



**UNIVERSIDAD
DE ANTIOQUIA**

Trabajo de investigación presentado como requisito parcial para
optar al título de:

Licenciada en Lenguas Extranjeras

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El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia

2023



Conflict Resolution Strategies: an Opportunity to Build Conflict Resolution Skills through Collaborative Learning

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June 2023

Abstract

This action-research aimed at fostering students' acquisition of conflict resolution skills by including conflict resolution strategies through Collaborative Learning. It was conducted in a public rural school in Rionegro, Antioquia with 26 eighth graders. Data gathering instruments included teacher's journals, students' artifacts, audio recording, and focus groups. Action strategies included were conflict resolution strategies and Collaborative Learning steps. Findings obtained were as follows: from knowledge to innovation: mediation and negotiation inspires students to propose creative solutions. From discord to harmony: utilizing teamwork as an asset in conflict resolution and learning. Incorporating conflict resolution strategies in foreign language activities and limitation in controlling emotions when the students face conflict resolution.

Keywords: Conflict resolution strategies, conflict resolution skills, Collaborative Learning, group work.

Título en español: Estrategias de resolución de conflictos: Una oportunidad para construir habilidades de resolución de conflictos a través del aprendizaje colaborativo.

Degree requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to thank my dear pet, Natasha. Even though she may not understand my words, her constant presence and unconditional love gave me strength when I needed it the most. Her comforting hugs and reassuring gazes were a balm to my soul and encouraged me to keep going.

To my friend Brenda, I want to express my gratitude for being like an advisor and a pillar of support throughout this process. Having someone so close who was willing to listen to me and offer their unwavering support was truly a gift. Your wisdom propelled me to give my best at every step of the way.

To my boyfriend Benjamin, I cannot find enough words to thank you for your unwavering support. Your constant support, thoughtful questioning, and words of encouragement helped me overcome the challenges and doubts that arose along the way. Having someone who believed in me even when I doubted my own abilities was an invaluable gift. I especially appreciate your patience and understanding during the last few days when the pressure was overwhelming.

Finally, I want to thank my little sister Linda. You have been there to listen to my stories, triumphs, and frustrations time and time again. Your words of encouragement and faith in me were a constant source of inspiration. Your unwavering support and willingness to cheer me on when things got tough are priceless. I deeply appreciate everything you have done for me.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	6
Description of the Context	7
Statement of the Problem	8
Theoretical Background	9
Research Question.....	13
Objectives.....	14
General Objective.....	14
Specific Objectives.....	14
Action Plan.....	14
Development of Actions.....	15
Data analysis	18
Findings and Interpretations.....	19
Opportunities.....	19
Challenges	26
Conclusions and Implications	30
Reflection	31
References	33

Preface

I am a student of foreign languages teaching program from a public university in Antioquia, Colombia. I am a teacher interested in helping students develop conflict resolution skills to contribute to the society and the EFL environment. The desire to conduct this research has arisen from the complex social situations that have increased recently in educational institutions, more specifically in public schools. Considering that EFL spaces allow for reflection on issues of conflict, for the development of the necessary skills to be responsible, integrated people, and for the development of effective communication skills to express ideas and opinions. This research study was carried out from August 2022 to June 2023. As a pre-service teacher, I conducted the project in a rural public school in Rionegro, Antioquia and I was assigned to observe a group of 20 eighth graders. This research project is mainly addressed to educators, especially who are interested in working on issues of conflict that they experience in their own EFL contexts.

Maira Brighith Cardozo Andrade
Rionegro, Antioquia, June 30th, 2023

Description of the Context

I conducted this research study at Institución Educativa Antonio Donado Camacho, a public rural school located in a rural area of Rionegro, Antioquia (Colombia). This institution strives to achieve educational inclusion through the implementation of its flexible educational model, *Pensar*, and its inclusion project, *Somos Todos*. As for the institution's philosophy, mission, and vision, it follows an integral formation of the students that contributes socially and ecologically to their personal and professional development as well as their context (Proyecto Educativo Institucional, Donado Camacho, 2020).

In relation to English class in the eighth grade, students took 5 hours of class weekly. The English curriculum was designed by the Cooperating Teacher's (CT) judgment. The methodology mostly used was Task-Based Learning which focuses on using the target language in real situations through multiple or small meaningful tasks.

Concerning the participants, I observed an 8th grade class, composed of 26 students, whose ages ranged from 11 to 16 years old. These students were lower middle class and most of them lived in the rural area of the municipality. Most students claimed that the most difficult aspects of English were text comprehension, speaking and vocabulary learning (Students' Questionnaire, September 26, 2022). Regarding the CT, she holds a bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages, and a master's degree in Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages. (CT' Interview, September 1, 2022).

The main problem I observed in this class was the lack of conflict resolution skills students demonstrated, in consequence of which the students resorted to violence among themselves, affecting the classroom environment and thus the language learning.

Statement of the Problem

In this 8th grade class, students did not possess the necessary conflict resolution skills to have safe class environment. In fact, students resorted to violence as the only method of conflict resolution, hindering their opportunities to learn the language due to a huge number of negative emotions, and not developing the competency of knowing how to be in the classroom sufficiently.

As violence is the main characteristic of these students, it is necessary to develop basic skills such as conflict resolution, so that students acquire social and emotional communication processes, giving space to the value of respect (Sekerci & Yilmaz, 2021). To illustrate, there were actions such as verbal harassment, threats, criticism, use of foul language, and pushing, due to conflicts in the classroom (Observation excerpt, August 11, 18; September 13· 29; October 4, 5 ,2022). Moreover, the teacher of the class acknowledged that it is common for students to fight and for her to intervene to prevent physical violence (CT' Personal communication, September 13, 2022). Without the development of conflict resolution skills and dialogue, disruptive behaviors would continue to emerge affecting the classroom environment.

The huge number of negative emotions in the classroom hindered opportunities to learn the target language. When a conflict occurs in the classroom, the victims, the aggressors and the spectators feel a variety of negative emotions such as fear and rejection of this context, loss of confidence in themselves and in others, low self-esteem, apathy, anxiety and antipathy (García & Martínez, 2021). Indeed, according to Krashen's (1981) affective filter hypothesis, the students' feelings, moods and other emotional factors positively or negatively influence the second language learning process. For example,

during the observations, when a student began to insult another student and the other student responded, the teacher intervened to control the situation and after this, the classroom was completely silent and participation decreased noticeably (Observation excerpt, August 11, 18, September 13, October 5, 2022). As a result, there was no meaningful interaction with the language.

The competency, of knowing how to be, was underdeveloped in the classroom. The applicability of the competence to know how to be is related to emotional intelligence, to know how to act integrally allowing for the suitable resolution of conflicts, with a continuous improvement (Soto, 2020). For instance, there was an argument between three students over the loss of two pens; the students began to use foul language, until the teacher approached them to return to their places (Observation excerpt, September 13, 2022). That type of conflicts are opportunities to make students recognize each other's emotions to reach an agreement in a peaceful manner. Therefore, learning these competences students can have the opportunity to reflect about conflicts through language and collaboration.

In conclusion, implementing conflict resolution strategies through Collaborative Learning approach could enhance these students' conflict resolution skills. The next section will present some of the theoretical foundations of this research.

Theoretical Background

In this section I present the theoretical concepts that guided this action research. Firstly, I present the types and benefits of conflict resolution skills. Secondly, I explain some conflict resolution strategies and how they are implemented. Thirdly, I provide the

definition and phases of Collaborative Learning (CL). Finally, I attempt to establish a relationship between the Collaborative Learning and conflict resolution skills.

As claimed by Deutsch et al. (2011) “conflict resolution is prescribed not simply as a mechanism for dealing with difficult differences within existing social systems, but also as an approach that can facilitate constructive social change toward more responsive and equitable systems” (p. 187). Likewise, conflict resolution entails a modification of the correlation and the situation so that the solutions developed by those involved are feasible and self-correcting over the long term (Deutsch et al., 2011). In addition, when discussing conflict resolution, Bercovitch and Jackson (2009) stated that values and benefits are created that lessen the cost of the conflict if it is dealt with by outsiders.

According to Deutsch et al. (2011) there are three types of conflict resolution skills: rapport-building skills, cooperative conflict resolution skills, and group process-decision making skills. Out of these three skills, cooperative conflict resolution skills and group process-decision making skills were the focus of this research project. Cooperative resolution skills incorporate self-confidence, emotional control, communication, and active listening. It aims to identify conflict type and recognize differences, interests, needs, and perspectives of both parties. Group process-decision making skills help identify and address problems by gathering information, generating solutions, and selecting the best one for effective implementation. These skills involve leadership, communication, innovation, conflict resolution and teamwork (Deutsch et al., 2011).

When discussing the benefits of conflict resolution skills, Trujillo et al. (2008) affirmed these skills promote social transformation and contribute to equality and social

justice by allowing individuals to share their experiences, feelings, and perspectives in pursuit of solutions. Furthermore, as Alzate (2010) indicated, conflict resolution skills promote understanding of conflict causes and implications, fostering healthy relationships, effective communication, and fair resolution without violence.

Regarding conflict resolution strategies, Crawford and Bodine (1996) proposed a problem-solving process for conflict resolution with three strategies: negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision making. This research focused on applying negotiation and mediation. Negotiation involves direct communication between conflicting parties to reach an agreement, while mediation involves the assistance of a third party. (Hernández 2012; Fisher et al., 2000).

Negotiation consists of three phases: interaction, preparation, and closing. In the first phase, the conflict is analyzed, needs and interests are identified, and methodology and assistance are agreed upon. The second phase involves sharing perspectives, identifying the problem's root, and proposing options. The last phase entails selecting the best options, creating an action plan, setting timelines, and planning for review (Fisher et al., 2000).

Mediation is a process that seeks solutions that meet the interests of all parties, where there is a neutral mediator, who facilitates communication and negotiation between the parties. However, while the mediator participates in the process, it is the parties who must make the decisions and find potential solution (Hernandez, 2012). Similarly, the mediation process according to Funes and Moreno (2008) includes five stages, from 0 to 5. Stage 0: *Pre-mediation* is where the parties assess if mediation is suitable; Stage 1: *Presentation and rules of the game* is where the mediator establishes trust and explains

process; Stage 2: *Tell me* creates a space for the parties express their problem, feelings, and concerns; Stage 3: *Clarify the problem* the mediator clarifies issues and gathers information; Stage 4: *Proposing solutions* parties offer compromises for conflict resolution; Stage 5: *The mediated agreement* is agreed between the parties, which is fair, realistic, inclusive and concrete solution with follow-up evaluation.

Another core concept for this research is Collaborative Learning. It is an innovative approach to education that emphasizes group work and active participation, allowing individuals to contribute their own ideas and perspectives while learning from others (Laal & Laal, 2012). Knowledge is taken as a social construction, in which individuals in the community are given the opportunity to be participants and share their ideas (Tampubolon, 2018). During this process, students confront both social and emotional challenges while collaborating, respecting diverse perspectives, and sharing responsibility for group actions (Laal & Laal, 2012; Tampubolon, 2018).

The collaborative learning model proposed by Reid et al. (1989) consists of five phases: engagement, exploration, transformation, presentation, and reflection. In the engagement phase, students share their knowledge and experiences while the teacher prepares an activity to generate curiosity. Transitioning to the exploration phase, students begin to explore new ideas and information, comparing them with their prior knowledge, while the teacher guides and provides necessary information. Moving into the transformation phase, students work in groups to reformulate concepts, clarifying, ordering, reworking, and synthesizing information under the teacher's guidance. The subsequent presentation phase involves groups of students sharing their learning, reinforcing their

understanding, and allowing for feedback and contributions. Evaluation can also occur during this phase. Finally, in the reflection phase, students analyze their learning individually and collaboratively, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and constructive ideas for improvement, which can be done throughout the process, not just at the end.

Lastly, a conflict must be resolved through collaboration to facilitate recognition of the needs of all involved, so that the conflicting interests are understood as a mutual problem (Deutsch et al., 2011). The classroom is a space in which, by its nature, conflicts *will* occur. The essential thing is that these conflicts can be resolved through agreements where differences are considered and respected. As stated by Kail & Trimbur (1997) from collaborative learning, dialectical processes are activities that involve the learner in reflection, argumentation, and negotiation of disparities. Therefore, the implementation of conflict resolution strategies through collaborative learning enables students to acquire conflict resolution skills. In the following section, I explain the objectives of this study and the measures used to accomplish them.

Research Question

What opportunities and challenges can the implementation of conflict resolution strategies through collaborative learning bring to 8th grade students' acquisition of conflict resolution skills in a public institution in an EFL class?

Objectives

General Objective

To examine what opportunities and challenges the implementation of conflict resolution strategies through collaborative learning can bring to 8th grade students' acquisition of conflict resolution skills in a public institution in an EFL class.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify how the use of conflict resolution strategies together with collaborative learning helps students develop conflict resolution skills.
2. To appraise students' development of conflict resolution skills when using conflict resolution strategies.

Action Plan

With the purpose of addressing the question posed for this research project, I implemented one action aimed at helping students acquire conflict resolution skills. This action was divided into five phases of Collaborative Learning (Reid et al., 2002), which were repeated twice. I decided to have two rounds of learning, focusing on mediation strategy (Funes & Moreno, 2008), and negotiation strategy (Fisher et al., 2000) in the second round.

The first phase was 'engagement' in which students had to share their knowledge about the corresponding strategy through dialogue and brainstorming, by looking at their pre-existing ideas about each strategy. The second phase was 'exploration' in which students were presented with more detailed information about the corresponding strategy, so that they could confront the new ideas with previous knowledge to see if they recognized some conflict resolution skills. The third phase was 'transformation' in which students worked in groups

and rephrased, through activities, what they had previously learned to determine whether they had utilized conflict resolution skills. The fourth phase was ‘presentation’ in which the student groups presented what they had learned about the corresponding strategy to identify the relationship it has with conflict resolution skills. The fifth and final phase was ‘reflection’ in which each student reflected on their learning process, both individually and collaboratively.

Data was collected by means of journals, students’ artifacts, an audio recording, and focus groups over a period of 2 months and 2 weeks. Journals were written and codified weekly, and the audio recording and focus groups were transcribed, codified and analyzed. Likewise, the students’ artifacts were scanned and analyzed.

Development of Actions

In the first action, to start the ‘engagement’ phase, I presented two images related to the word mediation, so that students could share their ideas and assumptions about it. While the students viewed these images, one of which depicted two people in dialogue and another showing a handshake, they shared their ideas.

In the ‘exploration’ phase, and before explaining the concept of mediation, I asked the students to complete the first three columns of a KWHLAQ (Know, What, How, Learned, Action, Questions) chart, a graphic that allowed students to plan and reflect on their learning before and after the lesson. The first three columns’ headings were: *What do you know? What do you want to know?* and *How will you find out?* The last three columns’ headings were: *What have you learned? What action will you take?* and *What further question do you have?* These questions were answered after my explanation of the concept of mediation. Explaining

through Power Point slides and images, I provided a definition before describing the 5 stages of the mediation strategy, giving two examples of conflict situations solved through mediation. All this information was presented in the target language, with a vocabulary bank to facilitate students' understanding.

In the 'transformation' phase, I used a conflict situation between mother and son in order to demonstrate how to analyze a problem and solve it through mediation; then, I explained how to write a role play, providing an example with the conflict situation analyzed previously. For this activity I gave the students vocabulary and useful expressions that they could use. The students worked in groups of 4, with each group being given a different conflict scenario, for which they wrote a role play after an initial analysis. Due to lack of time, it was not possible to perform the role plays.

In the 'presentation' phase, each group of students drew pictures related to mediation and each team member wrote in English a sentence about what they learned. For this activity, I gave the students a starter sentence to complete, E.g., 'I learned that...'. Students wrote about the significant role of mediation in resolving conflicts, finding solutions, the importance of following the steps, the usefulness of the mediator and the use of dialogue.

In the 'reflection' phase, students carried out two activities. In the first activity, students watched three videos of conflict situations in Colombia, then answered in Spanish the following three questions: *What do you think about these situations? What would you do if you were involved in these problems?* and *How would you feel?* The most recurrent answers were the rejection to this type of conflict situations, the feelings were of rejection and anger when seeing this type of events, the proposed solutions were to solve the problems

in a pacific way. The second activity consisted of filling out a reflection sheet called Reflect 'n' Sketch where students not only had the possibility to write but also to draw in relation to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their individual and collaborative work during this learning process.

In the action performed for the second time, the students started again with the 'engagement' phase but this time the conflict resolution strategy was negotiation. I showed them some images in relation to negotiation and the students, in groups of three, brainstormed around the word "negotiation". They then shared their brainstorms with their classmates.

In the 'exploration' phase, I asked the students to fill out the same questions in the KWHLAQ chart. These questions were answered after the students' explanation of the concept of negotiation. In groups of 3 and 4, students were given a piece of information relating to negotiation. One group was given the definition, another three groups received the three phases of negotiation, another group had 3 key words and the last 2 groups were given two examples of negotiation. This information was given in written form in the target language, and, again, I gave them a vocabulary bank to aid understanding. Each group had the opportunity to present the information to their peers, using a few words in English. To summarize the information, I presented a mind map.

In the 'transformation' phase, I presented an example of a comic book which illustrated a conflict situation between two students. As the story progressed, the conflict was resolved through negotiation. In the example comic, simple phrases and vocabulary in the target language were used. Then, in groups, the students received a sheet with 6 panels to create a comic strip in which a classroom conflict was resolved. Students used simple

sentences or single words using a combination of English and Spanish to write their dialogues.

In the ‘presentation’ phase, in groups, the students made posters, using lexicon and simple phrases, then the posters were pasted on the walls around the room, each group read the phrase, explained the reason for the drawings on the poster and made extra comments in Spanish to clarify what they wanted to express with their posters. All students were attentive to the explanations, the most recurrent comments were about ideas and words that they had not considered, and the other groups had.

In the ‘reflection’ phase, students had a snowball fight where they wrote on a sheet the strengths and weaknesses they had shown, both individually and collaboratively, during the learning process, and reflections on the contributions of conflict resolution skills and what is needed for the implementation of conflict resolution strategies. Each student then made a snowball with their pieces of paper to throw them across the room for their classmates to pick up and read aloud, then each student shared a comment about what they thought of their classmate’s writing and what differences they found with their own writing.

Data analysis

To analyze the information, I followed Burns’ (2010) stages for data analysis: assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. I consolidated all the information and proceeded to identify categories and codes. After that, I compared categories in order of relevance according to my research question to build interpretations and report the findings.

Findings and Interpretations

This study aimed at fostering students' acquisition of conflict resolution skills by including conflict resolution strategies through Collaborative Learning. The findings revealed two opportunities and two challenges. The opportunities referred to From Knowledge to Innovation: mediation and negotiation inspires students to propose creative solutions, and From Discord to Harmony: utilizing teamwork as an asset in conflict resolution and learning. As for the challenges, they related to Incorporating Conflict Resolution Strategies in Foreign Language Activities, and From Limitation in Controlling Emotions when the Students Face Conflict Resolution. In the following paragraphs I offer an in-depth explanation of each finding.

Opportunities

From Knowledge to Innovation: Mediation and Negotiation Inspires Students to Propose Creative Solutions

The data revealed that the knowledge learned about negotiation and mediation allowed the students to propose actions to resolve conflicts. Likewise, these strategies transcended the academic and school environment and, in some cases, reached the family.

The Application of Negotiation and Mediation Strategies in the Family and Academic Environment. Data analysis attested negotiation and mediation strategies went beyond classroom walls and impacted family environment. By performing the transformation phase activity and the reflection phase activity, they successfully facilitated open dialogues, discovered common ground, and achieved mutually beneficial agreements in real-life situations, circumstances that were previously resolved in a violent manner. To

exemplify this, “Juana angrily confronted Tatiana for sharing her problem with someone else, but another girl intervened, advising Juana to calm down and assuring her that there was no misunderstanding. Juana later apologized, and they returned to their seats” (Journal entry, March 24th, 2023). Students applied their knowledge in different conflicts in diverse settings such as the neighborhood, classroom, family, work, and co-living spaces (see Figure 2 and 3). Data revealed students’ ability to transfer the skills and knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life situations, showcasing the practical relevance and applicability of these strategies. They exhibited an understanding of these strategies and a heightened ability to adapt and utilize their knowledge in various contexts, which was also acknowledged by them as effective strategies utilized to manage and resolve conflicts.

This was evidenced in the focus group when students responded to the question “Have you applied the knowledge about mediation in other subjects, the school or with personal problems?”

Student T: si en mis problemas personales.

Student C: en mi caso, solo he intentado, pero no más, pues he tratado de buscar que dos compañeros de clase dialogaran y buscaran una solución pacífica.

Student G: yo solo una vez con dos compañeras de clase, cuando buscamos dialogar y buscar cómo solucionar una pelea que surgió en el momento.

Student M: yo una vez lo apliqué cuando mis papas estaban peleando.¹ (Focus Group, April 19th, 2023)

¹ Student T: Yes, in my personal problems.

Student C: In my case, I have only tried but no more, because I have tried to get two classmates to dialogue and find a peaceful solution.

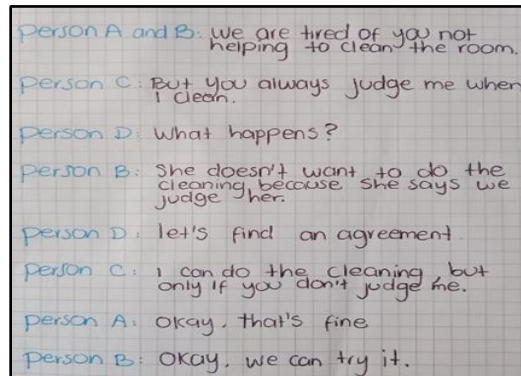
Student G: I only tried it once with two classmates, when we tried to talk and find a way to solve a fight that arose at the time. (My translation)

Student M: I applied once when my parents were fighting. (My translation)

Data revealed that one reason for applying negotiation and mediation strategies in diverse settings, in and outside the classroom, is that these strategies and concepts taught in the classroom are not merely abstract or disconnected from reality. As claimed by Deutsch et al. (2011) through interactive tactics and real-life examples, participants remain engaged in the active application of recently acquired information. Similarly, the contextualization of materials provided and assigned tasks could aid students in envisioning themselves in typical scenarios and responding appropriately.

Figure 2

Application of Mediation Knowledge in the Creation of the Role-play. March 13th, 2023



Person A and B: we are tired of you not helping to clean the room.

Person C: But you always judge me when I clean.

Person D: What happens?

Person B: She doesn't want to do the cleaning because she says we judge her.

Person D: let's find an agreement

Person C: I can do the cleaning but only if you don't judge me.

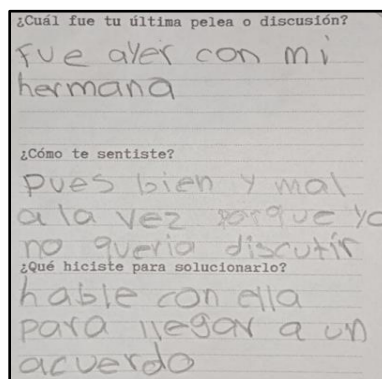
Person A: Okay, that's fine

Person B: OKAY, we can try it.

Note. Students' script based on the problem situation they received.

Figure 3

Application of Knowledge about Strategies in Family Cases. March 30th, 2023



¿Cuál fue tu última pelea o discusión?
fue ayer con mi hermana

¿Cómo te sentiste?
pues bien y mal a la vez porque yo no quería discutir

¿Qué hiciste para solucionarlo?
hable con ella para llegar a un acuerdo

Note. Students' answer about a situation that occurred at home.

The Construction of Appropriate and Creative Solutions for Solving Conflicts.

Data analysis revealed that students exhibited a remarkable aptitude for generating ingenious and well-suited resolutions to conflicts, exhibiting their creativity and proficient problem-solving skills. During the transformative phase of activities, such as role-playing and comics, the students demonstrated remarkable progress in their comprehension of the conflict, as they were able to think creatively, going beyond the conventional approaches. They deeply analyzed the root causes of the conflict and delved into the underlying interests of all parties involved. Additionally, they honed their skills in effective communication, fostering dialogue and understanding among the conflicting parties. Furthermore, the students showed a strong commitment to preventing the recurrence of this conflict in the future by proposing innovative strategies and solutions. To illustrate, students recognized that conflicts often arise due to divergent interests and needs, and by acknowledging and respecting these interests, they were able to generate more comprehensive and inclusive solutions, as shown in one students' artifact.

Figure 4

Ingenious Solution in Role-play Creation. March 30th, 202

Person A: Give me back my pen.
 person B: No, because it's mine.
 person C: what's going on?
 person A: He took my pen, but he says it's
 person C: Let's find an agreement.
 person B: I don't have any ideas.
 person A: well, take the pen, but next time
 me explain to me and don't take
 it without permission.
 person B: okay, I'm sorry, thank you.

Note. Students role-play script where they proposed to give in and avoid repetition in the future.

Moreover, the students' focus was on preventing the future repetition of the conflict.

After being asked about the changes they had implemented when faced with a conflict,

students declared “pues yo diría que sí porque antes resolvía los problemas de manera grosera y pues ahora pienso diferente, con respeto y pensando también en la otra persona con la que tengo el problema²” (Focus Group, April 19th, 2023). By studying conflicts in class, students were exposed to a variety of viewpoints, ideologies, and approaches to problem-solving. This exposure expanded their intellectual horizons and challenged them to think about potential solutions for conflicts, hence, analyzing conflicts from different perspectives encouraged students to consider diverse factors that contribute to conflicts such as the causes, parties, needs and interests.

The interpretation of the data suggests that transformative power of the development of adequate and creative solutions to conflicts lies in the resolute inclusion of conflict analysis and study within the sacred realm of the classroom environment. Fisher et al. (2000) argued that analysis can serve as a means of intervention and a component for preparing for action.

From discord to harmony: Utilizing Teamwork as an Asset in Conflict Resolution and Learning

The data showed that working in teams encouraged collaboration and cooperation among students. It urged them to work together, pool their resources, and combine their strengths. As a result, teamwork arose as a crucial skill to learn about and develop to achieve successful conflict resolution and to find solutions to diverse conflicts.

² Well, I would say yes, because before I used to solve problems in a rude way and now I think differently, with respect and also thinking about the other person with whom I have a problem. (My translation)

Acquisition of Conflict Resolution Strategies through Teamwork. Collaborative learning played a relevant role when students were able to acquire knowledge about mediation and negotiation. Throughout this process, students were encouraged to discuss their perspectives and ideas with their classmates, with this discussion helping them to refine their skills and enhance their understanding of mediation and negotiation. Students acknowledged that teamwork helped to develop the activities together. Data showed improvements in their relationships as one student claimed in the focus groups “para mi si me ayudó mucho a entender mucho más los temas, porque tenía alguien que me ayudara y si no entendía un compañero me podía explicar³” (Focus Group, April 19th, 2023). This excerpt proved that thanks to teamwork, students could solve doubts and in consequence deep understanding of the key concepts. Through teamwork, students brought diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the learning process. This diversity allowed for a broader range of ideas and encouraged peer-to-peer teaching and learning. Students could take on different roles within their teams, including explaining concepts, offering examples, and answering questions.

By engaging in discussions and sharing their thoughts, students could challenge each other’s assumptions, ask questions, and explore different perspectives. This exchange of ideas helped to clarify doubts, fill gaps in knowledge, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the key concepts related to mediation and negotiation. To exemplify this, “the group questioned a student’s solution for ignoring both parties’

³ For me it helped me to understand the topics much more, because I had someone to help me and if I didn't understand a classmate could explain to me. (My translation)

interests. Classmates deemed it unfair and suggested a mutually beneficial alternative. The student acknowledged the mistake and reconsidered the solution” (Journal entry, April 10th, 2023). This excerpt shows that in a supportive environment students could seek assistance when faced with doubts, knowing that their teammates were available to help. This environment encouraged them to take risks, explore complex topics, and engage in open dialogue. Within their teams, students could freely ask questions, seek clarification, and request further explanation when needed.

A plausible cause for this to happen is that through collaborative processes students were challenged to express their opinions while also considering the perspectives of their teammates. Reid et al (1989) found that struggling students in small-group classrooms encourage peers to explain concepts, improving understanding for everyone and fostering constructive dialogue.

Implementation of Teamwork to Solve Conflicts. Data evidenced that teamwork skills were successful in resolving conflicts. Teamwork fosters a collaborative problem-solving approach, which is highly valuable in conflict resolution. When conflicts arise, team members can share their ideas, and collectively analyze the situation, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict and encourages the exploration of multiple solutions.

Through this collective effort, team members can identify the underlying causes of the conflict and work together to devise strategies for its resolution. Students noticed the need to have different options to solve the conflict raised to make the comic and “students recognized the importance of collaboration and dialogue in finding solutions, similar to

their own group work where everyone contributed ideas and collectively selected the best ones” (Journal entry, April 26th, 2023). This excerpt proved that through teamwork, students brought diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the learning process, allowing for a broader range of ideas and approaches to problem-solving. As expressed in the focus group “necesitamos de las personas para resolver conflictos, que trabajen en equipo, que ayuden para encontrar soluciones, cada uno puede dar su punto de vista y una posible solución adecuada o no y luego entre todos arman una propuesta más apropiada⁴” (Focus Group, April 19th, 2023). This excerpt shows that when conflicts arise, team members can challenge each other’s assumptions and biases, ensuring a more balanced and comprehensive perspective. By considering diverse insights and alternative solutions, the team can minimize blind spots and seek suitable solutions. We can corroborate, then, that Collaborative Learning tends to generate more ideas for resolving conflicts compared to individuals working alone. As suggested by Crawford and Bodine (1996), working together as a team fosters peaceful conflict resolution, enabling individual to gain an appreciation of different perspectives.

Challenges

Incorporating Conflict Resolution Strategies in Foreign Language Activities

Data analysis showed that limited language proficiency poses a significant challenge in applying this type of strategies. Language limitations impacted students’

⁴ we need people to resolve conflicts, to work as a team, to help to find solutions, each one can give their point of view and a possible solution, suitable or not, and then together they put together a more appropriate proposal. (My translation)

ability to express themselves clearly and concisely, resulting in difficulty conveying their intended message. This problem specifically affects students' ability to participate effectively in the activities and complete associated tasks, understand the hypothetical conflicts posed, express their ideas, and share their views, especially in writing. Asking students to write a role-play in English was challenging when they had no previous experience with written production. As reported in the journal, "It was difficult for most of the students to write all in English, so they used Spanish or a mix of English and Spanish, and then with the help of the pre-service teacher, completed the piece in English" (Journal entry, March 13th, 2023). Data revealed that due to their limited vocabulary and grammatical structure knowledge, the students needed extensive support and extra explanation in the instructions in the transformation stage to facilitate their understanding. It was necessary to present them with more role-play examples, vocabulary, common expressions, and sensible sentences so that the students could write the role-play in English.

Moreover, without a strong grasp of the language, students struggle to identify and articulate the root causes of conflicts, explore potential resolutions, and empathize with others' perspectives. Language difficulties were reported by students, "hubo muchas veces en que yo no sabía cómo escribir los diálogos, o qué palabras usar cuando había que escribir en inglés, entonces a veces yo escribía como yo creía pero no expresaba todo lo que yo quería decir". Another student added, "en mi caso, cuando yo leía los conflictos que estaban en inglés no entendía de qué trataban" (Focus group, April 19th, 2023).

Limitation in Controlling Emotions Skill when the Students Face to a Conflict Resolution

Data analysis indicated that despite the incorporation of conflict resolution strategies, students did not acquire control emotions skill when they faced a conflict resolution. The evidence shows that, although the students carried out various activities to train in and develop this skill, their appropriation was inconclusive. It is important to consider the complexity of the skill itself. Emotion regulation and control require a deep understanding of one's own emotions, the ability to identify triggers, and the capacity to respond appropriately. In the following excerpt we can see a conflict situation presented in the last minutes of the class where a young man embraced the full spectrum of his emotions with unwavering authenticity, a time when his emotions overflowed, and he experienced intense emotional storms. To exemplify, "Carlos was at the door, when a girl was going to close it in his face; he replied "si me cierras la puerta, te mató y que hagan carne de burro". The girl kept silent and left the classroom" (Journal entry, April 26th, 2023). This excerpt shows that even though at that time they had already talked about the use and importance of mediation and negotiation, in addition to carrying out activities that required reflection on conflict situations in their context, these situations arise among the same classmates without taking a time-out to reflect on their actions and words. In the reflection stage when students expressed how they felt when they were in trouble, students indicated that a skill that was missing to work on deeply was control emotions. This could be seen when students reflected on the issue.

Figure 5

Students' Response to Reflection Questions. April 3rd, 2023

4 cuando me encuentro en un conflicto no controlo mis emociones y me dejo llevar por el momento

Note. This image corresponds to the answer to the fourth reflection question.

Figure 6

Students' Response to Reflection Questions. April 3rd, 2023

A. me siendo muy enojada, por eso no controlo mi rabia y digo lo que se me viene a la mente

Note. This image corresponds to the answer to the fourth reflection question.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate that students have difficulties in managing their emotions, as they struggle to find healthy ways to express themselves to avoid negative consequences in circumstances of conflict. Consequently, they do not have the necessary strategies to regulate their emotions to help them deal with conflicts more effectively. The following excerpt shows how anger becomes the immediate, instinctive reaction, driven by the intense emotions experienced at that moment, because although students recognize that the other way is to control themselves and be calm, this is not their first choice, as anger becomes that emotion that clouds judgment and hinders the ability to think clearly when faced with conflict. “Igualmente sabemos que, en un caso de mucha rabia, lo primero que vamos hacer ante un problema, no sería estar calmados, ya que somos jóvenes, impulsivos”⁵ (Focus Group, April 19th, 2023).

⁵ We also know that in a case of a lot of anger, the first thing we would do in the face of a problem would not be to be calm, since we are young and impulsive.

Lacking the ability to control their emotions might be due to the complexity of the skill, individual differences among students and the broader context in which they operate, as well as the fact that it may require continuous practice and reinforcement. As Crawford and Bodine asserted (1996), diverse activities, suitable for different ages, that offer practice, evaluation, and further practice, are essential for successful conflict resolution skills.

Conclusions and Implications

This research sought to examine what opportunities and challenges the implementation of conflict resolution strategies through collaborative learning can bring to 8th grade students' acquisition of conflict resolution skills. It could be concluded that the implementation of the conflict resolution strategies through the 5 phases of Collaborative Learning may encourage students to acquire some conflict resolution skills. Moreover, students enhanced the acquisition of teamwork and innovation skills studying conflict resolution strategies and carrying out contextualized activities through collaborative learning. The project implementation also posed two challenges, incorporating conflict resolution strategies in foreign language activities and limitation in control emotions skill when the students face conflict resolution.

The implementation of this research entails certain pedagogical implications for future applications. To begin with, it is important for teachers to provide sufficient input, including vocabulary, to students to facilitate their learning and engagement in various activities related to conflict resolution strategies, as these involves complex concepts and strategies. Another implication is that spending enough time practicing and reinforcing concepts is crucial for effective learning about conflict resolution skills. It provides an

opportunity to explore different aspects, uncover nuances, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts. Additionally, teachers should consider the use of contextualized material that facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills from the classroom to real-life settings; when students see how what they learn applies to the world around them, they are more likely to transfer that knowledge to practical situations.

Although this study offers valuable insights and potential directions for future actions, there are still possibilities to explore, such as, the critical analysis of the experiences of conflict-affected individuals to develop conflict resolution skills that could generate valuable insights into the complexities of conflict dynamic. In addition, incorporating narratives as a tool for building competency in resolving conflicts may offer chances to enhance conflict resolution skills as well as improve language proficiency.

Reflection

During my research process, I was struck by the gratifying feedback I received from the students. It was heartening to hear them express their appreciation for having a space in school to discuss and learn about conflict resolution, a topic they felt was relevant and applicable to their lives. This reaffirmed the significance of addressing such essential life skills within the educational system.

In my teaching process, I initially faced a formidable challenge of reconciling theory with practice. It became apparent that one could never fully anticipate the diverse contexts that may arise, demanding the application of accumulated knowledge and experience to determine the most effective strategies.

In retrospect, I cannot help but acknowledge the immense significance of my academic experience. The journey through university has been nothing short of extraordinary, a path filled with diverse knowledge, perspectives, and personal growth. However, the true essence of this transformative journey lies in the unwavering dedication and expertise of the teachers who guided me along the way.

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