

**Running head:** RAISING STUDENTS' AWARENESS ON POST-CONFLICT

How does the implementation of critical reading strategies raise the levels of social awareness related to the current post-conflict period in students of 8th grade?

Simón Navarro Gutiérrez

Universidad de Antioquia

Thesis, Research, and Practicum advisor: Marlon Vanegas

Medellin

November 2018

### Abstract

Responding to one of the main challenges currently faced by the Colombian society after the approval of the peace process agreement, this action research was developed with the objective of describing the increase of social awareness in a group of high school students through the implementation of critical reading strategies related to the post-conflict period in our country . The participants involved in this project were a group of female students whose ages ranged from 13 to 14 years old who attended Institucion Educativa San Jose de Itagui. Data was collected through the implementation of techniques such as surveys, interviews, journals, and students' artifacts. The analysis was conducted under a triangulation process framed on the principles of the socio-critical approach. Findings evidenced that students' perception towards the post conflict changed. They found themselves as part of the current history of the country. Students started to recognize the importance of examining their prejudices and stereotypes before judging a person. Debates and discussions promoted collaboration, recognition and acceptance. Critical reading strategies on social issues related to the post-conflict had a positive impact and increase the level of students' social awareness.

*Key words: Critical literacy, reading aloud, shared reading, social awareness, post-conflict.*

Título del Proyecto en español: ¿Como la implementación de estrategias de lectura crítica incrementa los niveles de conciencia social sobre el posconflicto en estudiantes de octavo grado?

### **Degree Requirement**

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the School of Languages, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge everyone who played a role in my academic and personal accomplishments. In the academic field, I firstly want to thank to Escuela de Idiomas of Universidad de Antioquia, and the teachers in there for facilitating the tools, for their advices and recommendations, and for their camaraderie which makes this long road into an agreeable process. Also, I would like to thank to my advisor teacher Prof. Marlon Vanegas, who guided me in a very important part of the development of this project. A special feeling of gratitude to Prof. Sandra Echeverri who, through her experience in the field, besides providing strong bases for achieving the objectives in this research project, became a very supportive person during the whole elaboration of this work. In addition, I cannot forget to thank to the CT Nancy Zapata, and Institucion Educativa San Jose, for allowing to develop my project in there by furnishing all the needed tools.

In the personal aspect, Firstly, I thank my parents for their constant support, for being an example to follow, and for giving me the enough bases for achieving my personal goals. Likewise, I want to thank my classmates Alan Bedoya and Julian Moreno who shared with me enriching and wonderful experiences at the University. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to Valentina León who, through her unwavering accompaniment and unconditional support, helped me to keep up my motivation in this work.

**Table of contents**

<b>Preface</b> .....	6
<b>School context description</b> .....	7
<b>Statement of the problem</b> .....	8
<b>Theoretical framework</b> .....	10
<b>Research Question</b> .....	14
<b>General objective:</b> .....	14
<b>Specific objectives:</b> .....	14
<b>Action plan</b> .....	15
<b>Development of the action plan</b> .....	18
<b>Findings and interpretations</b> .....	23
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	28
<b>Constraints and Suggestions</b> .....	30
<b>Reflection</b> .....	31
<b>References</b> .....	32

### **Preface**

Recognizing that, nowadays our society is facing different social challenges as the result of the peace agreement approval, and those challenges are summed up to social reconstruction and the strengthening of a growing society in favor of more human practices, the basis of this action research stemmed from the need of contributing to the achievement of the peace process objectives. For this, the need of using critical literacy strategies in English showed up, understanding also the school as one of the fundamental entities to assume the mission of raising in youth the levels of social awareness. Besides, following some of the principles of socio-critical approach for teaching a second language, the application of shared reading and reading aloud techniques helped to generate a very positive impact on students' social awareness in favor of the post-conflict in Colombia. Within the framework of education for peace in Colombia, this paper is aimed to those who look for strategies of learning and teaching ESL as a means for contributing to the success of the post-conflict and peace process.

### **School context description**

This research project was carried out at a public institution located in the municipality of Itagüí, Antioquia. Its educational scope covers preschool, elementary and high school education. Since the original building was in process of restoration, student and teacher population had to move to a temporary institution for the time being. John F. Kennedy School was a five-story building provided with a computer room, a restaurant, a cafeteria and a soccer field. For many years, this institutions was known as a female school only; however, considering current educational demands, it became little by little a coeducational school.

The class I was appointed to develop my teaching practicum was a group of thirty seven 8th graders whose ages ranged from 13 to 14 years old. Their classroom was located on the third floor across from the soccer field and together with the rest of 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The seating arrangement was distributed in 7 rows made up of 7 to 8 students each. The classroom was furnished with a teacher's desk, a whiteboard, and a video-beam. Illumination and ventilation were appropriate to facilitate learning. This group, as the rest of groups in secondary education, was devoted one-hour English class every week day.

My cooperating teacher held a bachelor's degree in Teaching English Language from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. She was also pursuing her Master's degree in Education at the University of Antioquia. She had been working for this school as a high school teacher for about 6 years. She described herself as a dynamic and a didactic teacher who aimed to educate integral students through a holistic approach to foreign language learning. Likewise, she believed that to respond to students' needs and interests it was necessary to go beyond to what the School Board of Education mandates. During her classes she promoted collaborative work, respect for diversity, and understanding of global reality and its effects on the Colombian context.

### **Statement of the problem**

Throughout my first semester in 8<sup>o</sup>2 group as an observer, I could carry out some conversations and interactions with the students which drove me to identify in them a prominent interest about the Colombian post-conflict topic as thematic to be worked in the classroom. For instance, in some chats I had with students, they expressed their concern about the need of discussing on this type of topics since, according to them, these are not discussed in the school and barely talked at home. After talking about it with the cooperating teacher, I confirmed that this topic has not been discussed so far in the English subject, but even so, students demonstrated interest in talking about it and expressing their perception about it. "Students expressed they consider important to know about the issues that affect the society in our country" (Journal #16). It is there where students' concern and interest about this specific topic became a huge opportunity for developing this research project based on this thematic.

Eventually, noticing students' curiosity on post-conflict topic, I decided to move to the general guidelines of English area to see how pertinent these papers were in terms of post-conflict and all what this might involve. I found out that these documents did emphasis on the necessity of reaching the global requirements to enable students to respond to the cultural and technological changes. It is to say that during the whole first semester, the topics worked in 8<sup>th</sup> grade were not related to working on the perception about post-conflict at all. Although values as inclusion and respect were present in the institutional guidelines, those were not aimed to be worked in favor of improving the perception about the participation on the social issues in our country. Likewise, the content and context in which the English lessons were developed promoted only the development of English skills delimiting the generation of spaces for the discussion and the construction of awareness on the post-conflict reality. For instance, referring



to teacher's guidebook in module 1, objectives were about discussing good and bad environmental practices, or describing ecological values (Way to go – Teacher's guidebook, Module 1- Unit 3, p.30). None of those objectives were in context with the modern social reality in Colombia. Nevertheless, I identified an important potential to work over these topics if they were contextualized and connected to our reality and our present.

In addition, during the classes I observed, I noticed that although students' English level was not very high, they felt more confident and comfortable working on shared reading and reading aloud activities. As proof of this, I perceived that students' participation and positive response to these activities increased in those assignments that included any of these reading techniques. Regarding this, I considered necessary to use those reading strategies to keep students in an atmosphere of confidence understanding that, as Frey & Fisher (2003) affirmed, "They [reading alouds] can introduce important texts that some students might not otherwise be able to read and comprehend independently" (p.39). Understanding the need of dealing with the post-conflict as one of the strongest social issues in our country, the critical literacy was considered the most accurate means for developing this project, since it is precisely a perspective that advocates in favor of the social change through consciousness-raising by developing in students the capacity of reflection on the reality by adopting a position about a social issue.

The social reality observed in schools in Colombia is an issue to analyze not only for schools themselves, but also for teachers, parents, and government (Perez, 2013, p.184). Additionally, I consider English as one of the most opportune means to get students involved in a questioning social-problematic process. In consequence, and regarding the issue mentioned above, I decided to aim this study to describe the increase of students' social awareness related to

post-conflict in our country through the use of reading activities as reading aloud and shared reading in the English class.

### **Theoretical framework**

After considering the importance of the social context in our educative system and in the learning-teaching practices that are developed inside the classroom, the authors in which I supported this study aim their works to understand and explain the impact of critical literacy in social consciousness through the academic processes. Hence, in order to develop an appropriate analysis on the use of reading activities in public schools, and thus respond to the objectives established in this project, it is necessary to broach some concepts which constitute the frame of this action research. Along this section, *Critical literacy* concept will be presented following Freire's apprehension of this idea. Also, the implementation of critical *reading aloud* and *shared reading* as the main strategies selected for developing this work. Additionally, an approach to *Social awareness* concept from a scholar perspective exposed by Lerner (2001). Besides, the idea of *Post-conflict* in Colombia will be stated by explaining how this issue is understood.

#### **Critical literacy**

The term "literacy" is defined as the capability of understanding texts and making meaning of it (Luke & Woods, 2009, p. 9). Critical literacy practices invite participants through their own learning process to analyze the different texts, question them, and study them by adapting a critical view on the different power relations that are identifiable in the text itself (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 53). Additionally, according to Freire (1984) the right understanding of the texts demands to establish a direct relationship between the text's content

and the reader's reality to have a most accurate process of reflection in order to get a specific purpose, and then a meaningful action (p.111). Critical literacy works under four main principles (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 54) that have as crux the readers' reflection from their own position in society. First, Critical literacy emphasizes on issues of power and encourage students' reflection, transformation, and action. Second, it centers its attention on problems and the complexity of them. Third, it promotes the development of dynamic strategies and their adaptation to the context where they are applied. And finally, critical thinking foments the analysis of texts from multiple perspectives. All of this is proposed following one objective which is for readers to become text critics in their daily lives through the comprehension of information with a natural stance (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 53). For starting a teaching process through critical literacy, the authors state that there are multiple strategies that, with an appropriate adjustment, can work and be applied in many situations since the dynamic nature of this approach allows an easy adaptation to any context. Reading alouds are one of those strategies that, besides attempting to improve linguistic aspects in students, constitute a space to reflect about social experiences

### **Reading aloud**

Reading aloud activities have become one of the most meaningful strategies in the teaching practices at school, since it makes readings captivating for the students' attention besides helping them to enjoy texts and improve literacy skills (Norato, 2014, p. 84). Seen from a critical perspective, reading aloud comprehends the development of collaborative work (teacher and students) around a discussion about a specific topic. According to Meller, Richardson and Hatch (2009) all the material used for reading aloud activities must be interesting for the learners, but not all of them include the critical perspective in themselves, the critical

characteristic is given by the analysis and conversation that is carried out around it (p.76).

Likewise, although it is not mandatory to hold the socio-critical approach, every read-aloud must give learners the opportunity to develop critical reflection in order to raise social awareness about the different world realities (Meller et al., 2009, p.76). Shared reading as another literacy practice gives the opportunity to work readings aloud with a higher students' involvement and participation during the development of the lessons.

### **Shared reading**

Shared Reading is technique also applicable as one of the critical literacy strategies which, through the reading aloud, allows students to work jointly with teacher to decodify the text of interest. This idea is supported by Frey, N. & Fisher, D. (2003) stating that "In addition to read-alouds, teachers also extend literacy experiences through shared reading. Shared reading is the practice of reading collaboratively with students" (p,42). Different from the basic reading aloud strategy in which only teacher has a direct contact with the text, shared reading experiences have as one of its main characteristics that students have the chance of establishing direct contact with the reading itself, and thus generating an enjoyable experience, introducing them to a variety of authors, illustrators and types of texts to entice them to become a reader. The critical reading aloud together with shared reading that have been carried out in this project are framed in the social awareness perspective.

### **Social Awareness**

It refers to the ability of being conscious of the problematic situations in society and adopting a position to face social imbalances (Perez, 2013, pp. 185-186). It is to say that social instability is present when there is not awareness of the social problematics, and even more when

the community members do not reflect on those situations nor take actions on them. It is there when school must respond to the call of educating the new generations to raise social awareness to face inequalities in their communities. Indeed, Lerner (2001), states that the necessity is to make the school a place in which reading, and writing become meaningful practices that allow to rethink the world and reorganize our own thoughts for carrying out worthy actions (p.27). This is where the concept of recognition stands out among the struggles for contributing to the development of social participation. the following section elucidates the importance of this term in the process of raising social awareness.

### **Post-conflict**

Post-conflict is a concept that does reference to a challenging era of social reconstruction in favor of the social peace after the finalization of an armed conflict by whichever is the mean, via military or via negotiation. (Ugarriza, 2013, p. 144). Moreover, post-conflict responds to a series of actions to raise democratic participation and decrease the possibilities of falling back onto the armed war. In the Colombian context, after a more than 40 years' war, and the approval of a peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC (Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias de Colombia), the idea of post-conflict is, according to DPS (Departamento para la prosperidad social) (2015) the articulation between the different politic and social sectors with whole strategies, with other state entities for the productive and social inclusion of the disadvantage people in order to contribute to the socioeconomic stabilization of the population. The previous conception matches entirely with the ideas presented by Ugarriza (2013) who affirms that post-conflict also refers to a construction of the peace through social reintegration, reconciliation, assistance to the vulnerable population, social compensation, social and political

participation, among other factors that allow the complete inclusion of all the affected ones (p. 146)

The previous understanding of the concepts allows to have clarity on the focus of this study and allows to have a logic line which works as guiding thread to observe with punctuality those factors that contribute to have clearness on the perspective from which this study is carried out. Accentuating the importance of the social context in the educative processes and the significance of critical literacy on raising social awareness as one of the factors to work in favor of the post-conflict period in Colombia, I set out the following question:

### **Research Question**

How does the implementation of critical literacy strategies contribute to raise social awareness related to the current post-conflict period in students of 8th grade in a public school in Itagui, Colombia?

#### **General objective:**

- To raise students' social awareness about post-conflict in Colombia through the implementation of Critical Reading activities.

#### **Specific objectives:**

- To identify the phases that best contribute to raise social awareness among students
- To describe the contributions of reading aloud and shared reading strategies to raise social awareness among students.
- To relate the content of readings with the post-conflict period in Colombia.

### **Action plan**

Having clear the general and the specific objectives of this study, I proposed to develop the following action plan in order to gather enough information which helped to answer the main question in this project. Taking into consideration the *Critical literacy lesson framework* proposed by McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), which consists of a cycle of 4 phases (Engagement students' thinking, Guiding students' thinking, Extending students' thinking, and Reflection) I decided to divide my action plan into 4 main stages through which the four phases of the mentioned cycle are present, and thus be able to apply reading aloud/ shared reading strategy in a most accurate way. The whole action plan was scheduled to cover up 10 weeks.

**Introduction stage (1 week).** The main objective in this stage consisted of giving students clarity about the new project of which they were part, sharing the content of the project, having a clear understanding of the topics to work, and comprehending the emphasis we were working from. During this stage, the idea was to present the methodology to the CT and students, additionally, to explain how the tasks were going to be developed and what were the purposes of these.

#### **Stage A (4 weeks)**

Using *The true story of the three little pigs* as the central axis, this stage was planned to be divided into 4 phases which alluded to the developmental cycle mentioned above: Engagement students' thinking, guiding students' thinking, Extending students' thinking, and Reflection. The purpose in this stage was to analyze with students the importance of having more than one version of the stories before judging.

**Engaging students' thinking (Pre-reading).** This moment was planned for calling students' attention through the activation of previous knowledge by taking students to find a

purpose for developing the reading. The objective in this phase was about having a prior preparation for the *Guiding students' thinking* phase. Likewise, the idea was to analyze the traditional story of the three little pigs by checking what perception we had about the characters of the story (wolf and the pigs) by alternative perspectives activity.

**Guiding Students' thinking (During reading).** During this phase, the main goal was to keep students' interest up by prompting them as we developed collectively the reading. For this, I planned to provide unknown vocabulary before the reading, and invite students to do analysis to the cover and some pictures of the storybook, and thus, getting a first direct contact with *the true story of the three little pigs*.

**Extending students' thinking (Post-reading).** In this phase, the plan was about extending students reading through a critical viewpoint by developing critical discussions on the social issue represented in the reading. For this, I arranged students to do a match between both version of the story, the traditional one and the wolf's versions. Debates and discussions were planned to be present during this phase.

**Reflection.** This phase was included to represent an opportunity for reflecting through some guiding questions. Why did I have the perception I had about some characters before the reading? Why did I change or keep the perception I had? Among other questions.

### **Stage B (4 weeks)**

Having as axis two real narratives told by people directly affected or implied in the armed conflict between FARC and Colombian government, the structure of this stage was founded in developing a deep analysis through 4 different moments during these 4 weeks, Engagement students' thinking, guiding students' thinking, Extending students' thinking, and Reflection. The main idea in this stage was having a direct analysis on the post-conflict narratives through a



reflection on those stories, and thus become able to raise social awareness on students through the post-conflict in our country was main topic.

**Engaging students' thinking (Pre-reading).** In order to catch students' attention and turn on the students' prior knowledge, this phase was planned to have a first contact with the narratives through a contextualization of what post-conflict is and all what this involves. An analysis to the post-conflict information shared by the media was part of the plan in the phase.

**Guiding Students' thinking (During reading).** For this phase, before the application of these reading strategies, I planned to show some pictures related to the narratives, develop an analysis to those pictures, take a position in front of the content of the pictures, and set a discussion from there. Additionally, I scheduled to provide students with accurate vocabulary for understanding the readings and developing a better analysis on them. Two different narratives were selected for carrying out this stage. The first corresponded to a victim's story, and the second to an ex-combatant's narrative.

**Extending students' thinking (Post-reading).** After having read and understood the narratives, the reflection activities were scheduled. For this, the use of written activities in which the matching between the narratives and the readings developed in the stage A must to be present.

**Reflection.** This phase was created to carry out debates and discussion, and thus give significance to students' reflection.

### **Closure stage (1 week)**

Finally, in this stage, a survey and some interviews were planned to be applied with the objective of acquiring direct information about the impact of those learning events strategies.

### **Development of the action plan**

#### **Introduction stage (1 week)**

During the first week of the action plan, students received some introductory lessons in which I told them about the objectives of this project, the why and the how of this action plan. Students demonstrated a high level of interest of being part of this, and they expressed their goodwill and enthusiasm for the development of the project. Also, it was necessary to set the percentages of the grades with the students and the CT, and solve some students' doubts related to the methodology. At the end of this stage, I carried out the first survey aimed to the students in order to have a first idea of the students' perception about the post-conflict and the people directly implied on it.

#### **Stage A (4 weeks)**

**Engaging students' thinking (Pre-reading).** During this phase, various activities were applied to check and activate students' previous knowledge. Likewise, after taking a look at the most common versions of the three little pigs' story, an alternative perspective strategy as Mind Portrait was used to motivate students to give their perception of the characters of the story. In this activity, students represented the characters' perspective based on what they have heard and seen from the media, their family, their school, etc. In effect, students exposed their opinion on the topic and did an analysis on their own perspectives. Students were very active during this section of the plan. They shared constantly their anecdotes and their memories related to this classic tale.

**Guiding Students' thinking (During reading).** During this stage, I shared with students some words and expression which could be found in the reading to develop. Additionally, we did an analysis to the cover of the book *the true story of the three little pigs* and some pictures of it to

have a first contact with the reading. This helped to preserve and even increase students' interest on the story and the thematic worked in class. It was necessary to use a projector in order to give students enough visual access to the pages of the story. First, when the reading moment arrived, we practiced reading aloud strategy, and then it was applied the share-reading strategy to which students responded with a high level of interest and enthusiasm evidenced by actions as highlighting the unfamiliar expressions and remarking the main moments in this version of the story.

**Extending students' thinking (Post-reading).** After reading the wolf's version in the three little pigs' story, students were able to adopt a position and set an opinion. Students responded positively to the activity *Think, Pair, Share* in which they followed some questions in order to write and discuss their ideas with a partner before sharing them with the larger group. Through different comments during the development of the activities in this phase, students demonstrated to have recognized the importance of having more than one version of the stories to get conclusions. Even so, students started to connect their own life experiences with the issues and situations exposed in the tale.

**Reflection.** This phase was very enriching for the embracement of the concept of social awareness since, besides reflecting on the topics worked during the class, students shared their own personal stories in which were necessary to listen more than one voice to make a fair judgement. Additionally, they proposed different actions in favor of increasing the levels of social awareness taking in consideration their own social contexts.

**Stage B (4 weeks)**

**Engaging students' thinking (Pre-reading).** In this phase, I shared with students the context that surrounds the post-conflict. I found the need of giving a short history lesson related to the conflict and the post conflict itself in our country, since students did not know too much about this topic. They expressed this topic has never been treated in their families or school. Many of the ideas they shared about the conflict and the post-conflict were, according to them, got from the media. In effect, it was discussed how this context and this topic is presented by the media and the social networks nowadays. Likewise, students tried to identify perspectives that are silent or missing from the news and media in this specific topic shared during the lessons.

**Guiding Students' thinking (During reading).** During this phase, I shared with students some vocabulary related to the narratives, and then we looked and analyzed some pictures that might represent what the stories were about. Then, after having introduced both stories (one based on a victim story, and the other one based on an ex-combatant version) we developed the reading aloud strategy in which I read for the students, and after this we practiced shared reading in which randomly students read themselves the stories. During the reading, the activity *Say something* showed up. Here students participated by saying something about the fragment just read (opinion, understanding, similar experiences, answering or posing a specific question, etc.) This process was repeated through the both narratives shared. Although students expressed both stories were very captivating, the narrative based on an ex-combatant's story, according to students' reaction, was more astonishing than the others, and their comments started to show up.

**Extending students' thinking (Post-reading).** In order to have a discussion based on the narratives already read, I gave to the students some guiding questions which allowed to expand the debate on the different characters' perspective. Likewise, students had the chance of reflecting through a written activity in which they socialized the matching between the readings

in both stages (A and B). In search of having a deeper embracement of the topic, students were asked to write a reflection on both stories, and many of them brought up many of their life's moments or their family experiences to be compared with the situations exposed in the narratives. They clearly expressed their similarity with the characters of the story and the experiences they socialized through the narratives.

**Reflection.** After doing a review of all the topics worked during this action plan, and after recognizing the connection among all of them, students thought also about possible actions in order to keep up social awareness related to the post-conflict. They proposed many activities to generate awareness not only in the post-conflict aspects, but also in all the different social issues we can find in our society.

### **Closure stage (1 week)**

To finish the development of the action plan, I carried out a survey aimed to some students (randomly selected) and an interview was applied to the CT. All these activities were executed with the intention of gathering the last part of data in order to develop the pertinent analysis in favor of getting the accurate conclusions in this project. Students realized the action plan was about to finished, and they expressed their feeling of sadness demonstrating also that they engaged with the thematic, the methodology and the project proposed.

### **Data collection techniques.**

During the development of this action plan, different gathering information tools were used to collect enough valuable data to analyze and interpret how impacting this action plan was.

**Journals:** Every class I observed and every class I tough during the academic year were reported in a journal which allowed to have an accurate perspective of what we really want to

observe during the lessons. "The information obtained under this method relates to what is currently happening; it is not complicated by either the past behavior or future intentions or attitudes." (Kothary, 2004, p. 96)

**Survey:** Two surveys were applied during this research project. The first was developed before starting the action plan. The second was applied at the end of the action plan's application. Both surveys were applied to 10 students randomly selected. The survey's questions were addressed to know students' perception of the post-conflict and their position about it using their own words. According to Kothary (2004) one of the benefits of questionnaires or surveys is precisely the information gathered directly from respondents' words, which gives objectivity, precision, and clarity about their ideas. (p. 101)

**Interview:** Although some informal conversations were developed during the project, two interviews were applied at the end of the action plan. The first interviewee was the CT and the questions in this were addressed towards her perception about the pertinence of this project in this specific group of students and in schools in general. Following the same objectives, the second interview was applied to a group of 5 students which gave us their opinion from a different perspective in the project. One of the advantages of this method is explained by Kothary (2004) stating that "The interviewer can collect supplementary information about the respondent's personal characteristics and environment which is often of great value in interpreting results" (p. 99)

**Class Material:** Kothary (2004) also affirms that "The analysis of content is a central activity whenever one is concerned with the study of the nature of the verbal materials." (p.106) Following this idea, several activities were carried out during the whole application of the action plan. Besides being useful for the achievement of the objectives in each stage, the most of those

activities provided a clear idea of the nature of students' perception about the topics worked during the lessons, and these gave a general idea of the students' point of view about the social issues worked.

### **Findings and interpretations.**

By the data collection techniques, I could get some worthy information which helped me to understand better the impact generated by the learning events strategies applied. For this, it was necessary firstly analyzing the content of the journals which were developed during the whole academic year. From these some subcategories emerged being the most common the ones related to behavior and students' attitude. Likewise, based on the information gathered through the interviews to CT and students, I could identify some other subcategories, these were principally related to students' perception in front of the strategies and methodologies used. Also, using both surveys' results (the one at the beginning and the one at the ending of the course), I could analyze the evolution of students' position towards the post-conflict over the semester. After tabulating all the information together, I applied a triangulation process from which 3 main categories emerged, the first one was Students' view having as subcategories their view on post-conflict and view on social awareness. Second, contribution of reading events, with subcategories as language development, and prejudices and stereotypes. And finally, the last category, class methodology with one subcategory named class activities.

### **Students' view**

During the analysis developed to the information gathered through the different collecting date methods, I could identify that students' perspective demonstrated to have been influenced by the activities carried out during the application of the action plan. There were two main

factors in which students' view denoted a meaningful change, students' view on post-conflict, and students' view on social awareness.

**Students' view on post-conflict.** I found there was an important and positive increment in the perception students had about the post-conflict situation. Some of the aspects analyzed which demonstrated a significant variation by means of these surveys were for example the importance of talking about post-conflict with our family, friends, etc. Also, the aspect that had the highest increase was the one that responded to students as participants of the post-conflict. This variable had an increment of almost the double in comparison to the beginning of the semester. This is supported by the CT by affirming that “the dynamics that the pre-service teacher proposed have allowed students to identify themselves as part of the conflict in our country” (Interview CT, Question 2). Additionally, the post-conflict as social issue and topic of discussion acquired relevance for students' eyes after the application of the action plan. Searching to give students a little more of information about the post-conflict, some of the lesson got a hint more informative which led students to perceive they know a little more about this social issue today than before. As it is stated by Pachón (2017) a fundamental aspect in the process of social reintegration in the post-conflict is, through education, redirecting the development of the thematic towards rural, political, and social topics (p.294). There was a notorious growth in the commitment of students and their interventions in favor of the current situation of the country regarding the post-conflict. The activities I proposed in order to increase students' engagement with this social issue reached one their principal objectives which was about to guide students to feel appropriated of one of the main challenges of our country.

**Students' view on social awareness.** Based on the analysis of the final information, and the interpretation made to the triangulation of data, I found that the tasks and the activities I



proposed were approved and well-accepted by students when talking about generating a positive impact on the critical view development and the social commitment of students in different social issues, but mostly in the post-conflict aspect. This is supported by the CT when stating that "I feel that a positive impact was generated, and this impact is evidenced in students' self-reflection in front of the responsibility that they feel towards those different situations that represent a conflict and what happened after those conflicts" (Interview CT- Q2). As Bello, I. (2012) states, "the reflection and discussion on social concerns allowed students to enhance a critical view and a social transformation in their society while studying the target language" (p.112). In fact, it is possible to affirm that, through the tasks, the level of social commitment in students raised up. Being more specific, the activities proposed reached different concepts related to social awareness, having evident results on variables as prejudice and stereotyping.

### **Contribution of readings**

The data analysis also showed that students accepted positively the readings, their content, and way of redaction. During the activities, it was found that those reading activities were carried out with motivation and enthusiasm. Likewise, there was a constant interest by students on the issues presented in them and the reflection developed based on the texts and the activities. For instance, the Cooperating teacher said that the stories were well-adapted to students' ages and the discursive context of the girls in the classroom, in both content and vocabulary, which allowed a better interaction among students and readings (interview CT- Q3). The importance of this dynamism is also recognized by McLaughlin, M., & DeVogd, G. L. (2004) who argued that "The strategies, which are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used, promote critical discussions based on reflection and resulting action that leads to more reflection and other resulting actions." (p.38). It is to say, the readings were the appropriate

ones because their dynamism helped for firstly, capturing students' interest keeping them on track during all the process, and secondly for facilitating the generation of reflection and critical analysis, and thus, increasing social awareness levels. Additionally, the analysis showed that the readings generated an important impact on two other variables which are highly connected with the use of learning a new language for increase social awareness. Those variables are working on prejudices and stereotypes, and Language development.

**Prejudices and stereotypes.** This subcategory emerged as one of the contributions of reading, and findings reported that students arrived in the classroom with a whole background which shape their perception of the characters in the stories used for the reading strategies. This was visible in the development of the reading activities done by students. "When analyzing the comic strip made by the students, I found out that most of the reasons to get into pigs' house that students invented were related to a negative action by the wolf." Journal 3. But after working through the first reading strategy, students started to understand the importance of being open to new perceptions, and the value of other's ideas. As Torres (2010) exposed, a fundamental task is to face and attack prejudices and stereotypes in their roots because these naturalize and give permission to the social mistreatment towards certain people and different social groups. (p.26) It is to say that, more than finding an issue to discuss during the lesson, the dynamism of the readings allowed to face and analyze students' prejudices and stereotypes through the reflection and the pre, during, and post- reading activities.

**Language development.** As another subcategory obtained from contribution of reading, and based on the data information, I could realize that students improved some of their communicative skills as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, use of expressions, among others. "Yo creo que mejore por ejemplo la pronunciación con las lecturas porque pues usted nos ponía

a leer y a exponer y a hablar constantemente entonces uno como que se veía obligado a hablar bien (risas)" (Interview Ss- Q3). This is supported by Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2003) who affirm that reading strategies give new chances to students to exchange ideas and discuss with classmates while strengthening their English skills (p.39). It is evident that students not only improved in the field of social awareness, the methodology used also had an impact improving some of the students' linguistic aspects. Besides, the acquisition of confidence while reading or participating is another aspect in which students and CT highlighted improvement.

### **Class Methodology**

The data grouped in this category described that the methodology used for carrying out the actions was friendly for students, which activated their participation and consequently contributed to the increasing of students' social awareness about the post-conflict and also participated in the improvement of students' language skills. It is also stated by one of students who affirmed that they always wanted to understand everything and participate because they do not want to lose the track. The methodology was cool because it was different and made us think differently (Interview Ss- Q1). Regarding this, McLaughlin, M., & DeVogd, G. (2004) proposed that "The purpose of the strategies is to provide direction for students as they engage in critical analysis—examining social issues and power relations."(p.38). This led us to affirm that Students accepted positively the methodology used throughout the project because the adaptation made to the readings and the preparation before readings and the activities developed after reading were appropriate for engaging students in critical analysis through amicable activities.

**Class activities.** Through the triangulation of the data, it was also possible to define class activities as one subcategory which emerged from class methodology. I could notice that students took advantage of every reading activity for participating and sharing their thoughts and

their interests. Norato (2014) agrees with this idea, sharing that "It appears that students appreciate the read-aloud event as an opportunity to share the teacher's interest in the topic." (p.38). This was also exposed in the journal #2: "The purpose of the class was accomplished since students shared their perceptions of the story's characters and they explained clearly why they see in that specific way the wolf and the three little pigs". This confirmed that the activities proposed caught students' attention and encourage students to actively and constantly participate which demonstrated their positive attitude in front of the activities to develop.

### **Conclusions**

Considering that my research question was the following: How does the implementation of critical shared reading/reading aloud activities raise the levels of social awareness related to the current post-conflict period in students of 8th grade in a public school in Itagui, Colombia? I state that the application of the action plan, considering the different phases of critical reading strategies, allowed to achieve the general objective through the generation of a positive impact on students' social awareness which do increase the level of students' social commitment on post-conflict as social issue worked under the socio-critical approach.

Responding also to the first specific objective in this work which was to identify the phases that best contribute to raise social awareness in students, there were different moments of critical reading strategies that cooperated enormously in favor of this issue. The Engaging students' thinking phase (Pre-reading) as one of the fundamental moments of any critical literacy strategy, allowed to encourage students to understand the readings and contextualize them to students' reality. Additionally, this phase took students to identify themselves as part of a

context with several social issues having post-conflict as one of them. Likewise, Guiding Students' thinking phase (During reading) emerged as another important phase the action plan which helped to raise the social awareness on students since, for example through the true story of the three little pigs reading, students felt connected with an interesting reality as stereotyping and prejudging is. Additionally, students started to listen to others' point of view and respect those, as well as they shared theirs. Another important phase that empower the impact of the learning events strategies was Extending students' thinking phase (Post-reading). During this phase the activities proposed allowed students to have a better comprehension of the content and context of the stories and narratives, and thus, having an accurate reflection and thinking about the most appropriate action. Having reflection as one of most expected results in this process, this last phase gives significance to the whole plan previously developed.

The second conclusion, which is also aligned with the second specific objective in this project, refers to the description of the contributions of critical learning events to raise social awareness among students. The use of reading aloud and shared reading strategies gave first a clear view to the social issues worked during the semester. Additionally, these events provided a factor that connected students' interests or prior experiences with the topic of post-conflict. There was when the use of a classic tale as three little pigs, through shared reading and reading aloud, activated students' attention. From this, the pre, while, and post-reading phases on the texts, facilitates the development the self-reflection regarding students' responsibility in many social issues present in our context. Likewise, students started to identify themselves with the characters of the tale, and eventually with the narratives' characters. This brought an important contribution in students' perception towards post-conflict and the people directly implied in this issue.

Bringing up also the third specific objective, which responded to relating the content of readings with the post-conflict period in Colombia, I concluded that these reading techniques played an important role in the aim of achieving the general objective. After demonstrating interest and motivation about post-conflict as thematic to work during the lessons, students started to recognize the importance of avoiding prejudices and stereotyping through the debates and the discussions. The previous idea allowed to affirm that by selecting the appropriate readings and applying the accurate dynamics, the impact on the social awareness of students may be very positive. But the impact not only contributed to the students' perception about the idea of post-conflict, it also caused a positive effect on students' linguistic skills. The used of some expressions and a wide vocabulary became more recurrent during the development of the lessons. Likewise, the constant desire of expressing their opinion, agreement or disagreement, sharing anecdotes, among others was a reason to increase the level of participation during the classes and therefore an increase in their level of speaking skill. In fact, pronunciation and fluency also were highlighted as some of the linguistic aspects with a higher level of growth.

### **Constraints and Suggestions**

It is necessary to pay attention to time constraints since, if there is not punctuality in the activities proposed in the action plan, the development of this one can be affected, and in the same way, the results can be influenced by the hurry when carrying out an activity. When developing a research aimed to social behavior and based on the principles of socio-critical approach, it is fundamental to find and/or create work material that responds to the specificity of the group we are going to analyze. We must recognize that every group and every individual have their own characteristics and responds to the different stimulating actions, so I recommend give a high level of importance to the observation stage before defining the action plan in order

to have a clear understanding of students' features. Likewise, we must take into consideration that, in a public institution, there are several extra-curricular activities which may influence and interrupt the development of the action plan. It is essential to design our plan open to interruptions to avoid confusions in the launch of the activities. Finally, keeping a friendly relationship with the CT can be a very helpful variable during the lessons since his/her experience can give us very useful tools at the moment of dealing with different situations related to behavioral, personal, professional, or academic aspects.

### **Reflection**

Through the academic year I felt afraid of facing a learning-teaching context that I have never dealt with as this public institution was. But after having finished this project, I realized this work contribute enormously to my professional life. Besides, this led me to reconsider many ideas about the teaching process, not only for my academic process, but also for my personal life.

In the academic field, I had the change of putting into practice all what I learned during the whole career, all the teaching tools I received, and many of the advices I got from my teachers. Additionally, having the opportunity of seeing how the theory takes shape inside of a classroom is a wonderful experience. This type of works takes me to move into the ideas of many other authors with a perspective different from mine. This obligated me to be more prepared, to read more, and clarify my thoughts and my ideas related teaching and learning a new language. Therefore, I state that one of the most important contributions was the necessity of being academically enough prepared to face appropriately the context and achieve the objectives.

Professionally, I consider that experiences like this nourish our expertise and knowledge for being enough prepared to accomplish the objectives of a teacher. It is to say, it helped us to feel ready to go and face the educational system presented in our country. I agree with many who say that public institutions might represent the hardest scenario for a teacher, but it is precisely because of that rigorousness that I am grateful with this project. I think this year in a public institution with eighth graders toughen me up to confront many other teaching environments.

In the personal field, through the interaction with students, the results at the end of the year, and the positive impact, I could reaffirm my vocation for teaching. I learned to recognize and give value to the interaction with the people through which I ascertained that everybody can be a teacher because everybody has something to teach.

### References

- Bello, I. (2012, January - June). A Language-in-Use Study of EFL Students' Social Discourses in Project-Based Learning. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 14(1), 108-126.
- Booth, T. (2005). Keeping the Future Alive: putting inclusive values into action. *FORUM*, 47(2), 151-158.
- Departamento para la prosperidad social. (2015, January). *Sector de la inclusion social y reconciliacion: plan estrategico 2015*. Retrieved from [www.dps.gov.co](http://www.dps.gov.co): <http://www.dps.gov.co/ent/gen/trs/Documents/Plan-Estrategico-Prosperidad-Social-2015.pdf>
- Freire, P. (1984). *La importancia de leer y el proceso de liberacion* (16th ed.). Mexico: Siglo xxi.
- Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2003). Reading alouds and shared readings: Not just for elementary anymore. 37-58. Retrieved from <http://udlforteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Frey-and-Fisher-2003-Read-Alouds-and-Shared-Readings-Not-Just-for-Elem.pdf>
- Kothary, C. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and Technics* (2nd ed.). New Delhi, India: New Age.



- Lerner, D. (2001). *Leer y escribir en la escuela: Lo real, lo posible y lo necesario* (1st ed.). Mexico D.F: Fondo de cultura economica.
- Luke, A., & Woods, A. (2009). Critical literacies in school: A primer. *Voices from the Middle*, 17(2), 9-18.
- McLaughlin, M., & DeVogd, G. (2004). Critical literacy as comprehension: expanding reader response. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(1), 52-62.
- McLaughlin, M., & DeVogd, G. L. (2004). *Critical Literacy Enhancing students' comprehension of text*. New York: Scholastic Inc.
- Meller, W., Richardson, D., & Hatch, J. A. (2009, November). Using read-alouds with critical Literacy literature in K-3 classrooms. *Young Children*, 64(6), 76-78.
- Ministerio de Educacion Nacional. (2016). *Way to go! 8th Grade*. Bogota D.C.: Colombia impresion. Retrieved from [www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/colombiabilingue](http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/colombiabilingue)
- Norato, C. (2014). The Effect of Story Read-alouds on children's foreign language development. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 83-98.
- Pachon, W. (2017, December). Inclusion social de actores del conflicto armado colombiano: retos para la educacion superior. *Desafios*, 30(1), 279-308.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/desafios/a.4917>.
- Perez, L. (2013). Unveiling social awareness through literacy practices in an EFL class. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 15(2), 184-204.
- Polat, F. (2011). Inclusion in education: A step towards social justice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 50-58.
- Torres, J. (2010). La discriminacion en la escuela. *Ethos educativo*, 47, 17-31. Retrieved from <https://docplayer.es/14341124-La-discriminacion-en-la-escuela.html>
- Ugarriza, J. (2013, January). La dimensión política del postconflicto: discusiones conceptuales y avances empíricos. *Colombia Internacional*(77), 141-176. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint77.2013.06>