As mentioned above, the material to be developed in this research was an English unit, which was organized as a common core of contents for students of 4th and 5th grades, since *Escuela Nueva* is based on multigrade classes. Furthermore, it is expected from this material purpose to show an improvement and interest from the students while some relevant concepts related to the cultural context of the country are introduced. From this, the following question emerges: How does the design of an English learning unit based on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) promote cultural awareness in *Escuela Nueva* students?

JUSTIFICATION

In rural contexts it is quite usual to evidence challenges such as isolation, cultural adaptation, and how families misunderstand the motivation, education, infrastructure, and violence; shortcomings that teachers face in rural areas (Ramos and Aguirre, 2016). Even in *Escuela Nueva*, it is found a requirement of teaching English in-depth such as the case of the selected context that teachers only teach the basic grammatical patterns, carrying out the subject even when they consider there are a lot of gaps in her students' language.

Therefore, the design of this project will contribute to the learning of students through materials based on local culture. Mahardika (2018) states that learning a language means learning the culture, and he states that some scholars according to local culture, claim that students will acquire English knowledge with familiar concepts from materials and the context in general, which is Colombia.

On the other hand, this project will also contribute to the field of foreign languages in order to open ideas of how materials in rural contexts change the perception of both teachers and students of English. The materials containing local culture give the opportunity to demonstrate the representation of Colombia and its traditions, a focus in which the foreign languages can approach to awake what represents citizens awake the curiosity of students with something known. It is of major significance to include local culture in the teaching of the language because this might be helpful for students to learn a more contextualized English, more related to specific purposes, such as the awareness of diversity in the society, as well as being tolerant to other people and aiming to interculturality consciousness in the country.

Finally, professionally speaking, this project makes a change for teachers to know how to encourage students to learn in rural contexts, as well as the improvement of teachers' personal growth, reaching more wisdom by thinking further according to their experiences.

General Objective

To promote cultural awareness through an English language unit based on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) for students of 4th and 5th grades in *Escuela Nueva*.

Specific Objectives

To explore the basic learning rights as a support for our design.

To design an English language unit that includes local culture for teaching under the model of *Escuela Nueva*.

To reflect upon the pertinence of our own work from the English unit design.

CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES

In this section, some main concepts will be explored, they are important not only for our purpose but also to support and provide the basis of this paper. These concepts deepen in knowledge in order to have a clear understanding of what the study relates to.

Culture

Culture is intrinsically acquired by human beings and it is unavoidable not to follow cultural movements which in the first moment are not even chosen as an option, but a social imposition. Every country, social group, and community has different perspectives and customs which are representative and varied. Yeşil and Demiröz (2017) mentioned Trinovitch (1980) who describes culture as a system that includes everything related to the environment and human behavior starting from birth. Culture is quite connected with the context and traditions acquired during the lifetime, that is why it could be considered as a natural mechanism from people, innate and instinctively acquired. Damen (1987), cited by Yeşil and Demiröz (2017), argued that culture is patterns that are learned and shared, mostly factors of day-to-day living, these elements permeate all aspects of human social interaction, they also mention that culture is the men's primary adaptive mechanism.

Cultural Awareness

The current concept has a relation to the purpose of this study. The aim of this concept is to develop sensibility and tolerance to the cultural differences existing in the researched context. Al-Obaydi (2019) expresses that cultural awareness reflects the magnitude of consciousness that learners have against other cultures, and for her, it is important to avoid bias and cultural disagreements. Ghorbani (2012), studying the same field, determined that cultural awareness is nowadays an important concept in modern language education, that makes a connection between the culture and language. Regarding these interpretations, cultural awareness could be defined as the tolerance to other cultures and perspectives, which is important to work inside the classroom in order to avoid prejudices between partners and also with people outside the school.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

This concept is pertinent because in this research the focus of language teaching is culture, and the aim with it is to create consciousness in students. Ahangari and Zamanian (2014), mention the importance of intercultural competence and identify it as a key tool of foreign language studies; then, they remark the importance of intercultural competence to adapt the teaching techniques and the materials in order to raise students' cultural awareness. In the same study, Gupta (2002) was cited, he says that intercultural experiences encourage the learner to see himself from the outside and it also invites him to be aware of the cultural context and the importance of being mediators of culture.

Escuela Nueva

As our research project is focused on the *Escuela Nueva* model, it is important to define this concept. *Escuela Nueva*, according to *Ministerio de Educación Nacional* (2013), is the teaching in a primary school of multiple grades with one or two teachers with the integration of strategies of curriculums, communities, capacitation, administration where the active learning is promoted and strengthened. It promotes a flexible mechanism adapted to the rural children's conditions and the productive pedagogic project in order for students to advance their academic levels, and pass from a grade to another.

On the other hand, Zuluaga, López, and Quintero (2009) state that this methodology considers the needs and perspectives of the students, teachers, parents, and it is an alternative to solve the most common problems of rural schools. In this same research, Psacharopoulos, Rojas, and Vélez (1993) were mentioned in establishing the differences between the traditional school and *Escuela Nueva*. They claim that the main objective is to involve parents to support their children's learning. Furthermore, the guides are developed by teachers themselves and help them adapt to the national curriculum and local needs. Teachers and administrators are taught to involve the community and use the new educational materials, so the training, as well as the design of materials, is done sequentially.

EFL

English as a foreign language is the term used in the study of English of non-native speakers in countries in which English is not the dominant language. Now, according to Fernandez (2012) claims that countries in which EFL is present, English is not used as a medium of instruction,

nevertheless, it is taught in schools. The methods used to teach EFL are very different from methods used in ESL. Regarding another perspective from Gunderson, D'Silva, and Murphy (2009), EFL is often used in environments in which the language of the context is not English, and in some cases, teachers have to provide English models for their students. In addition, it is important to understand how people look for an ESL lifestyle while they are living in an EFL context, in order to get more opportunities, improve their English, and achieve a better education. Concerning Mitchell (2016), he affirms that every year lots of people go to ESL countries to do intensive courses in order to practice, travel, or basically prepare for an exam such as TOEFL or IELTS.

The concepts aforementioned provide relevance to this research, and these references were cited in order to go deeper with the terminology in this study, given that they are also necessary for readers to understand what the authors are talking about, and also to have wider regard for the context and purpose of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Within the methodology, it is relevant to highlight the purpose of this paper and its contribution through the elaboration of an English unit design for Escuela Nueva. The aim is to foster cultural awareness in students by creating local representative content. According to the previous statement, qualitative research is taken into account for the development of this project in which Ospina (2004) defines qualitative research as advantageous in terms of that it increases opportunities to develop new theories and ideas empirically. According to this, it could be said that the purpose of the qualitative approach in this research project is the analysis and the proposal of how local culture can be implemented in English teaching materials.

This research is based on the Critical Theory paradigm, defined by Horkheimer (1982), who was cited by Asghar (2013), who claims that “critical theory seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (p. 3123). In this research, this statement is significant since we want people to express themselves with liberty, understanding each other's differences, and developing their critical thinking, starting from cultural awareness.

Under the paradigm of critical theory, an *investigación proyectiva* will be developed. As Hurtado (2008) states, *investigación proyectiva* is in charge of an elaboration of a program, or a model in which its purpose is to provide solutions to a determined problem from a social group, or an institution, with evidence of how procedures should be carried out step by step. This study intends from a proposed design to demonstrate solutions for the necessities of a specific context, in this case, with a design of an English unit for students from 4th and 5th grades in *Escuela*

Nueva schools. The previously mentioned means that the English unit is a proposal and a tool for English teachers with the intention of the improvement of children concerning local culture.

The design of an EFL unit was developed as a basis to accomplish the objectives already stated. This unit has not only the purpose of being a premise on education for rural contexts but also to enhance cultural awareness in the students to create a sense of consciousness of the differences that every human being and group of people have.

According to Zuluaga, López, and Quintero (2009), who cited Psacharopoulos, Rojas, and Vélez (1993), they conclude that in *Escuela Nueva* contexts teachers themselves are the ones who design their guides. They help to adapt the national curriculum by the needs and experiences had with the activities, and with their students, it is a constant process. Therefore, in the projection of this design, the selected community is the population from rural areas that work with *Escuela Nueva*. Based on the Suggested Curriculum for English and the Basic Learning Rights from 2016, proposed by *Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia*, it was decided to develop the unit taking into account the aforementioned curricular guidelines.

Escuela Nueva methodology intents to integrate the community by motivating parents, students, and teachers to be engaged and participate actively in school activities (Psacharopoulos et al., 1993); this is important to be highlighted because one of the main purposes of the learning unit is integrating the students to the society, taking into account their social background, intending to promote ethical values, cultural awareness and critical thinking in students.

This research project is oriented to the population from schools of *Escuela Nueva*, students from 4th and 5th grades. Therefore, the unit fits with these types of contexts since its objective is to improve their English skills regarding local culture, at the same time, to leave shortcomings aside that they may have, and turns out that in *Escuela Nueva* schools, depending on the number of students per grade, an educator can mix several grades in one group. According to Colbert (2006) who cited Colbert, Chiappe, and Arboleda (1993), say that rural schools need improvement in education, and that is why *Escuela Nueva* was created, to support those rural education defects. However, the authors above mentioned, stated that the government had not demonstrated relevant support because there is evidence of overwork since these schools require more strategies, materials, and innovation to manage different manners to teach. Based on the ideas of the previous authors, *Escuela Nueva* is multigrade, and depending on the context, there might be a teacher to prepare a class for most of the subjects at the same time.

Data Collection Methods

Content Analysis

For the unit design, it was necessary to obtain information through content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) defines that content analysis has several phases, the first one is to explore texts to gather information, and the second one is analyzing this information to create a meaningful product that contributes to the field. This same author considers that content analysis techniques are reliable. If the product that is made by the researcher works in a context, in a determined way, it is expected to have the same result with other contexts, even if the elements

are different. Therefore, the unit content is designed by following the guidelines of the Basic Learning Rights of English and the Suggested Curriculum for a primary school in Colombia, in which it might be helpful for the improvement of the community, as well as might be a contribution for future research.

As already mentioned before, this study followed the correct national guidelines to develop quality work, by respecting the established parameters by the Suggested Curriculum and the Basic Learning Rights to make the content of the unit appropriate for the students, also aiming to make this research accurate for its context and reliable to be a valid research proposal. Moreover, it is pertinent to remark the importance of the correct manipulation of the information collected in the research process, which will be respected and managed accurately with only investigative purposes. It is expected for this research to be helpful for this context, regarding the learning of English in the classroom, as well as an opportunity to learn it through the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

These are the first and second phases of this research. First, it is exploratory which according to Hurtado (2000) it is the part of the research paper where the topic is determined, this phase is essential to avoid having difficulties in the other phases. Along these lines, the second phase which is descriptive complements the first. Hurtado (2000) states this phase consists of the reason to do the research, it is the point that explains why the research is being made, taking into consideration the motivations and necessities of the context

In order to acknowledge the previous phases, the following experiences were considered. On one hand, a teacher that works in this context commented in informal talks about the importance of creating materials since there is not a defined guide for English and they do not receive any materials from *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*. In addition, it is to clarify that some authors cited before in this research, described such previous conditions of shortcomings and lacks from *Escuela Nueva* and rural schools, therefore, that was the conclusion acknowledged for the desire to work on this background. On the other hand, this experience also emerged from educational experiences at the university where the researchers of this project have been attending classes, in which the teachers explained several community problems and it sparked these researchers' curiosity.

It was considered by the authors that *Escuela Nueva* is connected to our reality since it is an educational model that could be easily found around the region. To simplify, at the beginning the project was enhanced by research previously made in which other authors built an interesting work to contribute to this model, and for that, this study emerged. The researchers of this project have not had the opportunity to approach this context before, and it arose the curiosity to know how was the experience of working within a context that has a different method to the habitual, also, so they do not receive much English class, and it actually depends on the context; there are schools of *Escuela Nueva* that provide English classes and there are others that do not do it. Stemming from this, the idea of this research is to foster cultural awareness in the EFL classroom; hence, assuming this challenge was the main motivation to do it. Bearing in mind the necessities and motivations, it is also important to look at the standards that make part of the context and that must have complied.

DATA ANALYSIS

All the information collected for this research project was taken from the Suggested Curriculum, the Basic Learning Rights, as well as taking into account some specific aspects from an informal talk with an *Escuela Nueva* teacher who shared a few of her experiences and supported this research project to clarify situations about this context.

After all the information gathered, the process of codification started, and, as Richards and Morse (2007 in Saldaña 2013) claim, coding is an step toward a rigorous analysis and interpretation for a report. Coding is not just labeling, it is connecting: "It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (p. 137). After codifying all the features collected, there was, as a result, some main characteristics subtracted from the Suggested Curriculum, and the Basic Learning Rights, in which the attributes in common were simplified in order to create predominant categories.

At the same time, this research is oriented under an open coding perspective, which allows analyzing data more easily, and from the subtraction of several sub-categories, the examination of the content makes sense. Monge (2015), states that open coding is characterized for analyzing data by splintering the main concept into several subsequent categories, with the purpose of analyzing them each, and at the end getting a better understanding of the main concept. Consequently, as the main categories were extracted from similarities among concepts, some abstractions from the approaches mentioned in the tool used to gather the data were included in this research.

Based on the codification and as mentioned before, the categories emerged from common terms of the suggested curriculum and the Basic Learning Rights. They were taken in order to answer the question and the objectives of this research project. Furthermore, this supports the research to have a well-founded base to create a proposal under the perspective of *investigación proyectiva*, in this case, for students of 4th and 5th grades from *Escuela Nueva*.

RESULTS

Coding

After collecting the information from the document analysis instrument, it was perceived that there were common features between both grades, which were categorized with the goal of creating an appropriate English unit proposal that encourages cultural awareness in the students of *Escuela Nueva* context. The categories are represented by colors; the blue terms are related to the category of similarities and differences; the second category is represented in the color red, it is community; and the third category, coexistence, is represented in the color yellow.

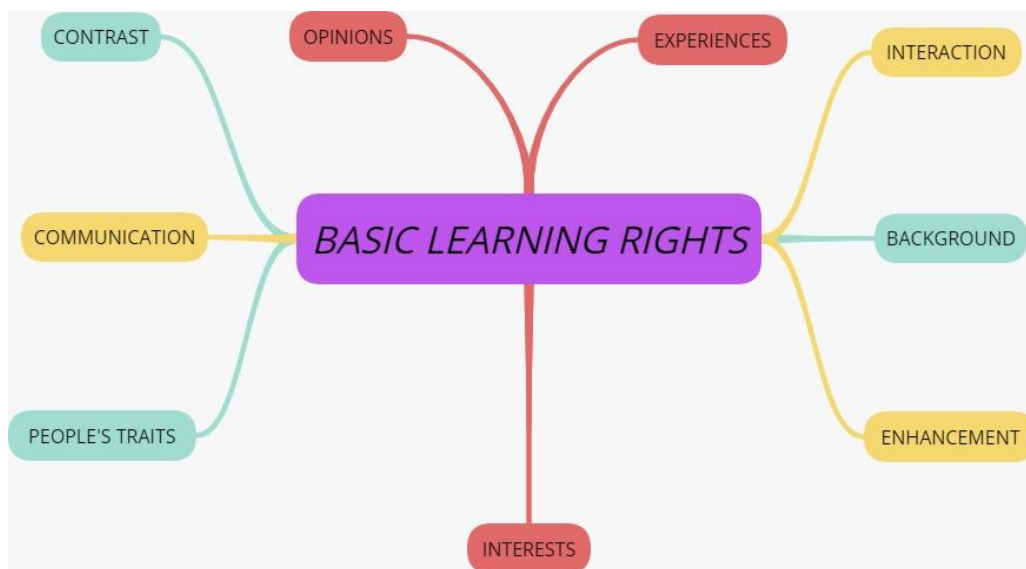


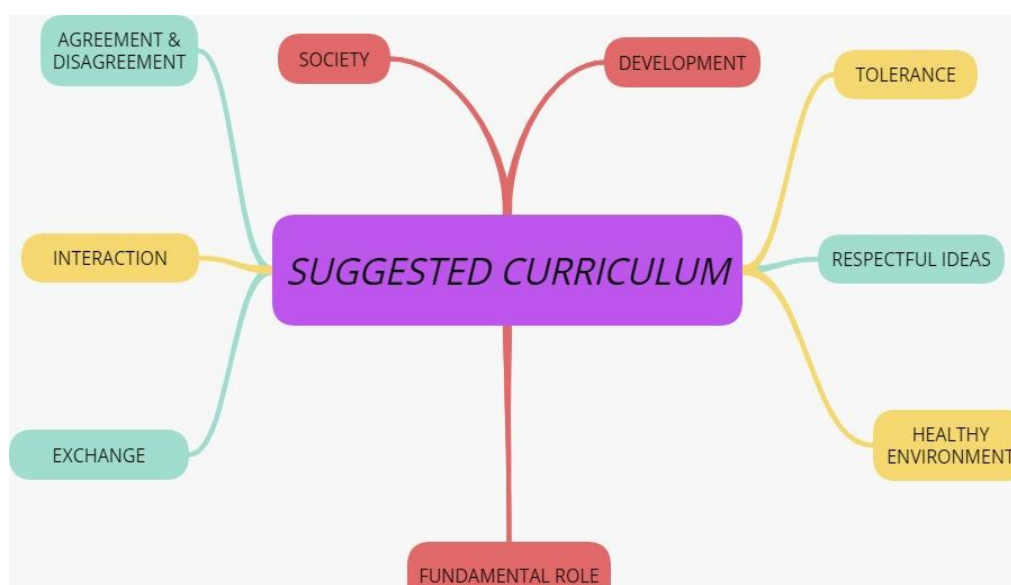
Figure 1. Mind Map showing the categories found in the Basic Learning Rights

Firstly, based on the Basic Learning Rights, the first category to analyze is similarities and differences, it was found that students can contrast elemental aspects of people, places,

objects, and background in the classroom. Therefore, the Basic Learning Rights claim it is quite important to consider the identification of those features such as their background and places since it develops the criteria of students in a way they could recognize the similarities and differences; at the same time, it is a means of interaction, where there are intercultural changes that help them generate flexibility in terms of tolerance among themselves.

The second category is community, considering the Basic Learning Rights definition, it explains that students can exchange opinions about their community and interests to create a sense of belonging and unity; therefore, it remarks on the relevance of sharing experiences about their immediate context. Lastly, the third category, coexistence, is understood as the capacity to live peacefully in society, exchanging opinions and preferences about familiar topics. The Basic Learning Rights points out the interaction of students through their likes and topics of interest, enhancing the intercommunication among pupils.

Figure 2. Mind map showing categories found in the Suggested Curriculum



In addition, the second document analysis has to do with the suggested curriculum. The first category is similarities and differences, it is stated that it is relevant that students express

agreements and disagreements through respectful ideas in the interaction with others. According to the suggested curriculum, it is important to express agreement and disagreement in an appropriate way, in a polite manner where respect and tolerance prevail regarding the ideals of others. In the second category emerged community, is defined as a social construction where interactions are made peacefully; furthermore, students should recognize their fundamental role in our society where it is essential to highlight cooperation among citizens. By participating in social activities, the whole community may contribute to the development of the region. The last category is coexistence which entails respecting others and being tolerant with them in order to maintain a friendly atmosphere, to favor the teaching and learning processes as well as for good development of the city, along with exemplary citizens.

It emerged the necessity to make a triangulation between the three categories. Campbell and Fiske (1959) understand triangulation as the way to validate the research. The triangulation in this research has as main purpose gathering aspects that all categories have in common, these categories surround culture and were previously interpreted. The best way to compare them in this research was through a Venn diagram in which the categories are represented with the same colors that were explained above: the first category is similarities and differences with blue, the second category, community, with red color, and the last category, coexistence, being represented with yellow.

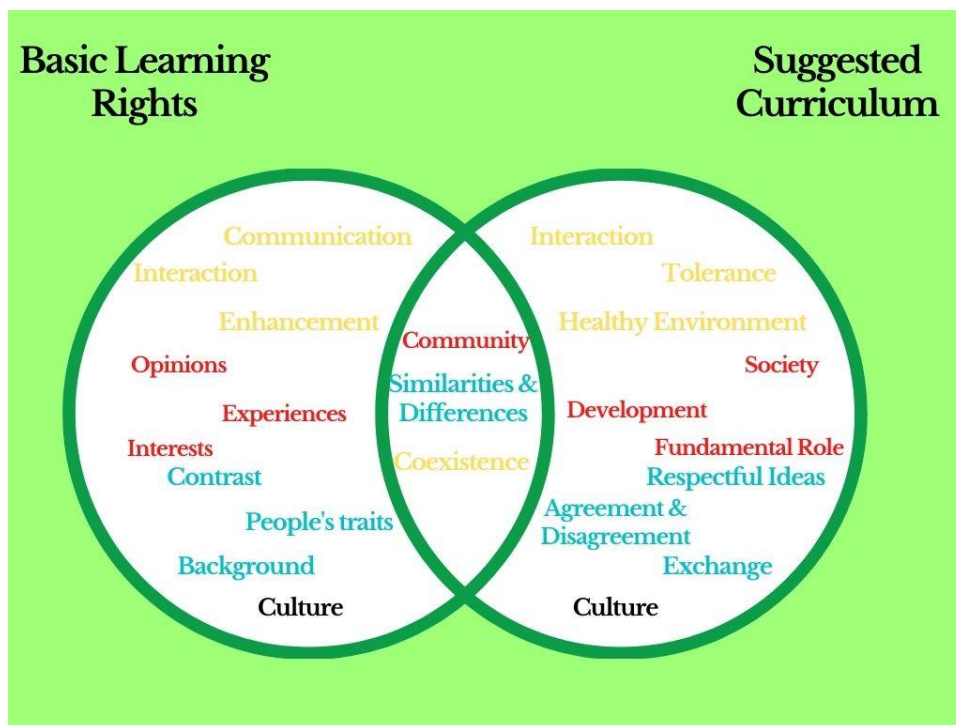


Figure 3. Venn diagram, triangulation findings

Finally, the perspective of the categories from the Basic Learning Rights and from the Suggested Curriculum was triangulated and examined. The purpose of this examination was to correlate both perspectives and compare what they had in common. With the first category, differences, and similarities, the purpose is that students can establish their similarities and differences about the community they belong to; furthermore, the researchers conclude that accepting differences and sharing similarities can help create stronger and positive bonds with people; this reinforces the importance of the teaching with adapted materials that support the context of *Escuela Nueva*. Regarding the guidelines from the Suggested Curriculum and the Basic Learning Rights, in the second category, community, they look for students to comprehend their role as members of a community by sharing the local traditions and cultural aspects with others; the researchers define a community as space for students to socialize and create social

links. And lastly, in the third category which is coexistence, it was deduced that students can assimilate aspects that could help them to keep the harmony between groups individuals, the idea here is to enhance the values of respect and tolerance, to create a peaceful environment in the teaching and learning process.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this project was to promote cultural awareness through an English learning unit, and it was accomplished with the support of the guidelines of the Basic Learning Rights and the Suggested Curriculum from *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*; likewise, based on the literature review some elements that the researchers consider important for *Escuela Nueva* were taken into account for the design of the tool. Inside the unit, there are many aspects that comprehend Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) such as the ability to understand other cultures, which are not seen frequently in the traditional model, and they might contribute to learners' communicative skills and cultural awareness. Responding to the research question, the way in which the unit promotes cultural awareness is integrating students through the recognition of their own culture and how distinctive their background is in relation to other surroundings.

In addition, at the very beginning of the project, it was decided to be related to *Escuela Nueva*, since the methodology, context, and modus operandi was interesting for the researchers of this project. It was engaging as well because of the challenge it entailed, as a rural area teacher it is necessary to avoid stereotypes and to take advantage of the benefits that teaching in a rural area has (Harmon, 2001). Working in a rural area, and more specifically in an educational context under the model of *Escuela Nueva*, could be considered as an opportunity to get immersed in its culture. The way to integrate the community should be based on providing activities whose content and elements are familiar to what they recognize. Nevertheless, some other intentions arose from the inside of the researchers, since the context has not been quite explored and the will of enhancing some human values such as the coexistence, sense of community, respect, and environmental responsibility should be reinforced in society.

Regarding the social background, the creation of a tool compounding aspects that may ensure the recognition of culture in students was an option that may be useful to enhance cultural awareness, tolerance, and the learning of English. In educational terms, the unit is considered, by the researchers, appropriate for *Escuela Nueva* students, since it contains familiar topics and promotes good values, as well as it intends to serve as a resource to teach English in a more contextualized way. Taking into account the previously mentioned, the unit was analyzed through different perspectives.

Standard guidelines for the design of the unit

After collecting all the features, subtracting every aspect in common, and creating the categories based on the Basic Learning Rights and the Suggested Curriculum of fourth and fifth grades, it was decided to make a formal analysis about the authenticity of these divisions in terms of the treatment of those aspects in real-life situations; and especially, for the development of the project in rural contexts. It was concluded that in a Colombian rural area under the educational model of *Escuela Nueva*, the following categories would be conducive in terms of meaningful learning, including some language functions that for most of the students in the context would have results that enhance communication. The categories comprehended, similarities and differences, community, and coexistence would not only boost the English communicative skills, but also cultural awareness, which is one of the most important purposes for the researchers of this project.

Then, from the very first moment, as previously mentioned, the categories were strictly planned to have an essence of rural contextualization, this was the main reason to create a

relationship between the context, the culture, and the daily life tasks that Colombian children in rural areas face every day. Therefore, the unit content encourages students to represent the categories in their lives according to the activities that they have to do. Furthermore, the inclusion of the language functions into the English learning unit is quite related to the categories extracted, since in every topic it was desired to create a sense of community, as well as enhancing coexistence and sharing similarities and differences. This in order to start changing specific aspects in the society that are considered to be improved such as respecting people's main characteristics, building environmental care, and in general propelling ideas from the cultural consciousness in the rural population.

Topics and activities selected for the unit

As mentioned before, all the topics chosen for the unit were extracted in accordance with the Basic Learning Rights and the Suggested Curriculum; therefore, the researchers read and studied the guidelines from both documents with the aim of creating the appropriate content for students. Consequently, the unit demonstrates the document's regulations since it contains the students' learning rights such as the exchange of information in English about topics of interest and everything in relation to Colombian culture, in which learners talk to their classmates about their habits and preferences of the country. Moreover, the production of English using all the language skills with familiar topics, and finally, the production of short, simple oral or written sentences of an event or an anecdote.

The researchers of this project developed the unit with a total of four English grammar topics, in which they are explained through examples, not through definitions; therefore, teachers that may use the unit support the examples provided with more explanation to the learners. Every

topic is formed in relation to the center of this research project, such as culture; in which students can develop cultural awareness in a common space where they can interact with each other (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2003), something that they may encounter new. The unit starts with the first chapter that shows the English personal pronouns connected with the verb to be, vocabulary about adjectives, and simple sentences describing the family as well as some wh-questions with examples. The researchers considered the thematic of "family" as the main core of a person when growing up; this is how the categories of community and coexistence are evidenced.

Secondly, the second chapter has to do with the description of learners' surroundings in which contains the topic of likes and dislikes, in which students establish their similarities and differences. Here, the researchers look for students to develop their critical thinking, preferences as well as awareness of their surroundings in their community. According to Zuluaga et al (2009), it is important to stimulate rural students to value their traditions and customs by the recognition of the richness within their culture; Also, it is important to include elements of the region in which students live with the purpose of ease meaningful learning. Finally, the unit last chapter has to do with the same category as the previous chapter, which corresponds to what learners like the most; and the idea is also for them to make comparisons in accordance to Colombian facts, such as food, people, and even raising interculturality on students with the comparison between Colombia and other countries, establishing here their similarities and differences.

Achieving the objectives

Interculturality and cultural awareness are reflected in the learning unit through the different elements that were used as representations of the Colombian culture. The condor, the

Colombian coffee, the mountains, the colors of the flag, among others. They are part of the learning unit, and they are as well considered remarkably important since they are clear points of reference that allow people to have a connection to them. Besides, recognizing that everyone belongs to the same country means understanding that it has a vast diversity of traditions and customs. It is also relevant for the authors to convey to the people who might have access to the unit that there are elements that make part of our surroundings from urbanity to rurality that may go unnoticed.

For the authors of this research, cultural awareness arises through the recognition of what has probably been forgotten or undiscovered in terms of local culture; the reason is that there is a lack of recognition by the Colombian people about their own culture, it could even be more appreciated by foreigners. The unit not only contributes to linguistic features, but also to culture, and can work as a guide for future teachers; the unit contains all the aspects for teachers to implement in fourth and fifth grades. Despite the limitations in terms of contents, the unit can be replicated and adapted in the same or in different grades, depending on students' and teachers' needs.

CONCLUSIONS

After finishing this study and culminating the process of the design of the unit, it is now feasible to say that promoting cultural awareness is possible through tools that enhance motivation to learn from interculturality. In this case, the promotion of cultural awareness is evidenced under the aegis of the unit that is designed with activities that encourage students to interact with their context, family, and environment. At the same time, thanks to the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) the researchers realized that getting to know different cultures can help foster cultural awareness, being evidenced by demonstrating the differences from the local culture with other countries; therefore, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) shall be accomplished in the classroom. Simultaneously, the teacher encourages the autonomous skills in their students, through the research from different sources, as is seen in the final activity of the unit where students have to obtain the information on their own.

The researchers, without having the experience of doing the research before, gained knowledge from interculturality as well. Learning about cultural aspects is enriching for researchers' daily lives; moreover, the creation of the unit was beneficial for the process as researchers. At the moment of creating the unit, the feeling of not knowing how to begin arose, and from it, it is thought that the leadership in researchers was achieved; hence, the process was completed satisfactorily, and it brought positive results. On the other hand, it was determined that this study drew advantages and disadvantages: for example, something challenging was the difficulty to find research studies similar to the focus of this one, but in the end, there was

enough support to achieve the objectives proposed and to culminate the educational tool developed.

In the case of the unit design, the researchers took into consideration the standards and guidelines from Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to develop cultural awareness; it is suitable for the context since it contains elements that may be effective for meaningful learning, and also to intensify social relationships inside and outside of the classroom. However, as this research is based on *investigación proyectiva*, it would be interesting to see the results of the application of the unit in the context, as well as knowing the effects it may bring.

Finally, this research could serve as a model for future pre-service and in-service teachers as well as researchers who would like to explore rural contexts, in order to take advantage of cultural and linguistic aspects of the social background. Some further recommendations are: first, applying the whole unit during a month since it is suggested to be completed in this lapse of time, but the teacher should consider as well their students' needs; second, raise teamwork in the classroom in order that students collaborate each other and learn to be tolerant, solidary, and comprehensible with their classmates; and lastly, try as much as possible to implement communicative skills, owing to the main purpose of this project, which is strengthening Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). It is also significant for future researchers to consider deepening on rural areas, as it is in this case with *Escuela Nueva*; in accordance to the experience of doing this project, there are few contributions to the field, therefore, using culture as a means to the learning of English may generate positive results.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. English Unit

This is the link to access the English unit:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RXOxqJxxRkQjTC01QxUryAq-nLqXSc2H?usp=sharing>

UNIDAD DE APRENDIZAJE DE INGLÉS
 ESCUELA NUEVA

CONTENT UNIT
 CHAPTER 1: FAMILY home. country. How am I?
 CHAPTER 2: DESCRIBING MY SURROUNDING environment.
 CHAPTER 3: DO YOU LIKE THE MOST? Comparisons of my country. How do I describe my family and my surroundings.

Coffee is hot.
 One of the favorite drinks of Colombians.

The macaw is colorful.
 The armadillo is small.

Let's share our knowledge
 Choose one of the following countries: Argentina - Mexico - Brazil - Peru - Venezuela
 In groups of three, design a poster and prepare a presentation that contains the following aspects:
 1. Include things that you like from that country.
 2. Include cultural aspects like music, food, sports, famous people, and traditions.
 3. Compare the previous aspects from that country with Colombia. Use comparative and superlative adjectives.
 4. Share the information with your classmates. At the end of the presentation, answer the question: What is your favorite place from the country you chose?

2. Listen and repeat
 Audio #1
 I am a musician.
 You are my best friend.
 He is happy.
 She is tall.
 It is delicious.
 We are a family.
 They are Colombian.
 Listen to audio #1
 Congratulations!

My Environment
 PREFERENCES: We use the verb like to demonstrate approbation, and dislike to disapprove something.
 Like
 I like my neighborhood.
 Don't like
 I don't like living in the city.
 Most of the people that come from abroad like Colombia because of the variety of ecosystems, for people and culture.

Noun - To be - Complete
 I am Camilo.
 He is my dad.
 She is my mom.
 It is a "ruana".
 You are my classmate.
 They are my family.
 We are from Colombia.

Carrots are more delicious than avocados.
 I am happier living in Colombia than in Brazil.
 My school is huger than the school in Brazil.

14
 19
 4
 36
 29