

Implementation of a Critical Intercultural Approach Based on Women's Roles in Medellín

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Abstract

This action research report describes the experience during the implementation of a critical intercultural approach at Centro Formativo de Antioquia CEFA in Medellín. It was developed with a small group of female students from 11th grade. This project was based on women's roles in our city and had four main sections where these roles were reviewed through time (past, present and future) along with their defining factors. Data were collected from a journal, surveys and students' work. Although all the objectives for the project could not be achieved due to different limitations, findings showed that students' perceptions about women's roles changed during the development of the activities and led them to different reflections. Moreover, they were more engaged in their learning process and improved their English knowledge by having the opportunity to express their ideas and using language in context.

Key words: Critical intercultural approach, intercultural communicative competence, women's roles, English learning.

Degree requirement

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

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Preface

The relationship between language and culture has become more evident through time and, nowadays, foreign language teaching proposals are aiming beyond linguistic contents. However, in our country, especially in public schools, this has not happened yet. Most teachers still have a main focus on grammar and vocabulary, leaving culture and students' contexts aside. Taking all these aspects into account, the purpose of this action research emerged from a personal interest in fostering critical awareness and using students' setting as the means to encourage foreign language learning, in this case, English, in order to address teaching in a more meaningful way. Therefore, this project aims to the implementation of an approach where critical interculturality becomes the basis of EFL teaching.

Context

The school Centro Formativo de Antioquia, herein CEFA, is a female-only institution located in downtown Medellín which mainly offers tenth and eleventh grade with a technical emphasis. In 2016, the school began to offer sixth grade and has had one new group each year in order to complete all high school levels. With the motto “let your light shine” (“Que vuestra luz resplandezca”), the mission of the institution is to promote the education of women in their basic, upper secondary and technical education. CEFA, based on a civic culture, aims to foster students initiation in the labor market and their access to tertiary education.

CEFA is next to the streetcar station Pabellón del Agua EPM; its location downtown offers a wide variety of means of transportation, which allows the school to receive students from all over the city. The institution is also close to diverse cultural sites such as “Pequeño Teatro”, Museum “Casa de la Memoria”, and Pablo Tobón Theater, as well as higher education institutions such as Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, CESDE, CENSA and Escolme. CEFA has a total area of one block with the following areas within: classrooms (35), library (1), auditoriums (2), computer’s rooms (3), English lab (1), Mathematics lab (1), Chemistry, Physics, Natural Sciences and Food production labs (4), chapel (1), school cafeterias (2), teacher’s lounges (10), offices (7), coliseum (1), swimming pool (1), gymnasium (1), and main courts (2).

The institution describes itself as a school “from the city to the city”. It offers seven different modalities for the technical emphasis, which are: Healthcare, Commerce, Computer Sciences, Food Technology, Chemical Sciences, Design and Mathematics. CEFA has its own culture (Cultura CEFA) whose main goal is that students learn to coexist from their own strengths and qualities as human beings. Moreover, the school has a quality policy of providing

an appropriate, convenient and trustworthy educational service. Their main focus is on work and civic competencies aiming to be recognized in Medellín as the best scholarly option of the city.

The purpose is to educate healthy, moral, thriving and happy women.

The English department at CEFA makes part of the “Humanities area” of the school.

There are a total of six English teachers, equally divided in the morning and afternoon journeys.

The department owns a lab with twenty-two computers and a big TV; they also keep many books there, mainly short stories. There are also different English materials such as books, posters, flashcards, games, recording machines and realia which are stored in the teacher’s lounge. Every classroom at CEFA has a whiteboard, a table and a plastic chair for teachers and tablet arm desks organized in rows for students. Most of them have windows facing the street or the hall, but they usually remain closed.

Most of the students at CEFA belong to the first and second socioeconomic strata levels; there are also students from the third and fourth strata levels. Each group has an average of forty students. I worked with the same group from the Design modality; during the first part of the project, they were in 10th grade; for the second part and the implementation, they were in 11th grade. This group has forty-three students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Since this is one of the most requested modalities, most students are well behaved, attentive and receptive. English classes are twice a week and each one lasts fifty minutes.

Throughout this project, I worked with two cooperating teachers (CT). The first one has a Bachelor’s degree in Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. He has been teaching English since 1994 and has worked at CEFA teaching English and Spanish since 1998. His lessons were mainly based on grammar topics, he aimed to work with the books from the

Ministry of Education, *English, please!*, and with the program *English Discoveries Network* at the computer's lab. However, there was not a precise sequence of topics and students were not engaged with the classes. The second CT is a Professional in International Business from Universidad del Tolima. He has been teaching English since 2003 and he started to work at CEFA in 2018. He had a more structured plan for the semester; he designed different units and activities for students based on the Ministry of Education standards and the Basic Learning Rights. Most of the activities were grammar-based; nonetheless, he included and worked on all language skills with students.

I am a student of the School of Languages of the Universidad de Antioquia. I have worked as an English teacher for three years, mainly teaching children. I decided to work at CEFA because my mother taught there for twenty-two years and thanks to that, I already knew different aspects about the school. Moreover, I wanted to challenge myself by working with teenagers. Since I have always lived downtown and most of my school education was in female-only institutions, where English lessons were mainly focused on grammar, it was easy for me to relate to this particular context in order to propose pertinent actions.

Statement of the Problem

Colombia has adapted and implemented many English education standards and models in the past thirty years (Usma, 2015). Since 2014, the Ministry of Education has developed and implemented the program *Colombia Bilingüe* that includes different standards like the Basic Learning Rights and a Suggested Curriculum for English, along with materials for both students and teachers. However, there is a lack of contextualization between the contents proposed on the

program, the English level demanded for each grade and Colombian students' realities along with their actual language level.

Medellín has made its own efforts as well, more recently with the project *Expedición Currículo* which proposes a general plan for English teaching in all school grades. Nonetheless, there is no connection among local and national proposals. In this particular case, *Expedición Currículo* is related to *Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo*, the predecessor of *Colombia Bilingüe*. This lack of connection among programs demands teachers to adapt guidelines and contents to their context, which has caused extra work for them or the disregarding of these proposals.

This situation is also present at CEFA. Since the institution does not have a structured English curriculum and each teacher decides on his/her own planning and lessons, there is no link among national, local or even institutional actions. As a consequence, students learn a foreign language in a decontextualized way where cultural aspects are not taken into account and there is no relationship among English and their realities.

The classes observed were mainly focused on grammar topics and there was not a clear connection or transition among them (Personal journal, August 24th, 2018). Moreover, lessons were not demanding for students. In different conversations and on a short survey I applied, students manifested they felt they were not learning anything since they were not asked to do many activities or make any oral or written production (Personal journal, August 31st, 2018).

This general lack of contextualization is clear evidence of the absence of cultural awareness in the learning and teaching processes. This is an aspect of concern since, as Chlopek (2008) stated, "to learn a language well usually requires knowing something about the culture of that language" (p. 10); therefore, culture needs to be present in language teaching and learning

processes. Furthermore, the Common European Framework of Reference (2001) includes intercultural awareness and intercultural skills among the competencies that must be developed in order to be able to communicate. This remarks the importance of relating the culture of origin with the foreign culture and understanding this relationship.

Taking into account the conditions and issues mentioned above, this project aims to implement an intercultural approach based on women's roles in Medellín. This purpose is related to the institution since historically, CEFA has aimed to change the traditional roles women have had in our society, which is reflected in its mission and the education they provide to students. Consequently, this proposal will provide students with language learning in context and the possibility of reflecting about their roles and other women's in culture and society.

Theoretical Background

In the past decades, the relationship between language and culture has been widely studied in the field of foreign language teaching by several authors (Paricio Tato, 2014, p. 215). Therefore, nowadays it is evident that this process demands taking culture into account because, as stated by García and García (2014), in order to successfully interact in any communicative situation, not only a linguistic knowledge is necessary, but also a cultural knowledge (p. 53).

This can be observed in the inclusion of cultural aspects and intercultural competences in different language models. One example is the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001) which includes and considers diverse aspects concerning interculturality in its general competences. For instance, intercultural skills such as the ability to relate both the origin and the foreign culture (p. 104) and intercultural awareness which is produced by the "knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and

distinctive differences) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’” (p. 103).

Moreover, in language teaching, there have been an integration and implementation of an *intercultural approach*. Taking into account the different problematics at CEFA, it seems as an appropriate way to address these issues. According to Corbett (2003), an intercultural approach is centered in culture and its main goal is the intercultural communicative competence. The author also focuses on the improvement of reading, writing, listening and speaking, “in order to help learners acquire cultural skills” (p. 2). This approach intends that learners get a deeper understanding of explicit and implicit cultural goals in the use of the target language; in addition, they get the opportunity to reflect on their own language and community. (p. 2)

Being *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC) the main goal of an intercultural approach, it is necessary to define it. This concept was introduced by Michael Byram in 1997 as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other language and cultural backgrounds” (Sun 2014, as cited in Douglas & Rosvold, 2018). In Byram’s proposal (1997), ICC requires five *savoirs*: knowledge (*savoir*), skills to interpret and relate (*savoir comprendre*), attitudes (*savoir être*), critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) and skills to discover and/or interact (*savoir apprendre/faire*) (p. 34). Moreover, when interacting with people from other cultures and linguistic backgrounds, ICC comprises empathy, respect, tolerance, sensitivity, flexibility, and openness (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018, p. 27). In this perspective, foreign language learners are expected to be intercultural communicators by developing these five *savoirs*.

Furthermore, when addressing ICC or an intercultural approach, there are other aspects to take into account. For instance, García León and García León (2014), with the purpose of providing insights on an ideal language education model, revise several aspects that must be considered and are strongly connected to interculturality. They state that all human actions are determined by fundamental interests which could be grouped in three: technical, practical and emancipating (p.55). For this research project, the most relevant is the third one, the emancipating interest. It is based on independent and responsible actions that emerge from informed decisions, which demand critical theories that explain how reality works. Language learning has an intercultural perspective where the world can be problematized in order to be transformed and aims to modify situations of oppression and domination (García León & García León, 2014, p.57).

Then, García León and García León (2014) analyze the concept of interculturality from three different perspectives. The first one is the relational perspective which is based on the fact that, in regions such as Latin America, the relationship among communities with different cultures has always existed; therefore, interculturality is not seen as a conflict situation but something natural, perpetuating domination relationships (p. 58). The second perspective is the functional one; it accepts difference and looks for intercultural dialog and a tolerant coexistence; however, it does not question its context and just functions inside the established political, economic and social structures (p. 59). Finally, a critical perspective exposes the need to change not only the relationships but also the structures, conditions and devices of power that maintain inequality, inferiority, racialization and discrimination (Walsh, 2009 as cited in García León & García León, 2014, p. 61-62).

Therefore, as a conclusion, for García León and García León (2014), foreign language education should be critical, intercultural and with an emancipating interest (p. 63) because only through the critical reading of reality, an intercultural education can be truly achieved because understanding others is not only recognizing them, is also being able to break free with them through a cultural change (p. 57).

A form of oppression that can be addressed in foreign language teaching and learning, in order to promote a critical intercultural approach, is *sexism*. An example is the “Sexism curriculum design” created by Botkin, Jones and Kachwaha (2007) where they defined sexism as “a system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, enforce male dominance and control” (p. 174). This form of oppression can be addressed from *women's roles* in a specific setting, in this case, Medellín, because as Botkin et al. state, sexism "functions through individual beliefs and practices, institutions, images, and ideas" (p. 174) and "is often experienced in the most intimate parts of our lives" (p.176). Moreover, CEFA is a school that has marked the history of women in the city by acting against the traditional oppression that has shaped their roles in society (Institución Educativa Centro Formativo de Antioquia, 2018, p. 7-10). Having a context as diverse as CEFA, where students come from all over the city, provides a broad perspective of women's roles in Medellín, allowing the development of critical intercultural competencies.

Research Question

How does the implementation of a critical intercultural approach in an EFL classroom affect students' views of women's roles in Medellín?

General Objective

To explore how the implementation of a critical intercultural approach affects students' views of women's roles in Medellín.

Specific Objectives

- To foster students' acquisition of intercultural communicative competence.
- To identify how students perceive the different roles of women in Medellín.
- To analyze students' reflections about women's roles through time.
- To monitor students' proposals to change situations of oppression against women.

Action Plan

In order to implement a critical intercultural approach, I designed a unit composed of four parts where time is considered as the central aspect to englobe and analyze women's roles. Each one will be developed during a week and their names are: *Factors that define women's roles*, *Women's roles today*, *Women's roles in the past* and *Women's roles for the future*. Moreover, I took into account the BLR and the achievements for 11th grade proposed by the government that could be worked and fostered during the unit and were related to my research objectives (See Appendix A).

The first actions to be done are the socialization of the research project with the group and the signing of the informed consent. During the first week, the idea is to introduce students to the main topic of the unit. Using images of real women from Medellín, students' will make short descriptions of them to start identifying their roles. After sharing their descriptions, they will reflect and propose the factors that, according to them, have a stronger influence on these women to become who they are. Then, students will think of a woman they admire and reflect on

which of these factors influenced her the most and how. The following weeks are framed through time. The second one is focused on the present; here, students will contrast their assumptions with their realities by describing a character they will create, which is “the most paisa woman” and compare her to themselves and another woman they know. Then, we will consider some external views by comparing the Google search feeds in English and Spanish when searching for “Medellín women” and “Mujeres Medellín”. Then, they will reflect about them and express their opinions in a short letter.

During the third week, students will think about roles in the past and compare them to what happens today. For this purpose, old advertisements will be used to analyze and think about the roles portrayed there. Then, students will interview an older close woman they know, could be a relative or a neighbor, and share the answers with their classmates. They will discuss what they found and make a comparison between past and present by stating the differences and aspects in common through a short reflection paper.

Finally, throughout the fourth week, students will identify different negative situations that women in Medellín currently face in order to propose actions to change these issues and improve their lives in general. Moreover, they will reflect on their own future and the roles they want to assume.

In terms of data collection for this research project, the main instruments will be a student-teacher journal and students’ work and production during the unit. Moreover, a final survey will be carried out regarding students’ perceptions of their learning and the implemented approach.

Development of Actions

The implementation of this project did not go as planned because of several reasons that delayed its beginning and interfered during its development. Firstly, Secretaría de Educación de Medellín implemented new regulations for the practicum processes. Teacher-students had to follow a registration process and schools could not receive anyone until they get the approval by Secretaría de Educación through an administrative resolution. This process took almost two months and I was finally authorized to begin on March 18th 2019. However, I could not start right away because there were a teachers' strike, a holiday and a parents' meeting during the days the group had their English class. Considering other upcoming events such as holy week, the possibility of another teacher's strike and that I had to wait for my CT to finish the unit he was working with the girls, we came to an agreement to develop this research. The CT looked for volunteers to work with me during the classes; they would participate in the project and comply to the regular class activities alongside. Therefore, the unit was implemented with a small group of ten students. On April 24th, the first intervention took place; before beginning with the activities, students signed the informed consent and a small survey was made to know students' ages, where they lived and their English learning experiences. During the implementation, we missed several classes because of students' final term exams, holidays and other school activities. Hence, I could not implement the complete unit, nor assess students, and some small changes were made in order to develop the activities.

The first week, *Factors that define women's roles*, was developed outside the classroom and it took three classes instead of two, as it was originally planned, because they were shorter due to different institutional reasons (Personal journal, April 29th and May 15th 2019). The first

activities were developed according to plan; on April 24th and 29th students made the descriptions based on the images, first individually and then in pairs (See Appendix B). Then, on May 15th, students shared their opinions and ideas in order to define the factors that had a stronger influence in those women. The last activity, where students had to describe an admirable woman for them, was supposed to be done in a written way; however, it was done orally because of short time available.

During the second week, *Women's roles today*, some small changes were made as well. On May 20th, students created, drew and described their characters, "the most paisa woman" and shared them with the group (See Appendix C). The comparisons among these women, themselves and another woman they know in real life were done orally within their small groups rather than in an individual written way as it was planned. On May 22nd, for the activity with the Google search feeds, only 5 girls could participate in it and we could not work inside the lab because there was a problem with the keys; therefore, the activity was explained and we read the different results from a cell phone. Students shared their opinions with the whole group instead of pairs and worked individually during the class and finished their letters at home (See Appendix D). During a third class, we closed this part by a whole group discussion about the activities, how they see themselves today, and the expectations from their families and contexts, taking into account the factors they defined at the beginning.

For the third part, *Women's roles in the past*, on May 27th, the general plan was shared with students so they could work on them at home and we focused on the creation of the questions for the interviews. Besides from the basic questions about personal information, students proposed to ask those older, closer women about the place where they grew up, their

childhood, what they wanted to be when they were younger, what influenced them to achieve or not to achieve those dreams, and the expectations from their families. It was not possible to socialize these final activities because we missed the final classes due to different institutional activities and it was the end of their semester (Personal journal, May 29th and June 5th, 2019). Finally, students were asked to complete an online survey from their homes to gather final information.

Findings and Interpretation

For the interpretation of data, three main sources of information were used. The main one was my my personal journal that recorded observations from the first time I attended the institution; there, I described and reflected about the different events and situations that occurred during the research, the development of the lessons along with students' reactions and comments during them. The second one was students' work; due to the type of activities that were implemented, they provided valuable information related to the objectives of the project. Finally, the third source was student's surveys; the first two were useful to identify general information for the description of the context and getting a clear idea of students' background which was convenient for the implementations; the last one's purpose was to gather final information about students insights and thoughts about the experience.

Data analysis was done following the process proposed by Burns (1999) by assembling, coding and comparing data in order to build interpretations and provide final results (p. 156-160). After a first review of the different sources, three categories were chosen taking into account the research question and objectives. They were *Changes in students' views and perceptions of women's roles in Medellín, Fostering the acquisition of intercultural*

communicative competence and *Improvement of language learning*. Then, all sources were coded to assign information to these categories.

An aspect that is important to highlight in these results is that during the implementation, it was possible to have diverse perspectives due to students' backgrounds since they came from different neighborhoods in the city such as Buenos Aires, Miraflores, Caicedo, Downtown, Picacho, Robledo, Campo Valdés and Manrique. (Data from the first short survey, April 24th, 2019). This was aligned with the original purpose of this research and enclosed the following categories.

Changes in students' views and perceptions of women's roles in Medellín.

The effects of a critical intercultural approach on students' views of women's roles were the main concerns of this research. Therefore, in the final survey, students were asked about it. The following graph shows that most of them considered there was some type of change in their perspective; only three of them thought otherwise.

Do you think there were changes in your perspective on women's roles in Medellín?

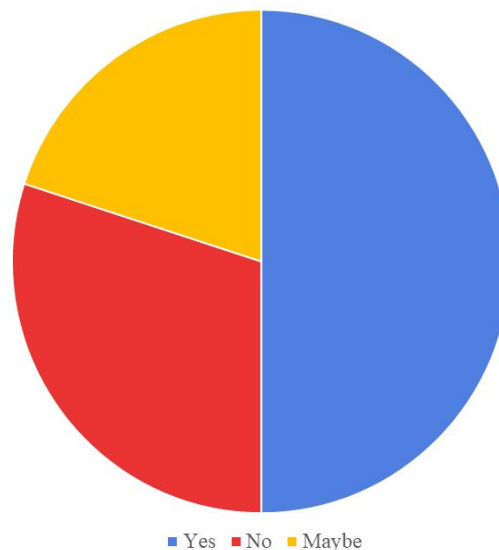


Figure 1. (Students' survey, June 6th, 2019)

The following question asked students to explain their former answer. There were different reasons for them to consider these changes. One of them expressed it in a quantitative way “I realized that women in Medellin have many more roles than I thought.” (Student 5, June 6th, 2019). Others referred their changes to external views: “Maybe (there were changes), because I used to think that people had a different vision about Medellin women, and I think it's sad that paisas are reduced to what people say (...)” (Student 2, June 6th, 2019). “I had never compared the image from national people (about women) with international people's, so I was very surprised.” (Student 9, June 6th, 2019). “(...) my perspective changed in the sense that there are still many people in this game of money and sex who avoid, on one hand, women's past, and on the other hand, the solutions (which may or may not be many) to the problems that lead them to this.” (Student 10, June 6th, 2019). Another one expressed “Yes (it changed), because from a research and descriptive process, we reached conclusions that can be shared with other people.” (Student 3, June 6th, 2019).

Fostering the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence

Taking into account the five *savoirs* required in ICC (Byram, 1997, p. 34), they were all promoted during the development of the activities, thus fostering the acquisition of this competence. For instance, in terms of *savoirs* (knowledge), students could learn new aspects of women's roles during the experience as it was mentioned above. In addition, when students were making descriptions, they had to use their background information to write their texts. Several times during the activity with the images, they could relate with some specific features portrayed there; for example, they said things such as “this lady is using a uniform from Club de Vida, my

grandma goes there and hers is the same color”, or “for the type of houses in the background, she must live in a popular neighborhood” (Personal journal, April 24th and 29th, 2019).

Considering *savoir comprendre* (skills to interpret and relate), students got the opportunity of contrasting external views with their own when we worked with the Google search feeds. As it was mentioned before, this activity had a strong impact on them and led to some interesting reflections that were visible in the letters they wrote (See Appendix D) in which students mediated in this situation. It could also be seen in this students’ opinion: “I think it is of common knowledge that many people from the outside and even from this same country consider Medellín women as a business or as a way to achieve self-satisfaction and that's why it was not so unexpected or radical to realize of those results, but in the same way it is sad to know that this is the first thing that is sought from us.” (Student 10, Student’s survey, June 6th, 2019).

In *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness), for most of the activities, students had to face different stereotypes. The most evident one was when they were creating “the most paisa woman”. When they were discussing the features for their characters they fell in two typical views, a traditional and a contemporary one (See Appendix C). They realized about this at the end of the activity when they were asked to compare their characters with themselves. However, they were able to identify some similarities in spite of expressing throughout the lesson how different they felt from their portrayals (Personal journal, May 20th, 2019). In addition, one student mentioned on the survey that “Many times we create prejudices about the people of some communities or places without realizing that we also belong to them (...)” (Student 5, June 6th, 2019).

This was also related to *savoir être* (attitudes) because students' values and beliefs had a strong influence during the development of the activities and they got the opportunity of reflecting on them constantly. When we had to decide on the factors that define women's roles and during the conclusion of the second week, students could express their thoughts and opinions. It was possible to see their effort to organize their ideas and communicate them. All together brought to the discussion interesting topics such as their personal experiences in their contexts, their feelings, and aspirations. (Personal journal, May 15th and 27th, 2019). Another student expressed about the experience that "(...) it helped me to reinforce my ideas and motivated me to want to make a difference in this reality" (Student 7, Students' survey, June 6th, 2019).

Finally, considering *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills to discover and/or interact), all the previous *savoirs* were evidence in the way students expressed themselves during the activities and their attitudes in their development. For instance, some students express on the survey that: "(...) (we) created an atmosphere of confidence because if we were wrong, there were no jokes. On the contrary, we were corrected in a good way." (Student 7, June 6th, 2019), and "(...) both those who participated and the teacher (Hada), we had the best attitude to develop the class to get better learning about what we worked on." (Student 1, June 6th, 2019).

Taking into account that one of the purposes of ICC is to provide students the opportunity to reflect on their own language and community (Corbett, 2003, p.2) and that as García León and García León (2014) stated, intercultural education combines reflection and practice (p. 63); it is possible to see that most activities aimed to this purpose, it actually happened during the implementations and students could achieve it during this research.

Language learning improvement

In terms of language learning, this approach showed positive results. For instance, all students thought that it was useful for the improvement of their language knowledge as it can be seen in the following graph:

Do you think that this approach was useful to improve your language knowledge?

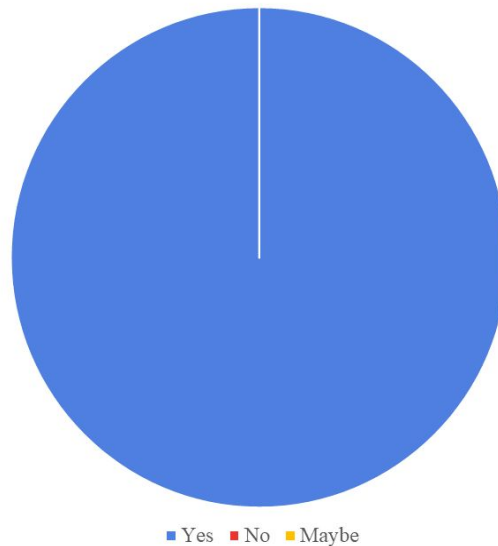


Figure 2. (Students' survey, June 6th, 2019)

In addition, in the survey, there were positive comments about the approach regarding English learning. For example, one student said: "I liked to participate because I felt it was a more didactic way to learn English and to use it in such a daily context." (Student 8, June 6th, 2019). Other students highlighted the opportunity of using language in context: "I liked the experience because we could talk about interesting topics and do it in English (...)" (Student 7, June 6th, 2019); "(...) I was able to learn a little more about the language and expressing through it the different ways in which women are seen." (Student 6, June 6th, 2019).

Conclusion

The results of this action research revealed that most of the objectives that were proposed at the beginning could be met. For instance, students' acquisition of intercultural communicative competence was fostered, they positively changed some of their views of women's roles and their perceptions could be analyzed. Even though a reflection through time could not be completely developed, there were different opportunities where students could have interesting reflections about this topic. The girls were engaged in the development of the activities and they could use language in context. Debating and sharing in English made students use the language as a means to communicate and not as an end in itself. This helped them to have a meaningful learning in the development of their skills in the foreign language by working on a topic that was close to them, using different materials that they could relate to and having activities that encouraged them to express their feelings, thoughts, ideas and opinions.

Due to the different time constraints, it was not possible to develop the last part of the project where students had to make action proposals, one of the objectives of this research and an essential aspect in any critical approach. However, important insights could be provided and they could be useful for a similar implementation in the future. It would be interesting to carry out a similar proposal with a bigger group of students, with the appropriate resources and implementing assessment methods.

Reflection

From the beginning, my practicum and the development of this project was a challenge for me. One of the main reasons was working with teenagers since it was one of my greatest fears. I have always preferred to teach children and most of my teaching experiences have been

with this population. However, I could overcome my worries and after having such a great experience, it was good and enriching to step out of my comfort zone and proof to myself I am able to teach students of different ages.

Another challenge was working with a critical approach. During the Foreign Language Teaching program, we have been constantly told of the importance of being critical in our practices and fostering this thinking in our students. Nonetheless, it has always been a theoretical insight rather than a practical one; in addition, it always seemed as something quite complex that could only be done with more advanced students. Luckily, I took the course Critical Pedagogy during this year and it was really helpful to get some ideas and adapt different activities to my research. I realized that in order to implement a critical approach, an advanced knowledge of English is useful but is not mandatory. After reading students' responses in the final survey, I felt really happy and proud of what they said because, in spite of all the issues we had to face, it was good to know that they enjoyed this approach and the activities, and that they could learn and reflect during the lessons. Moreover, they left some nice comments about me as a teacher and it is very rewarding to see that I could develop a positive rapport with them. Having the opportunity to teach using this approach, had a positive contribution to my personal and professional growth because I was able to connect students to their realities, helping them to become more aware of their roles in our society and guiding them to think critically.

Finally, the implementation itself of this research project was certainly challenging because of all the different external issues I had to face. This concluded in not having enough time to develop everything that was planned. Even though I would have loved to implement the complete unit, what I could achieve with students was great and I really enjoyed this experience.

This is the reason why I am now looking forward to teaching in a school where, hopefully, I will get the opportunity of having a longer process and implementing different strategies and actually get to see my students progress.

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Appendix A

UNIT 1: Women's Roles in Medellín



Centro Formativo de Antioquia CEFA
 English 2 hours per week
 Mondays - Wednesdays 6:15am

UNIT GOALS

General

- To work in the English class through a critical intercultural approach based on women's roles in Medellín.

Specific

- Students will be able to identify the different factors that define women's roles in Medellín.
- Students will reflect about women's roles through time using different tenses.
- Students will express their opinions about different situations related to women's roles.
- Students will propose actions in order to change situations of oppression against women.

WEEK 1
Factors that define women's roles

| LINGUISTIC ASPECTS (vocabulary, structures) | ACTIVITIES | ASSESSMENT (summative, formative) | RESOURCES |
|--|---|---|--|
| Simple present Verb be Verb have Can Adjectives Professions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing different women from Medellín from pictures. (First description will be individually. Then, in pairs, they will share their descriptions and get a new woman to describe. Each pair will get a different one. Then pairs will share their descriptions with the whole group) • Brainstorming: Factors which define women's roles. (family, education, socio economic conditions, among others). Based on the previous descriptions, students will identify and propose these factors. • Describing an admirable woman from Medellín. ~Individual work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from the first round of descriptions. (Pronunciation and grammar). • Description of an admirable woman. | Images of women from Medellín. Guiding questions for descriptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does she look like? - How old is she? - Where does she live? - What does she do for a living? - How do you think her family is? - Did she had some kind of education? Guiding questions for an admirable woman: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is she? - What does/did she do? - Which factors may had influenced her? |

WEEK 2
Women's roles today

| LINGUISTIC ASPECTS (vocabulary, structures) | ACTIVITIES | ASSESSMENT (summative, formative) | RESOURCES |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Simple Present Verb be Verb have</p> <p>Adjectives Professions</p> <p>Phrases to express opinions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Description of general features of Medellín women. Drawing of these women. Presentation to the whole group. ~In small groups ● Comparing the former descriptions with one woman students know in real life and themselves. Do they fit this description?. Written assignment. ~Individual ● Google search feeds. ~In pairs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparisons through simple descriptions. - Answer simple questions. - Sharing ideas and general thoughts ● Letter writing to someone who might see this feed. Sharing opinions about how Medellín women really are. ~Individual work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group presentation of women from Medellín. ● Written comparison. ● Google search feeds answers. ● Written letter. ● First self-assessment | <p>Guiding questions for general features of Medellín women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does paisa women look like? - How do they speak? - How do they act like? - What are their jobs? <p>Google search feeds in English and Spanish</p> <p>Questions for feeds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What aspects do these feed have in common? - What are the differences among them? - Which one is more accurate to you? Why? |

WEEK 3
Women's roles in the past

| LINGUISTIC ASPECTS (vocabulary, structures) | ACTIVITIES | ASSESSMENT (summative, formative) | RESOURCES |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Simple Past <i>Reported speech</i></p> <p>Adjectives Professions</p> <p>Phrases to express opinions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analysis of old advertisements. ~In pairs. Sharing to the whole group. ● Brainstorming about how women in Medellín were seen in the past and what their roles were. ● Interview to an <i>older</i>, close woman. (Mother, grandmother, neighbor, teacher, etc). Questions will be made and chosen by the group. ~Individual work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback from presentation of the advertisement. (Pronunciation and grammar). ● Questions about the interviews. ● Reflection paper | <p>Advertisements.</p> <p>Questions for the advertisements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you see? - How does the woman from the add look like? - What does she do for a living? - How are women portrayed in this add? - Do you agree with it? Why? <p>Interviews.</p> <p>Possible questions for the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's your name? - How old are you? |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing interviews. ~In small groups. Answer the questions about the interviews. ~Individually. • Comparing women's roles from the present and the past. Discussion. ~In small groups. • Short reflection paper about the differences among women's roles in the past and present. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you do for a living? - How was your childhood? - Where did you grow up? <p><i>Other questions for the interview will be done according to the factors that students identify in the beginning.</i></p> <p>Questions for the report of the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is this woman? - What does she do? - Which factors influenced her the most? Why? |
|--|--|--|--|

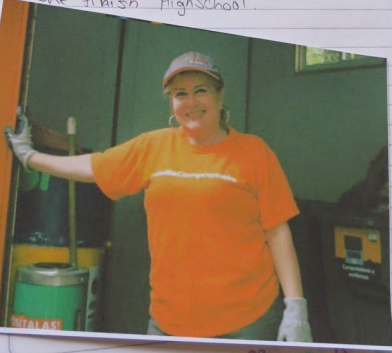
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| <p>WEEK 4 Women's roles for the future</p> |
|--|

| <p>LINGUISTIC ASPECTS (vocabulary, structures)</p> | <p>ACTIVITIES</p> | <p>ASSESSMENT (summative, formative)</p> | <p>RESOURCES</p> |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Future (Will - Going to)</p> <p>Adjectives Professions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Quality of living of women in Medellin. Identifying the aspects that should be improved. ~In small groups • Brainstorming about aspects that need improvement. ~Whole group • Creation of a campaign, a group or a movement related to one aspect that need improvement. Making of a visual aid (Advertisement, logo, moto). Oral presentation. ~In small groups • Making of a personal agreement. ~Individually | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the campaign/group/movement. • Personal agreement. • Final self-assessment. • Peer-assessment. | <p>TV</p> <p>Different materials for the campaigns/groups/movements (cardboard, markers, paint, brushes).</p> <p>Questions for personal agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do I want to be? - What will I do in the future? - What will I do to achieve that? |

Appendix B

Proyecto vida.

- She looks happy, its a big woman, her work is not the best but she is happy, she is chubby, tired, she is blonde, she is nice, she is carefull.
- She is 45 (forty five) years old.
- She lives in a popular neighbourhood.
- She ~~lives~~ and picks up trash.
- She has 2 childrens and one son, she has grandkids.
- She finish Highschool.




Description (Fisra Personalidad)

Fred

She looks happy and excited her hair is dark and a little messy. She is like ~~30~~ 33 years old, is a little ~~chubby~~ chubby.

She maybe lives in manrique, and her job is in a supermarket organized the fruits and the vegetables.

She finish the school, but ~~she~~ She got pregnant ~~because~~ because of this she won't start the university, and ~~she~~ search ~~for~~ job ~~to~~ to survive.




29 Abril/19

Describe

Hi! My name is Isiana, I am sixteen years old and I am a student, I am in eleventh grade, I am from Medellin, Antioquia, I am Colombian.

I am nervous about my future, I would like to go to University in Medellin to study Fashion Design. I dream of having my own brand, I am good at Fashion History, I am not really good at drawing but I could take a course, I will hard and apply for fashion designer.



Straight

she looks happy, she is beautiful, is tall, she is smiling, her hair is long, she is spoiled, she is very nice, she work in tv and she is a model, she lives in Palmes, she don't have husband, she don't have children, she lives alone, she is rich.


She is 22 years old, she finish high school she study Communication in the University.

29 Abril/19

she is imaginary, she is Divorced, she study Chemistry in the Universidad Nacional, she lives alone, she don't have family in her Country.

She looks happy, she is sweet and smart, her hair is straight and black, she is wearing a shirt, earrings.



Her name is Mónica Echeverry, she is Colombian she have short hair, brown eyes and light skin, she use accessories; she have a cup of coffee in her hand, she is happy, she is chubby, she is an ONU ambassador, she lives in Laureles, she is 34 years old, she is married, she doesn't have childrens she studies in Harvard.



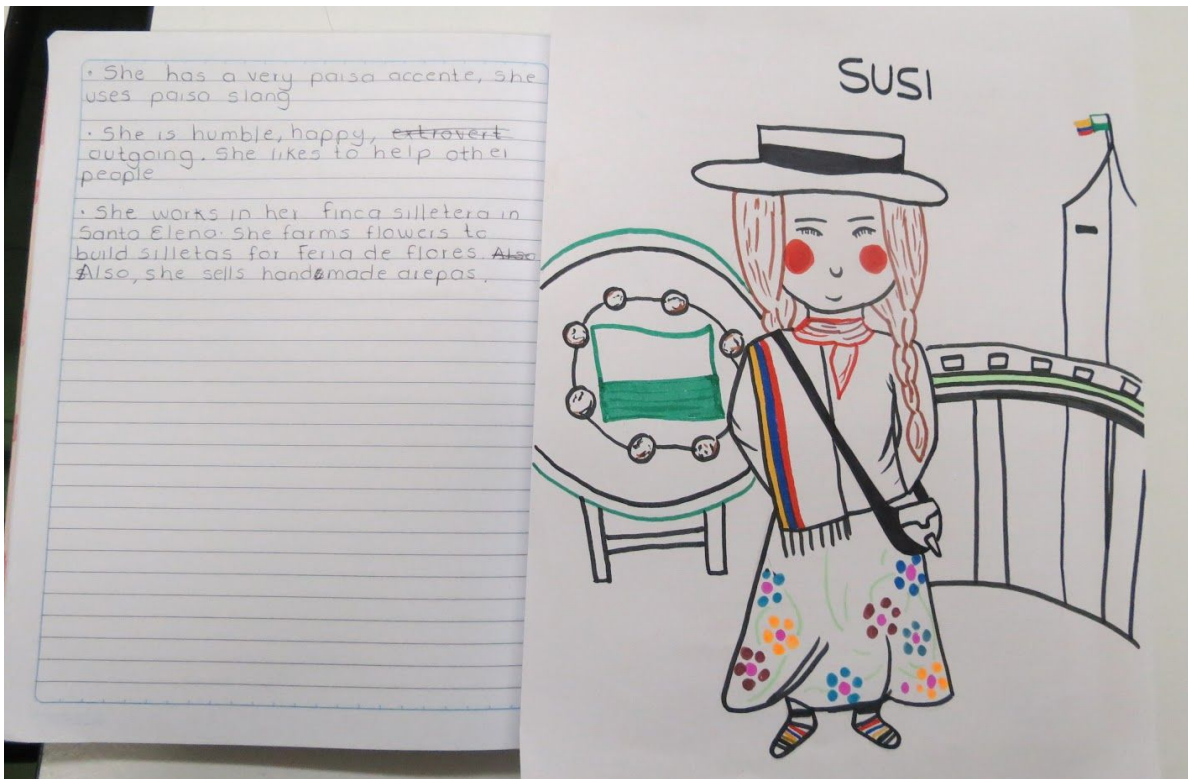
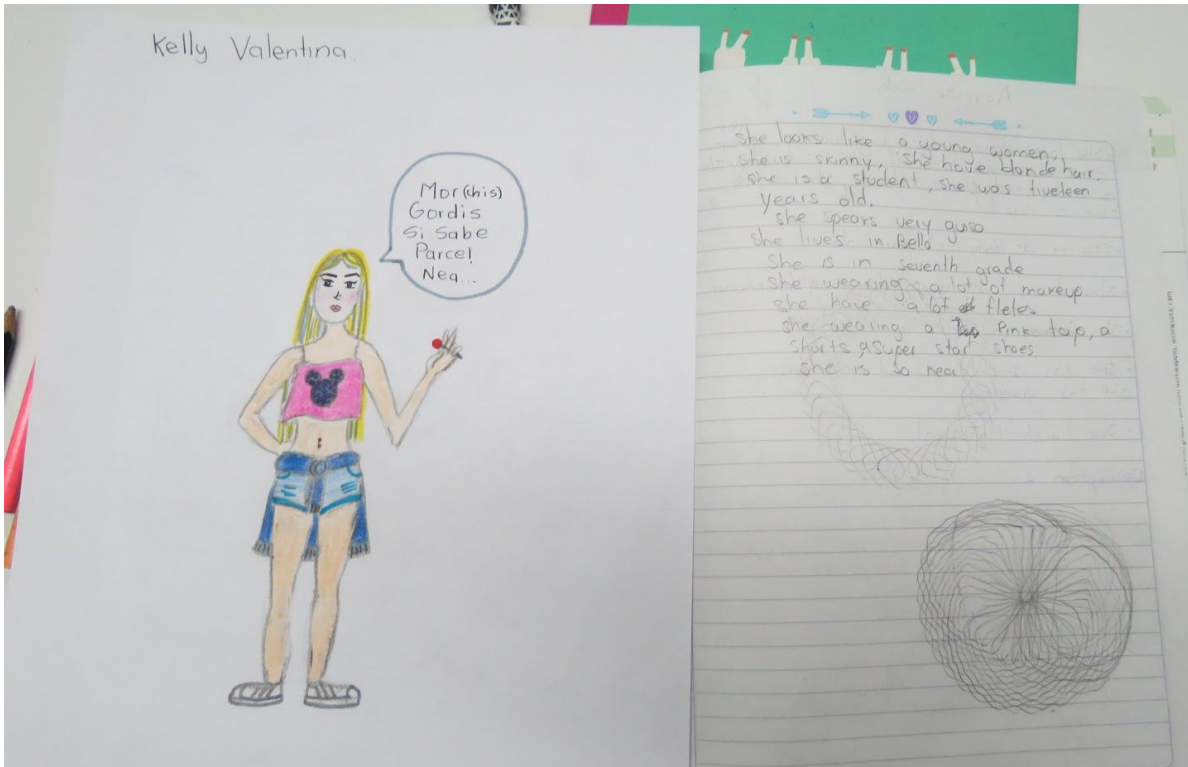
Cómo se ve

- She has long blonde hair.
- She's wearing a white shirt, a pair of black pants and a pair of black high heels. She's skinny.
- She looks like a lovely mom. She has two sons, she is married. She works in a toy show. She lives in Tablada. She is fortythree years old.
- She lives with her son and her husband in a big house. She went to University and studied Visual communication.
- She is Carmen, She is forty seven years old. She lives in Curcuma, She is a mom of a boy, a daughter and a son. She works making handicrafts. She is single. She has a brave attitude. She studied until high school. She is wearing a colorful shirt.



She wanted to give a better future for her is

Appendix C





Appendix D

2. Write a letter to someone who might see these feeds. Share your opinions about them and tell this person how you think Medellín women really are.

The women of Medellín are not only sex and dating; we are not a market. We have qualities of being cheerful and outgoing, hardworking and with big dreams, we are strong and do not give up easy. Maybe we're flirtatious but we're not easy. We are also beautiful and with a good heart.

2. Write a letter to someone who might see these feeds. Share your opinions about them and tell this person how you think Medellín women really are.

You don't have to believe in these things that the internet shows you. Medellín women are not only dates, sex or violence, they are also beautiful, strong and cute. The internet only shows bad things about us, Why don't you come to Medellín and see it by yourself? !!!

We, Medellín women are brave, we like to fight for the things we want, we are so much more than dates, sex or prostitution, as they show on the internet, we work hard and also we have big dreams.