

IMPLEMENTING A CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO FOSTER ADULT
ENGLISH STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

A thesis presented by
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DEDICATION

To my beloved hermaniviri, dad and mom, who supported me during this challenging process.

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ABSTRACT

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Language education today entails a great challenge: to prepare learners for the challenges of a demanding globalized society, and particularly for the intercultural interactions they will encounter in their lives. However, beyond a preparation on the structure of the language, global citizens need an education that helps them become open-minded and respectful of differences. Data collected for this study evidence that, when intercultural activities and critical questions are used to tackle authentic materials, students become able to identify stereotypes portrayed in texts, recognize problematic representations they hold of other cultures, and use strategies to interact with English speakers around the world. Moreover, it was found, that creating spaces in the language class to share different perspectives about other cultures and practices results in the development of more positive attitudes towards them. Finally, it is argued that topics such as cultural representations can and should be addressed in EFL classes even with novice learners to promote the development of their communicative competence.

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Introduction

Economic and cultural globalization is changing the world we live in at a great speed. Individual lives are influenced by global events, as technology develops faster every day; what is more, boundaries of what were before defined aspects of economy, beliefs, culture, values, etc. are disappearing (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b, 272). Given these recent developments, it is easier to travel abroad to either study, work, or go sightseeing. With the internet alone, we can see how fast people make friends online, have romantic relationships, share information, create and consume pictures, ideas, music, and so on. In a few words, thanks to the means we have today, we participate in intercultural exchanges and we are creating, every day, new ways of communicating with people from other corners of the world. In this respect, Byram (1997) states that institutions and schools are “increasingly expected to prepare those entrusted to them for the inter-lingual and intercultural experiences” (p. 2); that is, educators, specifically language educators, have the great responsibility to help students face the linguistic and cultural challenges of today’s world. Consequently, language education must not be restricted to the teaching of linguistic structures. Given the global diversity and the changes that it brings about, language education must help students design strategies to face unexpected situations, be flexible and open towards other practices and customs, and de-centralize dominant and discriminatory worldviews, especially one’s own (Barletta, 2009, p. 155). In alignment with this, Byram (1997) introduced the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in Europe, which he defines as the knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness that a person needs to develop in order to perform in this globalized society. Thus, ICC is

about fostering curiosity for other cultures as well as strategies to deal with intercultural exchanges, respect for different practices, values and beliefs, and awareness of others' and their own culture.

In Colombia, in the Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) field, there has been growing concern about culture and interculturality and, as a response, different studies have been carried out. A review of five of the most renowned journals in the FLT field shows that articles focus on a variety of topics related to culture; such topics include Intercultural communication (Costalas, 2009; Turizo & Gómez, 2006;), Intercultural awareness (Castañeda, 2012), Intercultural understanding (Cruz, 2007; Ramos et al. , 2012), Culture teaching (Álvarez & Bonilla, 2009; Barrera & Cantor, 2007; Bonilla, 2008; De Assunção, 2007; Díaz & Quiroz, 2012; Fandiño, 2014), ICC (Agudelo, 2007; Arismendi, 2011; Barletta, 2009; Gómez, 2012; Gómez, 2014; Jánica, Rey & Rosado, 2006; Olaya and Gómez, 2013), Materials to develop ICC (Rico, 2012), and Critical Interculturality (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). However, although the topic of Intercultural Communicative Competence has been of interest of many teachers and researchers, the teachers' practice reality is different, and it is not common to see ICC in the classrooms because the language continues being the focus (Alonso & Fernández, 2013, p.184). Byram, Holmes, and Savvides (2013) assert that even when theorists have convinced curriculum designers of the importance of concepts such as Intercultural Competence, teachers and students still have other priorities and interests (p. 252). This affirmation can be supported by Barletta (2009) as she concludes, after analyzing twenty monographs of pre-service teachers, that most of them do not have as their goals addressing culture in the language classroom, and those who acknowledge its importance still give priority to test scores or expect culture to be

learned just by taking readings to the class (p. 153). She also urges to address the topic seriously to language in-service teachers (p. 154).

As an educator and researcher, I believe that the goal of education should be to help students develop the necessary social and work-related skills, as well as to become respectful subjects able to interact effectively in an ever changing society and to analyze their context critically. In the field of foreign language learning and teaching, it is common to see that language learners have many opportunities today to interact with people from other parts of the world, to have access to different kinds of information, to be exposed to other worldviews. In accordance with this idea, I implemented Byram's model of ICC in an English classroom as I believe it will provide students with opportunities that will help them foster knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness to better perform when they have to face these new spaces that are presented before them.

However, although Byram's model may be pertinent to foster students ICC, it seems to be missing an analysis of issues of power that are portrayed in the media and that might affect the way they access these texts or interact with people from other cultures. Therefore, in order to implement this model, it becomes necessary to adapt it taking into account our context. Kumaravadivelu (2003a) states that we need to "take seriously the social and historical conditions that create the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lives of teachers and learners" (p. 256).

The social and historical conditions of Colombian society make our interactions different to those who were born in other countries. In Latin America, in the field of education, there has been a special focus on fighting discrimination, racism and exclusion, and the hegemonic history of cultures that have been considered superior and inferior

(Walsh, 2005, p. 8). In our case, Colombia has suffered for decades due to conflicts related to drugs, corruption, intolerance and civil war, and the image portrayed in the international and national media (news, movies, soap operas, etc.) has affected Colombians in different ways. We have been represented as swindlers, drug addicts, difficult immigrants, etc. and this image has influenced the way we see ourselves, promoting unequal interactions; that is, that we position our foreign interlocutors as superior to us.

Given this problematic situation, students should be aware of how they are portrayed in texts with the purpose of promoting interactions oriented towards equity and respect regardless the social and cultural differences they encounter. Equally important, it becomes necessary for students to identify problematic representations they hold of themselves and other minority groups and the way they are unconsciously reproducing these stereotypes. Hence, there is a need to adapt Byram's European model to the conditions of Colombia, which demand a more critical approach to help students analyze the way they are being positioned in texts and interactions. Given our social, educational and historical conditions, Granados-Beltrán (2016) suggests "situated pedagogical practices" that take into consideration these conditions (p. 173).

To this end, I drew on Walsh's (2010) concept of Critical Interculturality, which proposes an intercultural dialogue that allows the critic of the social conditions that affect the disempowered groups. I think that, besides providing tools to develop their ICC, we should go beyond and explore, together with the students, the way the cultural information we encounter generates relations of power and conditions of inferiority. In this regard, Walsh (2007) points out that "education can indeed contribute to the development of critical beings and more just societies" (p. 26). Thus, I will use Walsh's perspective of

Critical Interculturality to resignify the concept of “critical cultural awareness” within Byram’s ICC model to make it more suitable to our context.

In alignment with this goal, the question I will address in this study is: **How can a critical intercultural approach help adult language learners develop their ICC in an English class?**

In the next sections, I will present the theoretical framework on the role of culture in the language teaching field and the critical intercultural approach on which this study draws. Subsequently, I will describe the setting and the participants of this study. Then, I will explain the data collection and analysis, followed by a description of the unit design, materials and activities used. Afterwards, I will present the findings and discuss them in the light of the theory. And finally, I will state the importance of this study in the field, its implications for teachers, institutions and further research.

Theoretical Framework

For a long time, it was thought that culture was learned implicitly when learning a language. Only until recent times, “language educators recognize[d] the need for teaching culture explicitly” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 23). Consequently, sociocultural content has been included in the teaching of foreign languages within the framework of the communicative approach (Alonso & Fernández, 2013; Byram, 1997). This teaching of “culture” coincides with what has traditionally been called Culture with capital “C”, the products of artists and intellectuals of a group (music, literature, theater, etc.); and culture with small “c”, the beliefs, values, customs, etc., shared by this group (Alonso & Fernández, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Such notions of culture correspond to what Atkinson (1999) named a “received view” of culture, characterized by being “unchanging and homogeneous” and thus falling into stereotyping, given that it places a group under a restrained category that cannot be modified. Furthermore, it promotes discrimination, because it focuses on the native-speaker model (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002) and the “learners’ own culture is peripheralized, if not completely ignored” (Alptekin, 2002, p. 62).

In contrast with this problematic view of culture, Atkinson (1999) identifies an alternative view in which culture is seen as problematic considering that “cultures are fluid, ever-changing, and non-deterministic” (p. 630). In accordance with this view, people must be seen as individuals that play different social roles and have multiple and complex identities (p. 644). Authors such as Byram (1997) and Byram et al. (2002) suggest that instead of providing static representations of culture, Foreign Language Teaching should

rather prepare learners with the necessary tools to analyze and understand “any cultural practices and meanings they encounter”. Aguado (2003) also states that, in order to face intercultural interactions, students need more than learning practical information about a culture (such as how to greet in different countries). They must know that values, feelings and attitudes are culturally conditioned, and once they understand that, they will be able to communicate with others (p. 149).

In other words, the FLT classroom should be a space where students not only learn a set of defined cultural behaviors and products. They also need to become aware of how complex people are and develop skills, attitudes and knowledge to interact effectively with these people, to understand their context and accept their differences, to develop human relationships (Byram et al., 2002, p. 8) Students need a space where they don't have a specific foreign culture as a model to follow, but where they analyze other and their own cultures' practices, values and beliefs.

All what has been discussed above aligns with the concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) introduced by Byram (1997) in the FLT field. He proposes this concept as an improvement of van Ek's (1986) model of communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2013) because these competences still promote the native speaker as a model, which, according to him, creates “an impossible target and consequently inevitable failure” (Byram, 1997, p. 11). Another aspect of these competences is that they focus on exchange of information only and not on the understanding of communication as human interaction (p. 12).

As proposed by Byram (1997) and Byram et al. (2002), ICC entails five *savoirs*: knowledge (*savoir*), skills (*savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire*), attitudes (*savoir*

être) and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). These *savoirs* promote intercultural interactions based on respect as they involve curiosity, understanding and acceptance of other cultures, and the willingness of students to question their own values, beliefs and behaviors and accept that their worldview is not the only one valid.

According to Byram et al. (2002), the base of the model is the attitudes of the learner (p. 11). These attitudes (*savoir être*) refer to the students' ability to "decentre", to be open to different perspectives, to show curiosity about the other culture before making conclusions based on preconceptions, and to be willing to analyze what they consider correct, valuable and true. Another *savoir* is Knowledge. Having previous understanding of other cultures' information, products and social processes might be helpful to compare to students' own cultures' information. Knowledge can also be acquired in interaction by being open to the other cultures. Byram's model also proposes two kinds of skills. On the one hand, students need to be able to understand and interpret information from another culture by comparing it to their own. This is known as skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*). On the other hand, students should develop skills to find new information they might need to have a better understanding of the person they are interacting with or are curious about, that is, skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*). Finally, to complete Byram's model, he advises a critical cultural awareness component (*savoir s'engager*) which consists of students evaluating critically their values and how these can affect their views of other cultures, their values and beliefs (Byram, 1997; Byram et al. 2002). In Byram et al.'s (2002) words, the model's essence "is to help language learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms, and to be aware of their own identities and those of their interlocutors (p. 8)

From a critical perspective, whose aim is for students to be able to change their oppressive conditions by identifying by themselves issues of power and proposing actions, the word “competence” lacks the critical component given that it implies a set of skills, knowledge or capacity for practical purposes, such as communicating with a person from another country or being qualified for a job. Skills that will inevitably reproduce patterns of oppression and will perpetuate the status quo. However, if seen as an informed decision and combined with other principles, the acquisition of competences provides students with possibilities to have access to better opportunities in a globalized world, and thus, helps to reduce the inequality breach that affects our society. Moreover, as it could be seen, the dimensions or *Savoirs* proposed by Byram go further those practical skills that seek “successful” communication as it involves respectful interaction and the acknowledgement of the Other.

In my opinion, the model proposed by Byram (1997) should be introduced in the language classroom in order to provide students with opportunities that will help them foster knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness along with language learning. However, the development of ICC is not enough to cope with the issues of a globalized society from a critical perspective, especially the ones that affect our Colombian society. Even when the model proposes an interesting focus that helps students develop the *Savoirs* to become intercultural speakers, it should be remembered it is still an European model. Therefore, it becomes necessary to adapt the model taking into account our social, historical and educational context (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2003)

With regard to this issue, Granados-Beltrán (2016) asserts that although this model has “commendable goals, perhaps due to their origin in North American and European

backgrounds they seem to serve the functional interculturality described by Walsh.” (p. 14). As explained earlier, Byram includes a critical cultural awareness component which aims at students to evaluate how their views might influence the way they see others (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). Nevertheless, I find that this takes for granted what already is and “doesn’t question the rules of the game”, what Tubino (2005) calls “functional interculturality” (as cited in Walsh, 2010, p. 9). Byram et al. (2002) state that “it is not the purpose of teaching to try to change learners values, but to make them explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others (p. 13). That is, even if it seeks for awareness, it does not problematize worldviews and representations that marginalize some social groups and benefit others in search of social transformation, which should be the ultimate goal of any education.

In contrast to this “functional Interculturality”, Walsh (2007) proposes an Interculturality aligned with a critical pedagogy as a response to the necessity of shattering the hegemonic and dominant knowledge by generating participation that incites reaction and questioning (as cited in Cortez, 2015, p. 147), a praxis oriented towards “inquiring, transforming, intervening, acting and creating radically different conditions of society, humanity, knowledge, and life” (Walsh, 2010, p. 2). As an educator, in addition to adapting Byram’s model to my English class, I find relevant to draw on the concept of Critical Interculturality introduced by Walsh given our condition of colonized society with social problems whose base are the exclusion, marginalization, segregation, ethnocentrism, invisibilization, negation, new forms of colonization, domination and subalternation, among other aspects (Cortez, 2015, p. 17). These conditions might influence students themselves to reproduce problematic representations (collective worldviews and

generalized ideas and beliefs) and negative self-perception when learning about and interacting with other cultures. Granados-Beltrán (2016) warns, for instance, that students may become ashamed of not having a native-speaker-like accent (p. 177) and highlights the importance of self-reflection development as a way of “constructing a strong self-concept that is free of the complex of inferiority inherited from colonial experience” (p. 180)

Although Walsh’s Critical Interculturality was envisaged for education in general and not for EFL and she has worked mainly with indigenous and afro communities, I consider her proposal to be applicable to Colombian language teaching field, especially EFL. Granados-Beltrán (2016) observes that even when “the notion of interculturality in her work stems from an indigenous locus of enunciation, it does not imply that other subalternized sectors cannot make part of this decolonizing project” (p. 176). Consequently, Colombian English learners are considered here the minority group, with a history of colonization, that should understand and analyze the relations of power between them and the dominant groups they want to learn the language from.

I propose an approach that combines the principles of Byram’s model of ICC and the concept of Critical Interculturality of Walsh in the EFL class. Therefore, students will not only develop ICC that will help them perform as Intercultural speakers, they will also problematize how certain groups or individuals are portrayed in texts and discourses that might promote discrimination and strive for social change. In other words, a critical intercultural approach will help students become respectful, curious, open-minded beings as well as fight Eurocentric views and, ideally, try to change the structures that work in detriment of some human beings (Walsh, 2010, p. 12).

Having these theories in mind, I wanted to develop a pedagogical unit following a critical intercultural approach. As I mentioned before, to this end, I adapted Byram's (1997) model for ICC while also drawing on Walsh's (2010) concept of Critical Interculturality.

Byram et al. (2002), in a practical explanation for teachers, advice teachers to design different activities aimed at promoting discussions and comparisons. For this, they suggest using authentic material, such as written texts, audio recordings, photographs, images, etc. (p. 24). Authentic material is defined as sources created for native speakers of the language and not for language learning purposes. They also provide some examples of activities that can be used to promote ICC. Some of those are: bringing factual information of other cultures, such as life-styles, costumes, etc. to encourage comparative analysis to students' own culture (p. 15); analyzing foreign perspectives of students' culture by reading travel guides or brochures; producing "culture shock" to boost emotions and feelings about other cultures to later reflect upon students' reactions (p. 20); sharing students' previous knowledge and values and promote discussions upon them; and of course, carrying out these tasks in the target language (p. 24). Although they have some examples, there is not a model of activities that teachers can use as a guide to select material and design tasks to help students foster their ICC in the classroom. In this regard, Byram et al. (2013) highlight the importance of classroom practice descriptions to help those teachers who do not have the possibility to observe and share with others (p. 252); however, they also acknowledge that "there are far fewer publications about classroom practice...The relationship between theory and practice in education is a difficult one (p. 251).

Alonso and Fernández (2013) dedicated a chapter of their book to a suggested series of purposes and activities for teachers interested in the development of ICC in the language

classroom. They used Byram's model as the base for its pedagogical orientation and for its renown in the field of language teaching. They also designed a taxonomy of activities inspired in the classification of López García (2006). To design my pedagogical unit, I drew on three authors. Firstly, for the selection of materials, as there was not a clear model for intercultural competence activities, I decided to follow some of the principles proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011) in their Model for EFL Materials Development within the framework of Critical Pedagogy for they align to the fundamentals of ICC and critical pedagogy. Secondly, to design the tasks, I selected some of the activities suggested by Alonso and Fernández (2013) in their taxonomy of intercultural activities. Thirdly, for the critical component, I adapted some critical questions proposed by Thoman, Jolls, and Share (2002) and Janks (2014). I will describe these components in the unit design section.

In the following lines I will describe the setting where this research was carried out and the participants that took part of it. Subsequently, I will explain the research design method and paradigm this study claims to fall into, the data collection methods and their usefulness for this study. Afterwards, I will describe how the data analysis was carried out how the categories emerged, followed by a detailed description of the pedagogical unit, materials and activities designed to carry out this project.

Setting

I carried out my research in an English class of an extension program at a public university in Medellín. This English program is offered to adults with an undergraduate degree in any area. The classes of this program are heterogeneous; students come from different backgrounds, and their ages range from 18 to 60 and up. Their motivations to learn English vary as well. Many of them take classes because it is a requirement of their workplace or because they want to change their job; others, because they are planning to travel or because learning English has been a personal challenge for a long time.

The program has a thematic curriculum and every level focuses on a specific topic, like “Sports and Health” or “Arts”. Each level has its own set of sources based on authentic input (video, audio and written texts). The tasks included in the print material are designed within the program to help students acquire the necessary tools to participate in class discussions and to develop a project. These tasks include the practice of vocabulary, listening/reading comprehension activities, as well as group discussions about critical questions. By critical questions I mean intended to foster students’ reflection upon the topic of discussion. The program follows a communicative approach, so the activities in these teaching materials focus on the negotiation of meaning and try to make connections to the students’ personal and professional life (Nunan, 1989, as cited in *Lineamientos curriculares del programa inglés profesionales. Quinto borrador*, 2012, p. 1). In addition to the sources, students have to develop a project based on a topic of interest related to the level’s main theme throughout the semester. In this project, students are expected to use what they have learned from the learning materials and the teacher; that is, they must show knowledge of the language and of the topic of the level.

The program subscribes to Halliday's (1984) concept of *thematic teaching* by proposing that learning English is not the ultimate goal of the course, but learning about other subject areas through the language. For this, in 2010-2011, within the curriculum restructuring plan, a survey was carried out to identify the topics of different areas that were of interest of students and teachers. For the selection of the materials and design of the tasks, the program followed the Vygotskynian position about creating an environment that promotes students interaction to build together the language by expressing their opinions and feelings. For the program, learning a language becomes easier for students if the topics and activities are meaningful and relate to their lives.

I did my research in a level 1 course, whose topic is "Social events and customs around the world". About the level's communicative goal, students are expected to name, describe and give their opinion about different celebrations, rituals and practices presented in the texts and in the project research.

Participants

There were 14 students in my class, 9 women and five men between 18 to 50 years old and up. There were a sociologist, an accountant, a social worker, a logistics technologist, a licensed pharmacist, a surgical technician, an administration technologist, an international business woman, two business administrators, two math teachers, and two lawyers. Half of the students took English courses before, most of them one or two basic courses at their university or at a private institution and only one was certified after taking 8 courses. The reasons why they decided to learn English are varied; they think it is very important nowadays to communicate with people from other places, because they need it

for their job, among others. When expressing what they were looking for in an English program, they preferred communicative activities and grammar.

In this research, I particularly focused on the observation and analysis of all my students' class interactions. However, I also selected three specific cases and interviewed them at the end of the course to give a closer account of their ICC process. This purposeful sampling was made of *information-rich* cases in order to "learn a great deal about issues of central importance" (Patton, 1990). The criteria to select the cases included the students' level of engagement in the intercultural activities during the whole process. These cases were: Rosario, who always participated in class by discussing the topics in an energetic way, both in the small group and whole class discussions. Moreover, she searched for additional information about the topics discussed in class and was dedicated to her project work. Teresa, who was engaged with her project work and looked for information autonomously. Nevertheless, she did not search for extra information about the topics of class and participated little in class discussions. Finally, Jacinto, who showed motivation in class activities by participating in class discussions. However, he did not seek extra information about class topics and did not show engagement in his project work.

Research Design

Given that this study seeks to understand how a critical intercultural approach helps adult learners foster their Intercultural Communicative Competence in an English class, this study is inscribed in a critical sociocultural paradigm (Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Yin, 2003; Richards, 2003). To carry out this research, I drew on a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2006) and on different sources of information (Yin, 2003). In the following lines I will explain in detail the justification to recognize this research as a case study that falls into a critical sociocultural paradigm.

With respect to the paradigm, this study was carried out taking into consideration that “reality is socially constructed” Richards (2003) and that learners bring their own stories which contributes to meaning negotiation through interaction with others (p. 38). This study also holds that learners are “active meaning-makers and problem-solvers in their learning process” (Fahim & Haghani, 2012, p. 694). However, and opposed to what Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) remark, this study does not consider social construction of reality as unproblematic neither intended to take a neutral position (as cited in Richards, 2003, p. 39). On the contrary, this work also stands from a critical paradigm as it sought not only to understand a phenomenon but a change in students’ awareness about problematic representations and issues of power presented to them (Richards, 2003, p. 40)

Concerning the type of study, I carried out a qualitative case study as I mentioned above. According to Yin (2003), in a case study the researcher analyzes a phenomenon in a real-life context to answer “how” and “why” questions; for this reason the outcomes of this research are unknown (p. 1). Furthermore, the researcher explores a bounded system (or a

case) over time and uses different sources of information to collect rich data (Creswell, 2003, p. 73). The present study proposed to analyze what happened when implementing a critical intercultural unit that intended to foster ICC in adult learners in an English class. In order to collect “detailed, in-depth data” I used different sources of information such as interviews, observations, audiovisual material, among others (Creswell, 2006). Next, I will explain in detail the methods I used to collect data and their relevance to answer my research question.

Data Collection

Richards (2003) states that “the classroom is such a familiar place that establishing observational ‘distance’ can be very difficult” (p. 105). In order to collect sufficient information that could give me detailed account of what happened in the classroom and to avoid bias, I used different methods. Namely, a questionnaire at the beginning of the course, audio and video recordings of students’ interactions, students’ written works, a journal, and a semi-structured interview to three participants at the end of the course. Following, I will describe each of the data collections tools I used.

Questionnaire. According to Rea & Parker (2005), questionnaires “allow researchers to generalize about a large population by studying a small portion of that population” (p. 4) I applied a needs analysis questionnaire at the beginning of the course, which contained questions related to general information (name, age, profession, etc.) (See Appendix A); English learning experience (courses taken, institution, level, topics and expectations); and English use expectations. To enhance trustworthiness, I conducted a small-scale implementation that assessed clarity, comprehensiveness, and acceptability (p. 31). The questionnaire was designed in Spanish, sent via email and answered by students in

class time to ensure the completion by all of them. This instrument helped to characterize my students as a researcher and to know better as a teacher their interests in learning the language, their idea of culture, and the importance they gave to culture.

Audio and video recordings. I video and audio recorded the class interactions in which students discussed the materials and tasks of selected activities. Richard (2003) states that recordings are used “as a means of developing a better understanding of the classroom world and the participants’ place in it” (p. 41). The recorded interactions evidenced students’ reactions and attitudes when exposed to texts that contained stereotypical representations of cultures and practices different to theirs. They also showed how students shared their own perspectives and experiences when analyzing these texts. This source of information also provided evidence of students’ reactions and attitudes when dealing with opinions different to their own in the classroom and if during the course and activities these attitudes and reactions changed or remained the same.

Samples of student work. In addition to the questionnaire and the recorded classes, I collected some of my students’ work from these activities as well as evidence from the project they developed during the course. These samples of student work provided information about students’ willingness to know about other cultures, their level of critical cultural awareness when writing about these cultures. If they reproduced stereotypical information as found in their research, or were judgmental when describing it, or if there was evidence of willingness to go beyond, to explain from the other’s perspective or even to demystify stereotypical positions. These works also gave account of students’ language development. I purposely selected some of students’ works. Those were: short descriptions

of women they wrote at the beginning of the classes, a collaborative composition in the middle of the course, and an individual report at the end of the process.

Journal. I kept a journal where I recorded my thoughts and reflections after each lesson. Keeping a journal was a useful instrument of data collection for different reasons. Firstly, it provided me with information about my students, the way they were interacting, their performance in class and level of engagement in the project which, together with the analysis of other sources, helped me to select the participants to be interviewed. Secondly, the journal was useful to keep track of how the activities were carried out in class and helped me to modify some aspects of them for better results in the data collection. As Richards (2003) points out, a journal helps the teacher to build up a picture of how instruction is being handled and that it might “reveal prescriptive teacher-centered approaches” that could affect the classroom environment (p. 25). Finally, it also supported my continual self-reflection about my performance as a teacher and researcher.

Interview. Lastly, I conducted a semi-structured interview to ask to three of the participating students about their opinions of different aspects of the class: the material, class activities, class environment, students’ interactions, interaction with people from other countries and communication strategies before and after the class activities, their performance in and out of class, their studying habits, among others (See Appendix I). Although I had an interview protocol which I designed based on the questions and interests that emerged during class observations, I used a progressive focusing; that is, I began with a general question and gradually focused on more specific aspects being attentive to opportunities given by participants during the interview to expand on the topics they brought (Richards, 2003, 64). These interviews contributed to my understanding of certain

class reactions and attitudes, their perspective of the activities and identifying any progress in relation to their ICC.

Ethical Considerations

At the beginning of the course, students signed a consent form (See Appendix B). I ensured “that participants [had] complete understanding of the purpose and methods” I used in this study and the implications of their participation (Drew et al., 2008, p. 57). To protect participants’ identity, I used fictional names and made sure this was consistent along the paper (p. 72). I also kept this information private and was only discussed with my thesis director and a research friend who also helped me with peer-checking in this study.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data I followed these steps. First, I listened several times to students’ discussions in small groups and in the whole class and transcribed those conversations and interventions I identified as giving account of students’ Intercultural Communicative Competence. Moreover, I collected and transcribed students’ works. After having the information I needed, I uploaded the transcriptions of the interviews, students’ conversations, students’ works, and my journal into Nvivo9. Afterwards, I did an inductive-deductive analysis as I reread and coded the data several times. Codes emerged based on repetitive patterns evidenced in the different sources of information uploaded into Nvivo9. These codes (inductive), and having in mind the components of ICC model and principles of Critical Interculturality (deductive) contributed to the four emerging main categories related to my research question. Subsequently, to ensure trustworthiness, I triangulated data by dragging information from all the sources to the categories previously identified “to minimise the danger of a one-sided representation (Richards, 2003, p. 251). Finally, to

avoid bias, I had peer-checking by discussing with my advisor my findings and ensuring the evidence corresponded to the categories emerged, and by discussing with a friend-researcher and assuring that the conclusions made answered the research question.

Unit design and implementation

A pedagogical unit can be defined as a course plan made up of a series of activities to be developed in a period of time and which has specific objectives to be achieved in this period of time. For this study, the pedagogical unit was planned only for part of the semester for various reasons. First, because this course offers 100 hours of class and this is too much time compared to most of the English courses in the city. Second, because of time constraints, it was considered to devote the part of the semester to transcribe and analyze data. And third, because it was necessary to anticipate possible time issues to implement the unit due to different factors such as doing the implementation in a level one class and the different activities students had in the program. As explained before, I decided to adapt some of the activities of the taxonomy of Intercultural activities proposed by Alonso & Fernández, 2013 based on Byram's model of ICC. I also drew on some of the principles of the Model for EFL Materials Development within the framework of Critical Pedagogy proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011), because these principles reflect what ICC and CI aim at. Moreover, I used some critical questions proposed by Thoman et al. (2002) and Janks (2014) as these questions helped me achieve the critical component proposed by Walsh in her CI. Next, I will describe in detail the materials selected, the tasks and the purpose of each activity.

Selecting materials as input. Although many language centers base their courses on a textbook, most authors of intercultural and critical approaches recommend the use of

authentic materials, because they reflect how cultural groups and practices are portrayed by dominant groups. The materials to develop ICC can be proposed by the teacher and should include both students' own culture and other cultures (Byram, 2002, p. 23). However, in order to promote autonomy, students can bring sources and also create the materials that will be used in class. Authentic materials can be T.V. commercials, advertisements, movies, music, book excerpts, stories, magazine or newspaper articles, etc. that are addressed to native speakers and were not intended for learning a language. I had the freedom to select the materials to be used, given that the program I implemented my unit does not follow a book and promotes the use of authentic material. I just needed to change the sources they had for their normal courses with the material I considered necessary to implement my unit.

As I mentioned above, to select material from the media, I drew on the Model for EFL Materials Development within the framework of Critical Pedagogy proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011). They propose that the materials present world realities that can help students develop critical consciousness, develop social and language skills, engage them in the cycle of reflection and action, and that include the learner's own culture. These principles reflect the objectives embedded in the ICC and CI I wanted to promote in my students. The materials I selected included two video segments, two sets of images with their corresponding descriptions, and two written texts. To select the materials I also took into account the topic of the level, given that I also needed to meet the program's goals and help them develop their linguistic competence. Bellow, I will describe in detail each of the materials.

The video segments. The criteria I used to select the video segments were that they were movies where minority groups were portrayed. I also wanted the movies to show cultural activities such as holidays or celebrations, because that is the topic of the level I was teaching. The first movie segment is from the movie *From Prada to Nada*. In this video segment, the Mexican protagonist is celebrating, in the US, a typical holiday from her country when an American friend comes to visit. The second movie segment, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, portrays a Greek family that celebrates that one of the girls is marrying an American man. The segment revolves around the cultural differences between the Greek and the American family.

The Images. I used two set of images in the unit and they were selected with different purposes. The first set was a group of images of different death rituals around the world, followed by their descriptions. The purpose was to expose students to practices that were very different to the ones they know. The second set was five images of women with different physical characteristics, followed by a short biographical description. The purpose was for students to describe the images of these women based on their appearance before reading about them. Afterwards, they had to reflect about the descriptions they wrote to identify problematic representations they have.

The written texts. I selected two written texts. The first text was a compilation of real short stories where people narrated cultural misunderstandings they had. The purpose was for students to identify the origin of the misunderstanding. The second text was a *DO's and DON'Ts when travelling to US* where some tips are presented. The purpose was for students to identify cultural preconceived ideas based on those tips.

Students generated material. Students had to work on a project where they had to search autonomously information about cultural practices or groups and do a series of activities using this information.

The tasks. The program I implemented my unit is a task based and project based program. After selecting the materials I was going to use, I designed a series of tasks per each source taking into account the program's characteristics. Each source (video or written text) had some tasks that helped students go from a simple to a more complex activity. The first tasks focused on giving students the vocabulary or structures needed to perform well at the end of these tasks. Subsequent tasks were related to understanding the text (listening or reading comprehension activities), understanding the way the language was used, and the final tasks focused on critical questions where students expressed their opinions.

In order to design tasks for the sources selected, I used the taxonomy of Intercultural activities proposed by Alonso & Fernández, 2013. Some of these tasks intend to explore aspects such as: cultural shock, stereotypes, comparing and contrasting, among others. Moreover, Following Thoman et al. (2002) and Janks (2014), I incorporated some critical questions to identify relations of power that intended to help students analyze cultural representations in these texts and themselves. For example, *Describe the people presented in the video, How are the people from the video portrayed? Whose point of view is represented there? why?; how can these representations affect a group or individual?*, etc. Below, I will describe the kinds of ICC and CI tasks I included in the unit.

Cultural shock. The purpose of these tasks was to expose students to certain situations and see their reactions to then reflect upon their feelings and opinions about other cultural practices.

Stereotypes. The purpose of these tasks was to recognize stereotypes in texts and preconceived ideas they hold of other cultures.

Comparing and contrasting. The purpose of these tasks was to compare students' practices and beliefs to the ones of other cultures and be able to accept other worldviews.

Situation. The purpose of these tasks was to ask students what they would do if they were in certain cultural situations and share opinions and strategies to deal with uncommon situations.

Critical questions. The purpose of these questions was to identify problematic representations, issues of power and discrimination in texts and their own, and be aware of the effects of these issues on individuals or communities.

Interaction. The purpose of these activities was to make students have real interactions with people from other countries (not necessarily English speaking countries) for them to use different strategies to face language and cultural differences.

Project work. As explained in the materials, students had to look for information autonomously based on their interests. Along the semester, and with the materials of class as a model, students had to do different tasks to show their progress with their research. Among them were: a short presentation to show the topic chosen, a short composition to be published in an online magazine, a written report to summarize the information found, and an oral report where they reported why they chose the topic and their interests and a final presentation where they show the highlight of their research. Students' autonomous research also gave account of their curiosity to know about other cultures, their willingness to stop prejudice and willingness to question representations found in the media.

(see a summary of the materials and tasks in Appendix C)

In the next section, I will present the categories that emerged after data analysis and describe the findings based on the most relevant evidence. After that, I will discuss the most significant findings in the light of the theory and their implications for my research and the field. Subsequently, I will restate some of the key aspects analyzed in the discussion in the form of a summary. Finally, I will state the importance of this study in the field, its limitations, implications for teachers, institutions and further research.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how a critical intercultural approach helped adult English learners foster their Intercultural Communicative Competence and CI in the classroom. To do this, I designed a critical intercultural unit for which I selected authentic materials and designed a series of tasks adapted from a taxonomy of Intercultural activities proposed by Alonso & Fernández, 2013 based on Byram's ICC model. Likewise I took into account applications of critical pedagogy in material design, as proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011), Thoman et al. (2002), and Janks (2014) to foster ICC and CI in my class of professional adult English learners.

Data collected indicate that the implementation of this unit evidenced and promoted the development certain behaviors, attitudes and skills in students embedded in ICC. For example, students were able to compare other cultures' values, practices and representations with their own; they identified and analyzed stereotyped representations of groups in texts; they showed willingness to find out information of other cultures or communities, and they developed their language competence along with their critical cultural awareness.

In the next lines, I will discuss the four main categories that emerged during data analysis, as I tried to answer the question: **How can a critical intercultural approach help adult language learners foster their ICC in an English class?** The first category refers to students' motivation to seek, on their own, information about other cultures. In the second category, I will discuss students' behaviors when presented with materials and different opinions that aimed at changing negative attitudes. In the third category, I will refer to how

students were able to use references of their own culture to understand other cultures' practices, problematic representations and their effect on other. And finally, in the fourth category, I will explain how students were able to discuss complex matters such as cultural representations with a limited language proficiency level.

Developing curiosity and motivation to learn more about other cultures

Willingness to find out information about other cultures is one of the important attitudes of the *Savoirs être* that Intercultural Communicative Competence aims at. The different activities proposed in the course intended to promote students' curiosity about other cultures by encouraging group discussions and individual reflections about foreign practices, as well as interactions with people from different cultures, and project work.

In general, all the students were willing to talk about practices and representations of different cultures from the beginning of the course. However, most of them limited to the information provided in class and did not go further to find out more about the cultural aspects or groups we were discussing in class. Students' lack of curiosity to seek information by themselves can be evidenced by comparing the following examples. First, the collaborative project paper Dionisio and Juana prepared for the collaborative written project activity; and second, Dionisio's individual report of the project.

SONGKRAN DAY

The image of Buddha is exposed in a procession, while musicians play and multitudes watch from the sides. To celebrate the New Year, people go to the temples early, and offer food to Buddhist monks. In this time, people clean their houses and the images of Buddha with aromatic water. Woman prepared[sic]

different foods, and men clean their houses and the image of Buddha, because they should be spotless.

(Magazine PIP contribution, Dionisio and Juana, October, 2015)

SONGKRAN DAY

Songkran means “transition or change of places”. In this time, people clean their houses and the image of Buda[sic] with aromatic water, with the objective to remove the bad energies from their houses and bring good luck. People also do different activities during the celebration: the image of Buda[sic] is exposed in a procession while musicians play, multitudes go to the sides and people offer food to Buddhist monks.

(Individual Report, Dionisio, November, 2015)

When comparing both papers, we can see that Dionisio did not go further in his search, but limited to reorganize the same information they had in the collaborative paper, even when exploring more about their topic was part of the students’ project duties. This happened with the majority of students in this activity.

Nonetheless, a few students extended this information with further research, just for the sake of knowing more to share in class and to develop their project. They showed this curiosity during the whole course. One of them, Rosario, used to take extra copies with information about the topics we saw in previous classes. To illustrate how this student went beyond class material, during a discussion in which students analyzed if their feelings towards death rituals around the world were positive or negative, she used the information she searched to explain to her classmates why this community has this practice:

Rosario: In Spanish? Prefiero decirlo en español

Teacher: yes

Rosario: **Es una práctica cultural de la cultura Budista y dice que, para reencarnar, el último acto que uno hace es una prueba de amor. Entonces no es**

que dejan el cuerpo, el Tibet es muy alto, entonces dejan el cuerpo en esas alturas y lo devoran los pájaros. Entonces es un acto de caridad.

(Whole class discussion, August 6)

Here, students were giving opinions about the Sky Burial in Tibet, a ritual in which corpses are placed on top of a mountain to decompose and be eaten by vultures. Most students expressed feelings of disgust and described this ritual as “terrible”, “horrible”, “disrespectful”, etc. Rosario, on the contrary, used the information she found to explain to the rest of the class that this ritual was not disrespectful, but that the particular land conditions of this place, along with people’s beliefs, explained why they had these kinds of practices, which she even called “an act of love”. This attitude of curiosity, which expands students’ knowledge, helped her have the tools to try to understand and explain the reason for certain practices, another *Savoir* included in the ICC model.

Later, in the interview, Rosario explained why she went further and investigated more about the topics proposed in class:

Teacher: (00:10:50) Rosario, I observed that you often took more information to class. We were talking about any topic and the next class you brought photocopies with extra information about what we had seen. Could you explain why? What motivated you to search about the topic?

Rosario: (00:11:18) First, **I like very much the topic of customs, cultural interests, I mean, as the central topic, the common thread of the course is wonderful**, because we live in a society that is not very diverse, not very open to change.

Teacher: (00:15:00) Other people in class also liked the topic of cultures, rituals, differences, but they didn’t take more information to class, why did you? Where does that curiosity and motivation come from?

Rosario: (00:00:15:17) **I do it because I am studious, because if I want to learn...I think learning is related to the capacity you have to go beyond what is being given to you and I think that it is part of my life routine, that if I learn a**

topic, as simple as it can be, even for a class, I always read more than what's given to me, why? because that way I can give my opinion with clarity.

(Interview, Rosario, December 9, my translation)

In this interview, Rosario mentioned two reasons that explained why she was always willing to seek additional information about the topics we were seeing in class. The first one is that the topic itself was interesting for her and motivated her to search more. The second comes from her father teachings and personal habits. She considers herself as a person who likes to go beyond, to understand the general picture of what it is being discussed in order to express her opinion with confidence.

Another student, Teresa, was able to address some of her classmates' doubts about the role of a Geisha. Students were asking questions related to the habits, customs and personal life of the Geisha. Teresa was able to provide this information without difficulties, as many other students who researched simple information of a cultural practice or group. Soon the discussion took another way and some students talked about the Geisha being a prostitute and even I found myself asking about her opinion of a woman being so prepared only to serve a man. In the interview with Teresa, when asked about this situation and her research, she said:

Teacher: I am curious about your project work about the Geisha, the topic you chose, and about a couple of questions asked during your presentation, do you remember them?

Teresa: Yes

Teacher: Tell me, what happened there?

Teresa: (00:23:55) Well, **the questions had to do with the wrong conception people have about the Geishas as "women of easy virtue", but after investigating, actually, I don't know, I was hooked and investigated a lot about the topic. First, I searched a lot about history, but in Spanish, and later I started to look for information in English in order to understand what they were**

talking about. So, I found a story in Spanish and I understood what the point was, why people said that these girls, skilled in different arts, were called “women of easy virtue”.

Teacher: **Did you know about this topic before reading for the Project?**

Teresa: **I didn’t know**, well, years ago, I liked to draw geishas with a friend, but I didn’t know about them.

Teacher: **That means that everything you presented in class, the *Sharing Activity* and even the *Written report* was researched in class.**

Teresa: **Yes, totally**

Teacher: (00:25:14) What do you get from that?, I mean, could you tell me what was your experience in this project? What did you like, what didn’t you like? What was complicated, what did you get from it?

Teresa: **I acquired a lot of knowledge, and that’s extra.**

(Interview, Teresa, Dec 2)

Thanks to her extensive exploration of the topic for the project, Teresa started to explain to her classmates that it was a misconception, and that she had read in different sources how prostitutes used the image of this Japanese figure to win clients and also explained why the Geisha was an artist to her by describing her transformation process and what this woman could do.

In contrast to all the above mentioned activities, and despite only few students showing willingness to seek more information, there was one activity that seemed to promote all the students’ curiosity about other cultures and it was the online chat with a random foreign English speaker. All of them expressed motivation and interest during this activity in class time. Students could choose from two activities. The first one entailed online live contact with a person from another country, where they had to interact with them. In the second option, they had to read a blog entry written by a foreigner, in which he narrates a bad experience he had with a Paisa girl and uses this experience to generalize and stereotype girls from Medellín. Students had to react to this experience by writing a

message in his blog. At the beginning, two students expressed they preferred to react to the text, because they felt too shy to interact with people from other countries in a real-time situation, but they opted for the online chat at the end as they saw the positive reaction of all their classmates.

What was remarkable about this activity is that even after the class, most students continued having contact with these people, and not only the person they contacted in class, but different people they had been interacting with at home, in their spare time, which means they started to make of this a personal habit. This can be seen in the interview with the three participants. Below, Jacinto's experience:

Jacinto: (00:10:10) I think a very, very nice activity was the online chat we did in the computers room to interact with another person and see there are interests, noticeable differences, because we talked with people from Australia, the United States, England, so...

Teacher: (00:10:46) Did you chat with different people?

Jacinto: **Yes, and I am still doing it.**

Teacher: (00:10:48) Tell me about your experience this day. Had you done it before the class? The online chat?

Jacinto: Never, not in English, the truth is that I had never done it before. In Spanish is very common, but in English, never. The website was interesting because, for what I saw, people register to interact and really learn languages. **That was cool, I still do it in my free time.** And I am not going to lie, I do not understand everything, but I have learned many things, and at least I can now have a brief conversation with somebody.

(Interview, Jacinto, December 3, my translation)

In class time, most were able to provide different kinds of information about these people's personal life, country, customs, etc., which shows they were curious about them and risked to interact more with them to know them more. Although Jacinto names countries such as Australia, United States and England as examples, students were

encouraged to talk to people from different countries using English as lingua franca. Some of them chatted with people from the Middle East, Brazil, and even Argentina, using English as their vehicle to communicate.

As shown above, even when the materials were intended to promote students' curiosity and willingness to search about other cultures, only one activity seemed to motivate students to do more than asked in class: the online chat session with a foreigner. Nevertheless, the few students that constantly read more and brought more information to class, used this information to try to explain the reason for certain cultural practices or demystify misconceptions about other individuals or communities.

Reflecting on the stereotypical representations one holds

Two of the principles of the Model for EFL Materials Development within the framework of Critical Pedagogy proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011) that align with the Walsh's concept of Critical Interculturality are to engage students in a cycle of reflection and action and that the material includes the learner's own culture.

During the course, students were presented with materials and activities and took part in small group discussions that intended them to express their opinion about different cultural practices, describe some people based on their appearance, identify traditional representations they held of some groups, including their own, and discuss the effects of stereotypes on some individuals and groups. This category refers to what happened when students were exposed to these materials, questions and their classmates' opinions.

Data show that most students were able to identify problematic representations they held of other cultures and their own and that they changed radical positions by being

exposed to two situations. The first one, when they had to answer some critical questions about their feelings or cultural representations. The second one, when they had the opportunity to share different perspectives with their classmates.

Questioning one’s cultural representations by answering critical questions.

Some of the activities presented to students were intended to help them to react to and describe in terms of opinions or feelings certain cultural practices and groups and analyze those descriptions. Data indicate that most students realized they held stereotypical representations when being asked to reflect upon them.

In an activity, students were provided with pictures of women of different physical features and had to describe them in terms of habits, education, origin, etc., without any other information available about them (see Appendix D). In the example below, we can see how Celedonia first described a woman with blond hair and blue eyes as an American who speaks English very well, while depicting the woman with dark hair and skin as being from a Spanish speaking country, who speaks poor English and does not have a profession.



Woman 1

She is vegetarian. She lives in the US. She has two part-time jobs. She speaks English very well.



Woman 3

She comes from a very religious. She only finished high-school. She speaks English poorly. She lives in a Spanish speaking country. She is a housewife
(Artifact, Women description, Celedonia, August 20)

After their descriptions, students read a short biography of the person, in which they were provided with the real information of these women (see Appendix E) and talked about their own descriptions.

Teacher: Now, in this paper you have a very short description of the life, of the biography of the women of task 1. Activity: in groups, I want you to read the information and compare this information to your first descriptions to see if the description was similar, different, was correct, was what? ok?

Celedonia: yo coincidí en que ésta era la ejecutiva.

Teresa: No, yo con esto no tengo ni comparación.

Celedonia: Teacher, what is “undergraduate”

Teacher: A career (I give examples)

Celedonia: O sea, este es el pregrado. Presidenta de J & J.

Teresa: y yo no la veía así, yo la veía...

Celedonia: yo la vi y dije XXXXX. **No ve que muchos decían que era ama de casa.**

Teresa: **ama de casa... la más religiosa...**

Lucrecia: **cómo nos equivocamos por la apariencia, ¿no?**

Celedonia: Sí, por ejemplo dijimos que ...**por ejemplo que era latina y mira que ella sí es de NY**, aunque sí es XXXX pues. XX graduation. Vea que sí se graduó, y nosotros que XXX

Teresa: que XXX (they all laugh and say : ahhh)

Lucrecia: es que la apariencia es engañosa

Celedonia: **Y pensé que era la ama de casa.** Ella enseña teatro en la universidad de XXX, NY. **La ropa si lo engaña a uno.**

Teresa: pero será...(laughs) no, muy charro

Melquiades: **las apariencias engañan**

Celedonia: **sí demasiado...o uno que es prejuicioso**

(Whole Class discussion, transcription, September 1)

In the previous conversation that took place in small groups, students compared their first descriptions with these women's real information and realized that they had judged them by the appearance and reproduced these typical stereotypes.

In another activity, students were directly asked to define stereotypes and give examples. The next small group discussion shows how students defined the concept:

Anselmo: o colóquele by lifestyle, por estilo de vida.

"Stereotypes reflect reality or don't reflect reality". **Ahí yo diría "Don't reflect". Los estereotipos no reflejan la realidad porque XXXX** (interference)

Jacinto: is a true, is false

Anselmo: pues, **porque es muy engañoso**

Jacinto: maybe, puede ser falso

Obdulia: **pero "los estereotipos reflejan la realidad..."**

Jacinto: **para mí no reflejan**

Obdulia: **para mí tampoco**

Jacinto: **entonces "don't reflect"**

Anselmo: **don't reflect reality, because is...**

Obdulia: eh

Jacinto: **maybe is false. Puede ser falso**

Anselmo: puede decir "because maybe false"

Melquiades: because maybe false?

Anselmo: **yo eso lo asocio mucho con los tatuajes. Hay gente que ve a un man tatuado y piensa, "no ese man es un ladrón"**

(Small group discussion, September 3)

Following, students were asked where their ideas of other cultures come from:

Jacinto: Bueno, "I think that my ideas of other cultures come from..."

Anselmo: **es como de dónde viene, o sea, de TV**

Jacinto: ah, como de origen

Anselmo: pues **yo pienso que las ideas acerca de otras culturas, sí, for TV**

Jacinto: in actuality, for TV, porque antes, yo diría...

Anselmo: for TV, pues, para mí, I think. **For TV, social network**

(Small group discussion, September 3)

Here, we can see that students defined stereotypes as false ideas or concepts about a person or group and people. Likewise, students expressed that these false ideas come from the media and our culture (family, customs, etc.) and gave some examples to illustrate the issue. This awareness was evident when they expressed embarrassment about how they reproduced typical stereotypes based on people's appearance. They acknowledged that most of the ideas they hold about other cultures come from the media and that they are not necessarily real.

In contrast to this, and although students were able to identify representations they hold and that stereotypes do not reflect the reality of a person or a group, when asked about the effects these stereotypes may have on a group or person, they agreed in that they do not have a major impact. Below is an example of this:

Teacher: Do you think that stereotypes affect a particular group of people? Jessica, do you think that stereotypes can affect a group of people or not?

Juana: **no, because the behaviors of people don't affect a particular culture**

Teacher: so you think that an opinion is an opinion (the group nods: ajá, yes) and an opinion doesn't have an effect on a culture. Do you agree or you disagree?

Melquiades

Melquiades: eh, **I agree. I think the people XXXXX. They think that Colombia is a drug dealer, everybody.**

Teacher: **and that doesn't have an effect on us?**

Melquiades: **what?**

Teacher: **that stereotype doesn't have an effect on us?**

Anselmo: **maybe**

Teacher: what is a possible effect of that stereotype?

Melquiades: **it depend [sic] the reaction of the people**

Teacher: ok, **so there is no real effect?**

Melquiades: **no (others say no, too)**

Teacher: only the reaction of the person

Melquiades: **directamente, no**

(Whole class discussion, September 17)

Based on the evidence above, it can be concluded that most students, when presented with material and questions intended for them to analyze the image they hold of other people or groups, could identify problematic representations and question the way they were reproducing these ideas. Likewise, when discussing the topic of stereotypes, students were able to define and give examples of stereotypes and conclude that they are based on judgmental attitudes and do not reflect the reality. Despite all this, students did not go further and concluded that stereotypes do not have a real effect on a person or community, even when bringing in the specific case of Colombians as drug dealers.

Changing perspectives when exposed to different points of views. Most students seemed motivated to participate and give their opinions about the different topics. Data show that when topics about cultural practices and representations were discussed in class, students used this opportunity to express and understand the diverse points of view which enriched their perspectives.

In one of the small group discussions, students had to express the way they felt towards death rituals around the world that were different to theirs (See Appendix F). Initially, most of them expressed disagreement and even disgust towards certain practices, as expressed earlier in this section. The following excerpt is an example of how students, during a small group discussion, initially had a negative perspective of a ritual, but when

another student expressed her opinion and the meaning behind that ritual, they all built a more positive idea of it.

Anselmo: entonces three, the post mortem

Dionisio: ¿solamente tiene que colocar adjetivos? ¿En cuál vamos? ¿Qué colocamos acá?

Anselmo: **No es agradable.**

Dionisio: No, Es que a mí no me parece como...ese ritual es como

Pascuala: **es que es miedoso**

Dionisio: **es miedoso**

Pascuala: **pero a mí me parece tierno el concepto porque como era costoso, pues el hecho de...**

Anselmo: era como el último recuerdo de...

Pascuala: **de tenerlo y de sacar como para el último recuerdo, me parece bonito, pues, pero igual es miedoso. Pues, la hijuemadre fotografía da miedo.**

Anselmo: entonces cuál?

Pascuala: entonces.. is scary

Dionisio: scary

Anselmo: scary

Pascuala: cómo podríamos decir lo que yo quiero decir...but..

Anselmo: es qué?

Pascuala: pero..But or boot?

Anselmo: **but...te parece miedoso pero**

Pascuala: **pero es un acto como de amor de la familia**

Anselmo: ella escribió ahorita “love”...

Pascuala: loved ones..sí pero allí debe ir un verbo

(Small group discussion, August 6)

Here we can see how the position expressed by Pascuala, who acknowledged the strangeness this ritual represented for her, but at the same time tried to explain the complexity behind it, boosted the collaborative building of a more positive representation with her group. Their opinion changed from describing the ritual as “scary” and “unpleasant” to “scary, but an act of love from the family”

For the most part, I observed that these kinds of activities, where students had to analyze their opinions and were exposed to their classmates' different perspectives, opened up spaces for students to reflect, question and even modify their initial negative positions.

This did not only happen with students, but with me as well. During the implementation of the unit, I was part of the discussions, I asked questions based on students' answers and reformulated students' ideas in English all the time. During the whole process I realized that even when I was trying to be "neutral" not to influence my students' responses, I could not help being bias and, sometimes, judgmental. Some discussions and students' reactions made me question my position and helped me to become more respectful towards other cultural practices. The following journal entry evidences how I became aware of stereotypes I held during a student's presentation.

There was an interesting discussion about the Geisha.

Anselmo asked if the Geisha was a prostitute. Teresa said that the Geisha only offered entertainment to the clients and did not necessarily have sex with them. That was not her job. She said that the rumor began when some prostitutes in Japan decided to dress as Geishas to win clients...that they were very well prepared women: they knew about music, art, history, etc, they were artists and good conversationalists. **I asked her what was her opinion about a woman being prepared for so many years, to master different arts, with the only purpose of entertaining men. If that was not male-chauvinist, humiliating to women, sad. She smiled at me, took air and answered: "I don't see it that way, that they entertain men. I see what she does and that's beautiful". Rosario, frowned when I asked that question and said: "It**

is so moralist to say that their only objective is to entertain men. She is an artist". I felt I was disrespecting somehow my students' choice and her opinion about this culture and that I was quick to judge based on stereotypes and was not willing to understand other practices with an open mind.

(Journal entry, September 10)

As it can be seen during this class presentation, the questions I asked my student were based on stereotypes I held of a foreign culture and I was not open to understand the new information about that culture she brought to class; I simply reproduced a problematic representation without questioning my beliefs or "knowledge". Even more problematic was the way I was questioning my student's opinion. This situation helped me realize I was also part of this "learning" process and from this moment on I tried to be more careful with my comments and be more open to understand the reasons for cultural practices different to mine, and very importantly, to respect my students' positions.

Using references of one's own culture to understand others'

Exposing students to texts that promote the exploration of cultural shock and cultural representations are some of the goals proposed by Byram et al. (2002) and of the Taxonomy of Intercultural activities proposed by Alonso & Fernández (2013), and asking questions that challenge relations of power is proposed by Critical Interculturality.

During the course, students were presented with activities that intended to help them explore different kinds of cultural practices; identify cultural representations and their effects on a person or a group. These activities consisted of students being exposed to videos, images, print texts and autonomous web exploration in which other cultures, including mainstream and minorities, were depicted. Based on these sources, students, individually or in groups, had to name, describe and analyze the way these groups and their practices were portrayed.

This category refers to a strategy students frequently used in many of these activities in order to understand or explain the reason for certain foreign practices or representations. This strategy involved using references of their own culture to compare both cultures in terms of their differences and similarities and thus arrive to a new understanding of L2 cultures. Some of these references came from representations of Colombians in movies, print texts, experiences they have had when interacting with others, values they identify in their own culture, family costumes, among others. Although, this strategy was not used by all the students, it was present in almost all the activities where students described and reflected upon the way other cultures were represented.

For example, during the activity where students had to read short descriptions of death rituals around the world and express their opinions, specifically, in the Irish wake ritual, where family and friends drink, sing, and tell anecdotes about the deceased, Pascuala used her personal experience of funerals to try to understand this ritual:

Melquiades: The Irish Wake.

Teacher: The Irish wake. What is the motivation for people to practice this?

Melquiades: people celebrate the transition the other life.

Teacher: people celebrate the transition to other life. It's like positive?

Melquiades: yes

Teacher: and they celebrate with beer, of course. Do you think that funerals and wakes should be similar or not? (to all the students) **Is it a moment to cry or to celebrate?**

Class: **cry**

Casimiro: **depende del muerto (people laugh)**

Anselmo: **both**

Teacher: both!

Casimiro: XXXX que se lleve la suegra, uno sí celebra

Teacher: Oh my god!

Pascuala: (raises her hand) **In my family....lo voy a decir en español...durante el entierro es triste, pero como hay tanta familia y no se ve usualmente, se vuelve, puede volverse después de tomar cerveza.**

Teacher: It's a moment for family reunion.

(Whole class discussion, August 11)

As it can be seen, although both Pascuala's family funerals and the Irish wake practices are apart in terms of epoch, distance, values and beliefs, her particular family experience made her feel identified and she used this information to try to explain why it was not necessarily a moment to be happy, but an opportunity to reunite with the living family members.

In another activity, students watched two movie segments where a Mexican family and a Greek family were portrayed; they had to answer some questions based on what they could observe (see Appendix G). When discussing about the way the Greek family was depicted in the segment, students often came up with examples of the way Colombians are represented in movies by Americans:

Teacher: do you agree with them? (“Them” refers to a group of students that said the perspective of the movie segment “A Big Fat Greek Wedding” was American and not Greek)

Anselmo: agree in the creator for American people, **but the perspective is because is exaggerated**

Teacher: so the description of Greeks and Americans is exaggerated

Anselmo: yes, **for example a Colombian character in a movie always is drug dealer**

Teacher: and that is the perspective of Americans?

Anselmo: of Americans

(Whole class discussion, September 17)

Here, Anselmo explains that Americans exaggerate when portraying other cultures; he focused particularly on his own experience as a Colombian feeling misrepresented and concludes that the representations of other minority groups in these kinds of movies were generally not a reflection of reality.

In the following example, a student uses a referent he has of his own culture to compare it to the new information he has acquired through interaction. In the interview, Jacinto mentioned that during his interaction, via chat, with people from other countries, he observed that other cultures are more motivated and disciplined when learning a language, while Colombians are less committed to practice, thus affecting the learning process.

Jacinto: I think a mistake, I don't know if a mistake, **but something that holds us back in the English learning process is personal commitment.** I was talking with my classmates and I said, after a month of classes, we said, we are learning, and we asked: have you dedicated time to read what we have seen in class to learn verbs, I don't know, something like that? And the answer is no. So I think that it is a drawback for us to improve the language.

Teacher: (00:13:38) and you are mentioning this because it also applies to the chat with that person?

Jacinto: Yes, **I think I perceived, I might be wrong, that people from abroad are more interested in learning and are autonomous, which we are not. So, I think we have to learn from that.**

(Interview, Jacinto, December 3, my translation)

These statements show the way Jacinto conceives other cultures in general (people from abroad) as superior in terms of discipline and dedication to learn, while he attributes the opposite values to his own culture, generalizing as well.

The previous examples evidence how students used references of their experiences and perceptions of their culture in order to deal with culture shock, understand certain practices different to their own, identify problematic representations of minority groups and identify differences between two cultures. However, even though students identified cultural stereotypes and used strategies in order to understand representations, values and practices of different cultures, they regularly used stereotypical descriptions to refer to foreign cultural practices and different kinds of people. The following conversation excerpt shows that even if students acknowledged that the representations of people in Hollywood movies are exaggerated, they used similar stereotypes to refer to other cultures.

Anselmo: entonces ¿qué? ¿American? Y explicamos por qué ¿o qué?

Dionisio: sí, es que cuando uno ve una película XXXX (China?) y es puro...

Anselmo: **No, parece, para mí la exageración fue Señor y señora Smith. Que se conocieron en Bogotá y meros bombardeos y yo !¿qué es eso?;**

Melquiades: ah, sí, sí

Anselmo: **qué exageración**

Melquiades: **y eso parecía más en México que en XXX**

(Small group discussion, September 17)

As evidenced in the example, Melquiades agreed with Anselmo when he was illustrating how Americans exaggerated or misrepresented Colombia in a movie; still, he attributed the same features to Mexico, engaging, as the movie, in the use stereotypes to portray other cultures. This also can be observed when students said that “Americans always exaggerate in their movies”. Even if students talk from their own experience as a minority group misrepresented in American movies, this affirmation makes generalizations about a culture.

In spite of a certain degree of awareness and understanding of the way other cultures and theirs were represented in texts, few students showed significant change in their stereotypical descriptions, especially in their class project. In the development of this project, they had to investigate autonomously about a cultural practice or a group and prepare a series of activities, such as compositions and presentations, taking as models the activities carried out in class. Here, most of the students reproduced the same problematic representations they found in their search, without questioning them the way they did it in most class discussions. The example below is an excerpt of the paper that Anselmo, Jacinto and Casimiro wrote for a collaborative written project activity. In their paper, the students investigated about the Vikings.

Viking

In the movies and stories, the Vikings are represented as rude, brave, strong, warriors, bold and traveler men; According to them, they were violent, drank a lot, and used arms such as swords, helmets, shields and axes.

Their physical appearance was white skin, blond, bearded, blue eyes, tall, with tattoos and beefy; they wore wool pants, wool layers, leather belts, long shirts and boots. They always carried an axe or sword.

The Viking are from Scandinavia, located in the north of Europe.

(Magazine, Anselmo, Jacinto, Casimiro, October, 2015)

As it can be seen, they described the Vikings as they were portrayed in the media without questioning this representation, which means that students were able to question problematic representations in class discussions when asked questions, but did not do the same during their autonomous research.

As illustrated above, data evidence that, in class activities and discussions, students were able to identify and understand foreign practices, values and cultural stereotypes by bringing in experiences, familiar representations and references they had of other cultures and their own culture. Nevertheless, when they carried out their project, they did not show the same awareness and reproduced the same stereotypical representations as they found them in their search.

Addressing complex matters while developing communicative competence

Another aspect taken into account by the ICC model is the use of different strategies to interact with a person, which implies, besides the development of attitudes and knowledge, the use of the language to communicate. Similarly, the Model for EFL Materials Development within the framework of Critical Pedagogy proposed by Rashidi and Safari (2011) also has as its principles the development critical consciousness along with language competence. During the course, students were presented with material and activities that intended to help them discuss complex matters while developing their language competence. The input sources (audio visual and written authentic texts) around a

series of tasks were intended for students to acquire the necessary language to build on ideas so that they could express their opinions.

The first activities within a source presented students with the new language. They included new vocabulary, structures and examples that intended to give a model for students to become familiar with those aspects. Subsequent tasks encouraged students to analyze the provided texts (a video excerpt, a piece of news, etc.), by describing what they read or watched and by expressing their opinions. The responses to tasks were always socialized in small groups and the whole class so that students could listen to different opinions about one topic. The teacher gave students the space to build their own sentences, but was monitoring from time to time students' work while helping them organize their ideas, giving them tips, helping them with vocabulary, structure and pronunciation. Even though the tasks were intended to help students develop their communicative competence, they also focused on cultural representations, practices and customs.

Data indicate that students, who were novice English learners, were able to use the language to name, describe, define and even give opinions about rituals, cultural differences, stereotypes, etc. They also researched information and prepared their project activities in English. Most students used the vocabulary and structures worked in class during their group discussions while the teacher was not present. For this, they used the dictionary, photocopies, class notes or asked their classmates to remind them information already seen in class.

Jacinto: **would you practice...**

Obdulia: ¿estarían ustedes en estos rituales?

Celedonia: en unos sí y en otros no

Dionisio: yo participaría si a acaso en uno

Celedonia: **en el Irish...**

Jacinto: **Fantasy coffins, maybe**

Obdulia: yo en dos, en este y en este

Jacinto: **yes, participe..**

Celedonia: **fantasy coffins and Irish wake**

Jacinto: **we participate in fantasy coffins and Irish wake**

Celedonia: vea, nosotros la vez pasada pusimos que nos gustaba eso porque era una...era una forma...que la gente se despedía de sus seres queridos con alegría

Dionisio: en el primero es en el que vamos a participar?

Obdulia: **yes and Irish wake**

Jacinto: **Irish!** (corrects pronunciation)

Obdulia: porque, cierto? **Because...**

Celedonia: porque las personas se despiden de sus seres queridos con alegría

Obdulia: sí

Celedonia: ¿cómo se dice? **Their...**

Obdulia: **their loves..** ¿loves qué? Ella nos lo enseñó

Celedonia: ah, **because in this ritual the people**, ¿cómo es?

Obdulia: sobra este

Dionisio: **ritual's people**

Celedonia: porque en estos rituales las personas se despiden de sus seres queridos con alegría...pero...**In this ritual, people farewell.** Ay, no, y no sé si está bien

(Small group discussion. August 11)

After being presented with the tasks, students generally used their mother tongue to discuss and give their opinions, which shows that they understood the topics and tasks we were addressing in English in class. Afterwards, they made use of the knowledge of the language developed in the classes, together with other strategies such as the dictionary and questions to build together the message they wanted to convey.

Correspondingly, the online chat with a foreign English speaker showed that students were able to use the language to communicate in a real time chat. In order to interact with these people, students used different strategies. During the online chat session,

which took place in the computer laboratory, students used the dictionary, consulted with a classmate or asked me questions of vocabulary or expressions. When chatting alone, some expressed they were able to communicate by using different strategies besides the dictionary, including asking for repetition, clarifying what they did not understand, etc.

Below, a student talks about his experience:

Teacher: (00:17:40) Was there any communication problem, any misunderstanding, something that you had to deal with? And how did you deal with it?

Jacinto: **Yes, initially I told her: my English is very basic. She corrected me, it was funny, because she corrected me. A specific case was that I asked a question without the...like an affirmation, so she corrected my question. And from that moment on I asked questions correctly.**

Teacher: So, it worked...

Jacinto: Yes

Teacher: (00:18:50) This was a problem related to the language, you made a mistake and she corrected you. Did you have any other type of communication problem related to the meaning, a misunderstanding?

Jacinto: **I don't remember, really. I used the dictionary a lot when I couldn't find the word I needed to express myself**, but I don't remember.

Teacher: So, **despite your basic English level there was interaction and communication**

Jacinto: Yes

(Interview, Jacinto, December 3, my translation)

As time passed by, students were more confident to spontaneously use their own words to express ideas and complement each other's information. The following example is from a whole class discussion in which students were talking about how Colombians are

represented based on texts they investigated at home about tips of “what to do and what not to do when you go to Colombia”:

Teacher: Number 1...what was the first activity?

Anselmo: Ehh...

Teacher: what was the topic?

Anselmo: **Colombian...ehh...what do you do and what no [sic]do? eh?**

Teacher: What to do and what not to do...

Anselmo: yes

Teacher: when ?

Melquiades: **when you go to Colombia**

Teacher: yes, when you go or

Anselmo: **travel to Colombia**

Teacher: (I write it on the board and give them the instruction to share their research with their classmates and discuss in small groups).

Teacher: So the question is. How are portrayed...what is the representation of Colombians in these tips? Remember the previous activity with the US? **What was the representation of Americans based on the tips?**

Melquiades: **the people of the US is a....how do you say “patriota”?**

Teacher: very...?

Jacinto: **Patriotic**

Teacher: so, they are very patriotic is one representation of them. One representation of Americans based on the tips, Carlos? So, they are patriotic,

Melquiades: **Imperialistic**

Teacher: ahh, you are going further. That is a high level of inference: “imperialistic”. Another?

Jacinto: **conservative**

Teacher: they are reserved, conservative

Casimiro: xxxxxxx (12:15)

Teacher: what is the representation of the non Americans?

Jacinto: **teacher, repeat the question**

Teacher: what is the representation of the non Americans? in the previous activity?

Casimiro: XXXXX

Teacher: they like to show affection in public. What else?

Jacinto: **They are over friendly**

Teacher: over friendly. A synonym of over friendly? Over familiar. Now, it's a similar exercise. With the tips of Jonathan and Olga answer those questions. What is the representation of Colombians? Colombians are...and if you think this description is correct or not. Do you familiarize as a Colombian with these tips? oh, yes, this is my description or not

Teacher: For example, analyze this tip, this only tip and tell me what is the representation of XXXXX based on this tip

Jacinto: **is dangerous...ehhh...salir**

Teacher: It's dangerous to go out..

Jacinto: XXXXXXXXX (16:37)

Teacher: so, look at this, It's dangerous...Jacinto, is dangerous what?

Jacinto: **to go...**

Teacher: to go..?

Jacinto: **the street**

Teacher: to go to the street

Jacinto: **with wear...**

Teacher: wearing

Jacinto: **wearing expensive watches and expensive...How do you pronounce joyas?**

Teacher: Jewlery. Tell me one thing that called your attention, Obdulia

Obdulia: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (17:55)

Teacher: Now, what is the difference between this tip and this tip?

Obdulia: **Yes** (laughing)

Teacher: What is the representation of Colombians/Paisas here?

Obdulia: **ehh, we are friendly...familiar**

Teacher: Familiar, friendly, kind. OK, good. In two minutes we will discuss

Anselmo: **Don't say to XXXXXX**

Teacher: what is the representation Colombians have...

Anselmo: **of Antioquia**

Teacher: ok, what is the representation of Antioqueños based on that tip?

Antioqueños are...

Anselmo: **are...friendly or over friendly...and extroverted**

Teacher: extroverted, what else?

Teresa: XXXXXXXX (19:04)

Teacher: Look at this "don't XXXXXXXXXXX" (19:07) What is the representation of Colombian there?

Teresa: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (19:20)

Teacher: ajá, so Colombians are...what? based on this tip
Teresa: eh
Anselmo: **drug dealers**
Teacher: Colombians are drug dealers? XXXXXXXXXX(19:30)
Anselmo: **offensive for the**
Teacher: so, Colombians feel offended when people..
Anselmo: **say**
Teacher: or
Teresa: **talk**
Anselmo: XXX
Teacher: about
Teresa: **drugs**
(Whole class discussion, October 22)

This group discussion exemplifies how students were able to understand complex matters such as identifying cultural representations based on tips they found in the internet about Colombians (see APPENDIX H). During the discussion, they answered questions that evidenced that issues such as cultural representations, stereotypes, etc., can be addressed in a basic level class. In this activity, students were not given time to build complete ideas in English, as usually happened in small group discussions, but they had to participate spontaneously. As it can be seen, although they did not build complete sentences, they used the language to express themselves and also used different strategies such as asking for vocabulary, code switching and complementing their classmates' information. The teacher was always helping them by connecting their ideas, asking questions and asking for clarification. Students were focused all the time on the issue we were discussing and the fluency of the conversation was not hindered by the students' language proficiency level.

Even when students demonstrated improvement in terms of participation and language use during the course, I identified some limitations that hindered students understanding of the tasks. Some of the instructions and questions were difficult to understand for them and I had to rephrase, use examples and monitor their performance in order to check if they had understood the tasks. This issue made me wonder if the complexity of some questions, and even topics affected students' motivation or ability to take part in the different activities.

Data indicate that after implementing an Intercultural unit in an extension program, ICC was fostered among professional adult English learners in different ways. To begin with, students showed understanding of L2 cultures values and representations by using references that came from their own culture and experiences. Students' background was helpful for them to feel familiar or at least try to understand the similarities and differences between their own and other cultures. In second place, although most students did not show curiosity to find out information on their own outside the class, they showed motivation when addressing topics of customs and cultures inside the classroom. Moreover, giving students the opportunity to interact with a foreigner in an online chat was an incentive for them to continue doing it as part of their routine and use different strategies to communicate. Thirdly, it was evidenced that students were able to define stereotypes and identify judgmental images they hold of other cultures, although they did not acknowledge the effect these problematic representations may have on a group or individual. Finally, even when students were novice English learners, they were able to discuss complex matters by using language resources while developing their language competence.

Discussion

Granted that today people have to deal with different and more complex kinds of intercultural experiences thanks to globalization and the advances of technology, the definition of culture and the way of teaching it in the language class has also evolved. It changed from a set of fixed ideas about a cultural group (literature, religion, norms, etc.) to a more complex matter that is not tangible as it used to be seen. Therefore, the role of education must be to prepare people to this new understanding of culture and to face the issues and challenges that come along with the intercultural experiences of a globalized society and help them become critical, open and respectful citizens. Attending this need, and with the purpose of promoting critical cultural awareness and the development of attitudes and skills to face intercultural interactions in a language classroom, I implemented a critical Intercultural unit to help adult English students foster their Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

In order to achieve this goal, I adapted Byram's model of ICC. The selection of materials and design of tasks for this unit were intended to promote students' development of what Byram (1997) calls knowledge (information about other cultures), attitudes (curiosity, tolerance and respect), skills (ability to relate and compare new information to previous knowledge and strategies to discover in interaction), and finally, taking into account the Colombian context, an adapted critical cultural awareness (identifying problematic representations and unveiling issues of power that work in detriment of minority groups) drawing on Walsh's concept of Critical Interculturality.

Data evidence, on the one hand, that students bring with them different levels of ICC to class and, on the other hand, that the cultural materials and critical questions I introduced as part of the intercultural unit helped students to strengthen their ICC in different ways. Namely, by using references of their own culture to develop empathy towards other minority groups, analyzing and reflecting upon problematic representations they held, and changing negative attitudes and building more positive opinions collaboratively. As a result of these, most students identified problematic representations, analyzed stereotypes they hold of other cultures, could determine the origin of other cultures' received ideas, expressed willingness to know more about other cultures through interaction, and showed autonomous curiosity about them and improved their communicative competence while discussing complex matters. I will discuss details of these in the following lines.

Making connections and unveiling stereotypes

An important dimension of ICC is skills of interpreting and relating (*Savoir comprendre*), in which students are able to establish a relationship between their own culture and the foreign one (Byram et al. 2002). During the implementation of the pedagogical unit, students were able to establish these relations based on previous knowledge, another *Savoir* of ICC. According to Byram (1997), knowledge is learned through formal education, that is, what they acquire at school or in the language class. Data show that knowledge was represented in different ways. First, the information presented in class by the teacher. Second, some students researched more information and compared and related in order to understand the new cultures they were exposed to. Third, students used

references from media like movies and made use of these to make connections. And finally, students used their own experiences, like family experiences, to try to analyze how other cultures behave.

Besides the strategies used to compare and relate previous and new information, some critical questions were necessary to go further the description of two cultures. As a result, students were able to identify problematic cultural representations; that is, the way other minorities were inaccurately portrayed. They were able to recognize relations of power among groups, where some are portrayed as privileged and others as of less worth. Walsh (2010) refers to this awareness as Critical Interculturality, which is that minorities acknowledge the way they are being positioned as inferior, especially by institutions and the media, and look for a change that will empower them to have a voice and find equity. In this particular case, students did so in two ways. First, by feeling empathy for cultures they did not even know about before which led to a more critical analysis of those texts and to question the representations they were presented with. This was evidenced when they described and discussed about the way the Greek and the Mexican culture were portrayed in American movies. Students made use of their own experience as a minority group represented in American movies to express that Colombians were always treated as drug dealers, rude and unwelcome. That way, they concluded that it was probably the same situation for the Greek and the Mexican in those movies, and did not trust these representations. Second, by reacting to tips to go to U.S and tips to go to Colombia. Students were able to unveil how, in these tips, Americans are positioned as patriotic, generous, responsible and clean, while those who want to travel there were positioned as

the opposite. Similarly, students perceived that Colombia was generally portrayed as insecure and its people as not to trust, something they disagreed with.

This finding evidenced the importance of presenting students with and encouraging them to search autonomously authentic material and analyzing cultural representations. Nevertheless, the material alone might not be enough to help students make connections and bring about those strategies; this is when the use of critical questions becomes necessary. Students agreed on that the minority groups portrayed in Hollywood movies were caricatured; they did not say this because they knew the Greek and Mexican culture firsthand, but because they concluded that Americans always exaggerated and represented minorities as loud, poor, less worth, etc. They arrived to this conclusion by answering critical questions I asked in class, following Thoman et al. (2002) and Janks (2014); for example, *Whose point of view is represented there? why?; how can these representations affect a group or individual?* Also, by describing and comparing the cultures presented in the movie in terms of language use, clothing, manners, etc., and analyzing the implications of those representations for the people involved. It is very important to note that students' empathy towards the minority groups was due to the fact they identified with them, and not with the groups that were represented as dominant. Otherwise, they probably would have not become aware of those problematic representations. Nevertheless, I consider that more questions were necessary to help students identify relations of power and thus make the analysis more critical; that is, to understand better the negative effects of those representations and propose actions to change the situation. Questions such as *Who benefits from this representation of Greeks and Mexicans? What are the producer's views, beliefs, values about Greek and Mexican people? How do you think a Mexican or a Greek would*

feel about the way they are portrayed in these movies? Imagine you are Greek. Write a message to the director of the movie expressing your feelings about the way you were represented in the movie. In addition, in order to achieve to a further extent what Walsh (2003) proposes, besides inquiring, it is necessary to look for action. For instance, having students look for representations of Colombians in different texts and bring them to class to be analyzed and then propose actions such as reaction letters that will be really sent to the corresponding person or institution.

Own problematic representations

Another relevant finding evidences that, in addition to students' different levels of ICC, the intercultural unit gave students the opportunity to identify and reflect upon problematic representations and negative opinions they held of other groups and practices. Additionally to recognizing these problematic representations of minority groups in the media, it is important for students to identify stereotypes they unconsciously hold and reproduce about other cultures and even their own.

Some activities were expected to cause “cultural shock” in students by presenting them with cultural practices unknown to them. This was done with the purpose of analyzing the way they felt about the situations depicted in the materials in order to identify their attitudes towards foreign cultural practices and design strategies to deal with these unfamiliar situations (Alonso & Fernández, 2013). For instance, when they had to describe their feelings towards cultural practices that were too distant to their own or when they were presented with anecdotes where people narrated different cultural misunderstandings. Here, by discussing their points of view and answering questions promoting reflection,

students were able to identify negative values attributed to foreign practices and reflect upon them. They were also able to look for strategies they would use in the stories of misunderstandings presented to them. Byram et al. (2002) recommend the discussion of values and opinions and points out that critical analysis of stereotypes can be done through texts students are presented with. He also alleges that their “prejudices and stereotypes are based on feelings rather than thoughts and need to be challenged” (p. 29).

Regarding students negative opinions of their own culture, data indicate they positioned themselves as inferior to other cultures, especially English speaking ones. This was evidenced in different forms. For instance, the majority of students described a dark-skinned woman as non-professional, non-English proficient, poor, coming from a Spanish speaking country; in contrast, they characterized a white woman as professional, English fluent, coming from the US or Europe. Another noticeable example is when a student, based on his online interaction with a person from another country, portrayed Colombians as generally lazy who do not do well when learning a language and attributed this to our “culture”, while foreigners (in general) were described by him as engaged and capable to learn. These issues become problematic because reproducing these derogatory notions of their own culture can be defined as racism and might perpetuate not only discriminatory ideas, but keep unequal relations between minority and dominant groups. Granados-Beltrán (2016) exemplifies this with two examples. First, he quotes hooks (1992) as she describes how people of color exercise racism against themselves and second, he mentions Frantz Fanon and his analysis of how black people incorporate ideas of inferiority based on their experiences under colonial power (p. 9). This finding reveals that it is of great importance not only for students to unveil stereotypes portrayed in texts, but to analyze how our own

views of some cultural groups may be problematic, and to identify that we unconsciously reproduce those problematic representations we receive from our culture and the media. Kramsch (1998) states that “group identity is a question of focusing and diffusion of ethnic, racial, national concepts or stereotypes” (p. 67). Both teachers and students should be aware of how, many times, we dangerously promote unequal relations of power by unconsciously positioning other cultures, including our own, as less worth, or by making racist descriptions, such as attributing certain pejorative characteristics to a specific nationality or skin color.

Most studies I found focused on students’ process of analyzing problematic representations found in texts, but did not explore students’ own prejudicial images of other cultures and their own. Being able to recognize the stereotypes one holds is essential for critical cultural awareness, because we cannot unveil and resist problematic representations if we continue reproducing the same pattern shown in the media that promotes intolerance and discrimination.

Not feeling affected by stereotypes

Even though students demonstrated becoming more aware of problematic cultural representations and in spite of relating to other cultures with similar problematic representations in texts, they did not evidence being really affected as individuals by these power relations. Even when giving examples in which they expressed feeling discriminated only for the fact of being Colombians, for instance, being mistreated at the airport, when asked *How are cultural groups or individuals affected by stereotypes?*, they stated that there was not a real harmful effect. This might have happened for two reasons. First,

because, although they acknowledge the existence of such discrimination and representations, they had never felt directly affected by them. Second, because the questions I asked could have been insufficient; perhaps more questions should have been asked in order to make the real effects of stereotypes on groups or individuals more visible.

This finding provides important insights about what teachers should take into account when selecting materials and designing questions aimed at identifying relations of power in terms of culture. In addition to proposing critical questions intended for students to unveil those problematic relations, teachers should take advantage of students' own experiences and references to generate more questions. Also, with the purpose of promoting higher awareness and action, teachers should open spaces for students to react to those texts and even create their own material as counter texts; that is, the reaction letters proposed before.

Change of perspective

Another finding was that the fact that students had different backgrounds (different ages, professions, interests, etc.) resulted in a great variety of opinions about foreign practices. As Kumaravadivelu (2003) states, "most classes are not monocultural cocoons but rather are multicultural mosaics" (p. 269) and García Castellano and Granados Martínez (1999) affirm, "each individual has access to more than one culture, that is, to more than one knowledge and patterns of perception, thinking and action" (as cited in Cortez, 2015, p. 110). Small group and whole class discussions opened a space where students could share varying viewpoints which resulted, in many cases, in a change of attitude from a negative to a more positive one. Students were able to unveil their bias through dialogue and then

build more positive ideas collaboratively. Byram et al. (2002) affirm that students will learn from each other if the sharing and discussion of values and opinions is promoted in the language class given that students bring with them different knowledge of culture (familiar or foreign) (p. 27).

Furthermore, students were not the only ones who questioned themselves or had a change in their attitudes during the interactions. As shown in the evidence, being part in the discussion as a moderator, as one who asked questions to promote further analysis or explanation of my students' comments and opinions, had an impact on me as well. As a researcher I tried to be careful not to show my bias in class and maybe influence my students' answers or attitudes; however, my positions, sometimes unconsciously prejudicial, became visible, especially when I made some remarks or asked some questions to students during a discussion. Byram et al. (2002) acknowledge that "teachers are not just professionals but also human beings with their own experiences and histories through which they may have acquired prejudices and stereotypes about other cultures and peoples just like any other human being" (p. 36). Even though this is true, it becomes necessary for teachers to reflect upon their practice and bias and be conscious about the representations and ideas presented in class. Reflecting upon my performance in my journal after class made me realize some attitudes I felt I needed to change. Likewise, and a relevant outcome of this research, is that some students responses to my remarks or questions made me question, not only my behavior in class, but some problematic representations I held of other groups or practices. That is, I was not exempt from the effect caused by being exposed to my students different perspectives, which made me question about my attitude and helped me changed it to more a respectful one.

Given these findings, teachers should design class activities that promote students collaborative analysis of stereotypes they hold about their own and other cultures, acknowledging, thus, the value of students' rainbow of perspectives that will lead to understanding other positions and respect for differences. Similarly, teachers should be constantly analyzing their own attitudes and prejudices and look for changing those that might influence their students and reproduce patterns of discrimination.

Curiosity and willingness to “descenter”

Byram (1997) states that curiosity and willingness to know more about another person or community might lead to a better understanding of this person's culture, and thus to a more respectful attitude towards them. When a person displays this attitude during an intercultural exchange (which can happen with a person or a text), it is implied that they are not judging immediately or making assumptions based on the limited information they have. Instead, cultural expectations are created during the exchange and not based on bias. Data from this study show that those students who were autonomously curious about other cultures were more inclined to display respect towards cultural practices that were very different to theirs, while those who did not seek to expand information presented in class were more prone to express negative ideas about foreign practices or groups. This willingness is also called the ability to “descentre” (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002) and it is fundamental to understand other cultures (Melde, 1987, as cited in Bryram, 1997).

Although results also indicate that, indeed, most students participated in class activities and engaged in small group and whole class discussions, not all of them demonstrated the same level of engagement and willingness to find out more information

about other cultures on their own outside the classroom. Even when some students expressed that it was due to lack of time because they had full time jobs, other factors might have affected their interest to go further topics such as culture and representations. One of those factors is probably the fact that some students (and even teachers) still consider the language class as a space to improve their language proficiency only and believe that “issues of wider educational scope such as... gender, class, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation are out of their area of expertise and action” (p. 178). Another factor might be the students’ personality and their study habits which can be evidenced in the interviews when Rosario expresses she has been an eager learner her whole life, while Jacinto suggested our culture to be lazy to study. Nonetheless, there was one type of activity that boosted most students’ curiosity to search information about other cultures outside the classroom: the live online chat sessions with a foreign English speaker.

Interacting with a foreigner

This online chat session was designed to promote students’ use of strategies to interact with a foreigner in English, which is one of the ICC dimensions (skills of interaction). These strategies refer to the ability to deal with unfamiliar situations, negotiate meaning, and use strategic competence (strategies used when communication is difficult: asking for clarification, rephrasing, etc.). These skills require other elements of ICC such as knowledge of other cultures and attitudes of openness and curiosity (Byram, 1997). According to Zhou (2011), the *skills of interaction* is the less developed component among language learners, because normally, language students in non-bilingual contexts will not have the opportunity to interact with a foreigner and, for many, English will only be useful to study and have access to information (p. 62). Another study by Ware (2003) found that

students, during online conversations, were not really engaged in cultural exchange and were only focused on language use (as cited in Barletta, 2009). These two studies that have discouraging conclusions for those teachers who, on the one hand want to help students develop skills of interaction in a non-bilingual context and, on the other hand, want to promote online intercultural interactions, were refuted by my research.

First of all, one of the biggest motivations of my students was to interact with people from other parts of the world and they have had and expect to have opportunities to do it (Questionnaire, July, 2015). The live chat session activity proved to be an opportunity as well. Many of them used different strategies to find out information through interaction and even made this activity part of their routines, as they continued doing it at home and with different people. Second, my students showed that during their online interactions they were concerned about both language and intercultural exchange. Most students, when asked in class, could provide different kinds of information about their interlocutors such as profession, religion, education, etc., as well as questions and concerns about their life conditions, beliefs, feelings, among other aspects that go beyond the mere language competence. This finding is supported by Arismendi (2011) who analyzed the development of ICC in online interactions of Romance Language learners and who concludes that, despite some limitations due to the difficulty of analyzing online interactions, the platform used for their study fostered intercultural exchange among people from different cultures (p. 23).

For this activity, I did not have access to their conversations to analyze my students' interactions and the way their skills of discovery and interaction were developed along the process. I had to rely on my students' experiences in which they constantly expressed that

they kept talking to different people (that spoke English or a different language but were learning English) and found the way to communicate, ask for and provide information related to culture, but also to the language as evidenced in Jacinto's interview. Based on this evidence, for the purpose of promoting online intercultural interactions, it would be important that teachers design activities and strategies to have more direct and systematic analysis of students' interactions online.

Use of the language

Finally, an important claim of this study is that complex matters such as cultural representations can be addressed in an English novice learners class. Most studies I found reporting the cases where the ICC model was implemented have been done in classes with high proficiency levels; some them with pre-service teachers who had at least an intermediate language level. Other researchers have stated that students need a certain proficiency level in order to discuss complex topics. This evidences that there is still the idea that some topics cannot be addressed in language classes until students reach certain level of proficiency. Castañeda (2012), on the other hand, carried out a study in a public school in Bogotá with 8th graders who did not have much contact with English. She reports very positive results about her students' Intercultural communicative competence development. Notwithstanding, she does not address the language development topic in her study; she only states that her students made use of Spanish to express themselves when a foreign situation had an impact on them (Castañeda, 2012, p. 14).

After the implementation, I concluded that it is not necessary to have an advanced language proficiency level to discuss complex matters; in fact, as Rashidi and Safari (2011) state, it is necessary to develop critical consciousness along with language competence.

Data evidenced that from the beginning, and with a scaffolding process, students were able to understand and complete the activities proposed in class. They were engaged in conversations and focused on the content, and with the teacher's help, they were able to name, describe, analyze and draw conclusions without the language level being an obstacle for this. Rather, these conversations promoted students' use of different strategies to communicate, notably the use of dictionary, class notes, classmates help and vocabulary and expressions questions to the teacher. All of them in different degrees. Of course, one of these strategies was the use of students' mother tongue, which is necessary for students in starting levels to build ideas. As Kumaravadivelu (2010) assures, "first language is perhaps the most useful and the least-used resource students bring to the L2 classroom" (p. 250).

Nonetheless, even when the language proficiency is not a problem to address topics such as cultural representations, teachers should be cautious about the way they present the activities to novice English students. Based on this experience, I identified some issues. For instance, a couple of students participated little in whole class discussions during the entire course. These students were the ones who expressed not having taken any English course before. Due to the heated conversations and the fact that they had to improvise and use different strategies to convey their message, they probably preferred to remain quiet. Whole class discussions might frighten those shy students, who would prefer to stay quiet than take the risk of making a mistake. However, I also realized that these students participated more when talking in small group discussions. Aguado (2003) asserts that besides promoting the sharing of personal experiences, the teacher must allow the small groups in order to facilitate dialogue (p. 94).

Based on this, teachers should provide different spaces for students, especially those who are shy and need more time to build their ideas. Moreover, all the students took more than expected when doing the activities and, sometimes, had difficulties to understand certain tasks, thus instructions and questions had to be rephrased in order for them to understand. Considering this, teachers must take into account students' proficiency level to design the tasks and formulate instructions and questions and even to anticipate difficulties in order to promote better understanding and participation. Rico (2012) proposed another component to Byram's model called Proficiency (*Savoir-Communiquer*) as he urges the necessity to give more relevance to the way students function linguistically and states that "FLT has as a central aim to enable learners to use that language" and how the lack of language knowledge might hinder communication (p. 139).

After analyzing and interpreting the findings, it can be concluded that indeed the materials and tasks designed with a critical intercultural perspective helped students foster their ICC. However, this does not work as a magic potion that takes students from point zero to an ideal cultural awareness state. Instead, it was evidenced that students bring with them different levels of ICC that, together with the pedagogical unit, create an environment that favors the sharing of different perspectives that contribute to a better understanding of cultural matters and the development of ICC. On the other hand, raising critical cultural awareness and developing the other dimensions of ICC is not an overnight process. Even when students showed in class some degree of critical cultural awareness, this was not always reflected when carrying out their projects. For instance, some students used the first stereotypical description they found about the cultural groups they were researching about without questioning it by asking questions or comparing with other sources of information.

This suggests that internalization of complex critical matters needs time and personal pace and cannot be achieved in one course. As Taylor (1994) states “intercultural competency *is* a process, not a result of an activity” (as cited in Marchis, Ciascai, and Saial, 2008, p. 2).

Conclusions

The present study revealed that, when presented with a critical intercultural unit EFL students were given the opportunity to bring their different levels of ICC and develop others. It was observed in this research that students changed some attitudes towards cultures that are different to theirs by being questioned about their feelings and beliefs and by being exposed to others' perspectives, which led to the collaboratively building of more positive ideas. Likewise, students were able to analyze problematic representations in texts, identify stereotypes they held of other groups or practices, use strategies to interact in English with people from other countries, and develop linguistic competence along the process.

Given the necessity of Language Education of not only focusing on the linguistic competence, but preparing students for the new intercultural situations they encounter, the inclusion of an intercultural approach has become imperative in the EFL class. Moreover, the inclusion of critical questions becomes necessary to analyze and understand issues of power presented in the texts we consume every day and the way these affect certain individuals and communities. By critical questions I mean, questions that aim at unveiling power relations and seek action. Additionally, it is essential to identify and question the representation one holds in order to stop reproducing those stereotyped ideas that promote discrimination and inequality, especially of our own culture.

Moreover, as most of the studies are carried out in EFL classes of intermediate/advanced students, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of bringing those cultural topics from the basic language levels in order to promote awareness along with language development. This study has shown that topics such as cultural

representations can be addressed in an EFL class even when students are novice English learners by preparing a scaffolding process; that is, providing students with vocabulary, structures and exercises they will need later to build ideas to analyze texts.

Finally, I acknowledge this study as a heartfelt attempt to do what I feel is my responsibility as an educator: to create spaces in my classroom for dialogue about topics that affect and matter to students, hoping this attempt will have a positive impact on the way students see themselves and the world and the way they interact in it. Even when the evidence of this study shows interesting and positive results about implementing a unit using an ICC model and critical questions, it is necessary to recognize that there is no recipe for how to implement critical intercultural approaches, thus, I am not providing a series of prescribed steps to foster intercultural communicative competence. Rather, I put forth that language teachers in Colombia should develop critical intercultural approaches that take into account the particular cultural conditions of our context, as well as the power relations that take place in the language classroom where native English communities are often positioned as superior. It is time to discuss, enrich and/or contest the Eurocentric models of culture teaching and interculturalism that have been so pervasive in language education in Colombia.

Limitations

The present study was carried out in a program with a very specific audience, professionals, and does not give account of programs with other kinds of audiences; for instance, classes with students of different ages (children, youngsters, seniors) and educational backgrounds, which is very common in languages courses.

Another limitation is the fact that my analysis of students' interactions with English speakers was based on what students provided in class and in the interview. This means that I did not have access to students' conversations to see in more detail their development of ICC. It would be interesting, in future implementations, to collect this information to have more insights about students' intercultural interactions.

Challenges

In addition, there were some aspects that affected the implementation of the unit and data collection. In the first place, students took more than expected doing the activities I proposed. As they were novice learners, students needed more time to understand and carry out the tasks proposed. As a result, the unit, which was planned for half the semester, took the whole course time. A second challenge was the fixed activities of the program. Students have some activities during the semester that are mandatory. Namely, a chat session with another teacher, a chat session with a foreigner, two quizzes, a final exam, a visit to a group, among others. Every time we had these activities or I had to prepare students to perform well in them, implied stopping the unit and the data collection. This might have affected students' motivation and continuity.

These two aspects did not only result in taking more time developing the unit, but also affected my freedom to make some changes to the unit and go further based on students' responses and interests. After going back to the data, I wondered "why didn't I ask more about this or that?" or "why didn't I make those changes?" And the answer was simple. Due to time constraints, I was more focused on finishing on time and collecting the data planned, and I did not take advantage of the class as I would have if I had been in a situation where I was not doing this research.

Another challenge I found in my research is related to the designing of the activities intended to help students foster Critical Interculturality. Although I took some principles of critical pedagogy into account that addressed the topics CI proposes, what I did was far from reaching the ideal outcome (not from students, but from myself). As it was concluded, students reached a phase of awareness, but it was far from a phase of action, which is the goal of Critical Interculturality. There were issues of time, lack of knowledge and excess of enthusiasm. Still now, as there is not a model to follow, these approaches need to be improved, but this can be done with practice and dedication, and collaborative work between teachers interested in going further language teaching.

These issues found during my implementation made me reflect upon my practice and future implementations. First, I would design shorter tasks and use simpler language for students to understand better and participate more actively. Second, I would make the necessary changes and expand on students' responses and interactions, even if that means not finishing what was planned. Finally, I would include more activities that lead to action, not only proposed by me, but also by my students. The unit should be the initial proposal, but students, with their experiences, different realities, opinions, and interests, should be the ones shaping and giving meaning to the class.

Implications

Language institutions must think about their role as educators, given the necessity of helping students develop strategies to cope with new intercultural interactions in a globalized society, the importance of becoming critical beings able to unveil problematic representations, and the urgency of a more respectful society. Focusing on the linguistic competence or on communicative methodologies is not enough anymore. It is crucial for

language institutions to do research and develop curricula that align with intercultural and critical approaches that address culture from a different perspective in order to cope with students' needs and societal realities.

Besides, when designing programs intended to foster students' ICC, institutions should constantly promote professional development. Spaces where teachers read and discuss about theory and research to be informed about what is being done in the world, but the most important, to share their own experiences and propose materials, activities, etc, that can give ideas to others of how to foster intercultural dialogue with a critical attitude.

Furthermore, teachers should look themselves for alternatives when the institutions they work for do not have an intercultural or critical curriculum. For instance, using the imposed textbooks to analyze the way other cultures are portrayed, use students' interests and realities to bring to class information and materials that will help them foster their ICC, ask questions aimed at questioning problematic representations, and propose actions that have an effect outside the classroom.

Considering the difficulties found in the class such as teacher's and students' time constraints and difficulties to search additional information outside the classroom, I recommend the following when working with adult novice learners. Firstly, it is necessary to open the space in class to do independent research. Taking students to the library or to the computers room might help them in their autonomous research. Secondly, it is imperative for teachers to dedicate more time and guide students in the selection of their project topic. A topic they really find interesting will motivate them tremendously to want to know more. Finally, the use of other kinds of texts is necessary to take the analysis to different dimensions. For example, texts where the different Colombian communities

(indigenous peoples, regions of the country, etc.) are represented in order to analyze how they are portrayed by others and by themselves, and how these representations might affect these communities.

Further research

As Intercultural Communicative Competence cannot be achieved in one course, but it is a process that needs time and continuity, it becomes necessary to design and implement a curriculum that aims at helping students foster their ICC at a long term goal. It would be very interesting to collect data of students' process along the five semesters of the program with a critical intercultural approach and see what happens compared to students who take the normal classes proposed by the program. Also, it would be interesting to see if these approaches have an impact outside the classroom and even reach the stage of "action" proposed by the critical approach which would be the aim of education.

As explained before, a classroom is in itself a multicultural space. It would be also interesting to analyze what happens with students' identities as they are faced to other cultures inside the classroom and address topics that they share or are different among them: professions, parenthood, religion, sexual orientations, genres, violence, ideas of success, etc. Only that focus will make a relevant study that would shed light about developing ICC and CI in the classroom.

Finally, the goals of Intercultural Communicative Competence and critical approaches are not only of concern of language education but of education in general. In the hope that people become respectful and critical social beings, able to cope with the challenges imposed by society today, intercultural and critical approaches should be implemented in a crosswise manner; that is, thought from different areas of education. That

way, there will be coherence no matter the education stage a person be: school, high school, college, language courses, cooking classes, etc.

My experience as a teacher and researcher

To conclude, I want to reflect about my experience as a teacher and researcher. I can say that I am a different person after all this process. As a researcher, I learned about how to be methodical and coherent. Sometimes as a teacher, I wanted to do many things in my classes, but more information about how to design materials and activities was necessary. I learned that it is very important to be informed and organized and have a clear purpose and method to carry out any idea. I am still in the process of learning this.

As a teacher, I have learned that students are the most important here. There is not a magic method to take students from point A to point B. The best method is to listen to what students have to say, their interests, experiences and opinions, and understand that each one has their own pace that cannot be forced. I learned that they do not come to class to be given the truth, and that there is not anything that can be called the truth, and that I myself learn from them every day. It was difficult for me not to have a word when I thought they were not identifying what I wanted them to identify in the texts, when they were not analyzing them as I thought texts should be analyzed or making the conclusions I made. We all have a different perspective of the world and all those perspectives affect us somehow. As an educator, I have a responsibility to open the spaces for students to bring those ideas to class, analyze them and at least go home with a question in their minds, as I go home with a question in mine.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTO xxxx

Universidad xxxxx

Master en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras

Protocolo de Entrevista

Natalia Alarcón Penagos

Título del estudio: Implementación de un enfoque intercultural crítico para promover la competencia comunicativa intercultural en estudiantes adultos de inglés

Pregunta de investigación: ¿Cómo puede un enfoque intercultural crítico en una clase de inglés ayudar a que se fomente la competencia comunicativa intercultural en estudiantes adultos?

Duración: de 30 minutos a 1 hora

La entrevista tiene como objetivo que los participantes:

- Expresen cómo se sintieron en la clase respecto al tipo de actividades y temas trabajados.
- Describan su experiencia durante el chat con una persona de otro país
- Reflexionen sobre su propio proceso.
- Den sugerencias y hagan comentarios sobre el curso

Preguntas

Sobre el objetivo de la clase

- En términos generales, ¿qué piensa del curso de inglés?
- ¿Cuáles de los temas y actividades que tratamos en clase recuerdas? ¿Cuáles crees que era el propósito estos temas y actividades?
- ¿Cuáles actividades/temas te gustaron más? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuáles actividades/temas te gustaron menos? ¿Por qué?

Sobre la experiencia en la implementación

- ¿Qué esperabas al principio de este curso y que opinión tienes al terminarlo?

- ¿Qué dificultades tuviste durante el curso?
- ¿Qué aprendiste de esta experiencia?

Sobre el chat con una persona de otro país

- ¿Cuéntame un poco cómo fue tu experiencia chateando con alguien de otro país? (¿Cómo te sentiste? ¿Qué te dio más dificultad? ¿Qué fue más fácil? ¿Investigaste más sobre el lugar donde esta persona vive después de la clase? ¿Qué aprendiste de esta persona durante la interacción? ¿Hubo algún problema en la comunicación? ¿Qué hiciste para superarlo? ¿Qué te llamó la atención sobre esta persona? ¿Qué ideas o prácticas de esta persona no compartes o son diferentes a tus ideas o prácticas? ¿Cuáles? ¿Seguiste hablando con esta persona? ¿Por qué?)
- ¿Cómo compararías esta experiencia con la experiencia que tuviste con Matthew?

Sugerencias y comentarios

- ¿Qué cambiarías del curso?
- ¿Qué cambiarías sobre tu participación en el curso?
- ¿Qué sugerencias le harías a la profesora?

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSIDAD XXXXX - INSTITUTO XXXXXX MAESTRÍA EN ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

Julio 23, 2015

Cordial saludo,

Usted está invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación que llevaré a cabo en el nivel 1 del programa Inglés para Profesionales desde julio hasta noviembre 2015. Mi propuesta de investigación propone la implementación de una unidad de clase para tomar datos que me ayuden a comprender de qué manera un enfoque intercultural para la enseñanza del inglés puede facilitar el desarrollo de una competencia intercultural en los estudiantes.

Es importante aclarar que esta unidad respeta los principios metodológicos y lineamientos del programa y no va a ser radicalmente diferente. Para esta intervención, tendré en cuenta los mismos objetivos lingüísticos, discursivos y socioculturales que propone el curso. Para esta intervención, tendré en cuenta los mismos objetivos lingüísticos, discursivos y socioculturales que propone el curso. Además, en la medida de lo posible, usaré el mismo material de clase, el cual complementaré con material y actividades adicionales que considere pertinentes.

Para tomar estos datos realizaré encuestas, entrevistas, grabaciones de las discusiones del grupo y análisis de los productos escritos con previa autorización de los estudiantes. Únicamente mi asesora y yo tendremos acceso a esta información y ésta será borrada cuando el proyecto haya llegado a su final. Esta investigación no significa ningún riesgo para los estudiantes o el programa. Por el contrario, los resultados beneficiarán al programa y a la Escuela, ya que darán luces sobre los beneficios de la educación intercultural en las clases de lengua extranjera.

Los resultados de este estudio serán presentados en un trabajo final de investigación que será guardado en la Biblioteca Central de la Universidad de Antioquia y en la Biblioteca de la Escuela de Idiomas y serán compartidos con la comunidad académica. Igualmente, serán presentados en conferencias locales y nacionales, y publicados en un artículo para una revista de investigación. El nombre de los participantes no aparecerá en ninguna publicación o presentación oral, ya que se utilizará un seudónimo para proteger su identidad.

Su participación en este proyecto es completamente voluntaria y tienen la libertad de retirarse del mismo en el momento que lo desee, por lo tanto, su elección de no participar no tendrá ningún tipo de consecuencias para usted. Si tiene alguna duda, pregunta o comentario sobre la investigación antes de firmar, por favor siéntase en la libertad de hacerlo.

ATT

NATALIA ALARCÓN PENAGOS

AUTORIZACIÓN: He leído la información arriba consignada y entiendo la naturaleza de este estudio. Estoy de acuerdo en participar en él y acepto las condiciones.

Firma: _____ Fecha: _____

Información de contacto

Si tiene preguntas acerca de esta investigación, por favor contacte a Natalia Alarcón Penagos por teléfono al XXXXXXX, al celular XXXXXXXXXXX, o por correo electrónico a: natalia.alarcon@udea.edu.co, o a la asesora del proyecto, la profesora Paula Andrea Echeverri Sucerquia por teléfono al XXXXXXX o por correo electrónico a: paula.echeverri@udea.edu.co

APPENDIX C

Unit Plan	
Title of research	
IMPLEMENTING A CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO FOSTER ADULT ENGLISH STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE	
Research question	
How can a critical intercultural approach help professional adult students foster ICC in an English class?	
Program English for XXXXXXXX	
Level 1 Topic: Social Events and Customs Around the World	
General goals-Program Goals	
Language goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify vocabulary of Social events ● Identify vocabulary related to “culture” and “stereotypes” ● Recognize vocabulary of family members and relationships ● Describe behaviors and activities ● Describe different Greetings around the world ● Know the vocabulary of some Nationalities ● Use adjectives to describe rituals, people, clothing, behavior, and feelings ● Recognize basic WH- questions ● Recognize and use Yes or No questions ● Use simple present to describe everyday activities and Simple past to describe past situations and anecdotes ● Identify some Few expressions and idioms found in a text ● Use of “would” to describe feelings in a hypothetical situation ● Use modal verbs ● Use punctuation, capitalization to write short texts in a correct way.
Strategic competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify key words in a text to understand the general idea ● Understand a word based on the context ● Establish groups of related words to build a glossary of a specific topic ● Use the images of a video to infer the situation. It is not necessary to understand everything. ● Infer vocabulary from short texts
Discourse Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Express what they like and don't like ● Describe the common activities people do in a social event ● Have short conversations in which simple information is shared ● Make short descriptions of people or social events ● Ask simple information related to activities carried out in social events ● Write a short coherent paragraph about a social event taking into account capitalization and punctuation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe everyday situations and anecdotes using simple present and simple past ● Ask about simple facts of everyday life ● Present written and oral information of social events or situations taking into account the place, the characteristics and what it represents.
Sociocultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify social events and value their meaning ● Interact with other people by providing and asking simple information ● Name and describe the way social events are celebrated in Colombia ● Describe the activities carried out in a social event ● Understand information provided by the interlocutor ● Describe the way a social event is celebrated in different cultures, including their own. ● Describe the physical characteristics, personality, and clothing of different cultures and compared them to the ones portrayed in a text. ● Establish similarities and differences between other cultures and their own. ● Understand what a person likes or dislikes based on their cultural environment ● Compare religious and cultural values present in some rituals and activities ● Provide information about their own cultural context
Intercultural Communicative Competence Indicators	
<p><i>Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The student shows curiosity and willingness to find out information about other cultures and not take for granted the media shows.</i> ● <i>The student is willing to analyze the way they feel towards certain groups' practices and question their unique way of seeing the world.</i> ● <i>The student is willing to understand the reason of possible cultural misunderstandings</i> 	
<p><i>Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The student identifies and describes basic information related to other cultures' practices, beliefs, opinions, products, behaviors, social events, etc.</i> ● <i>The student makes comparisons between other cultures and their own in terms of practices, belief, opinions, behaviors, products, social events, etc.</i> 	
<p><i>Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The student identifies ethnocentric perspectives in a text and explains the effects.</i> ● <i>The student is able to identify areas of misunderstanding and explains WHY they happened</i> 	

- *The student knows how to deal with uncommon situations that might cause conflict*

Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

- *The student is able to get information from an interlocutor or a text to compare it to previous knowledge.*
- *The student is able to identify relevant references and their importance and connotations.*
- *The student is able to use in real time knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with a person from another country.*

Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria

perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

- *The student identifies and analyzes positive or negative values in texts attributed to specific cultural groups, including their own, and the effects they have.*
- *The student proposes ways to change pejorative opinions, attitudes and behaviors that might affect certain groups or individuals.*
- *The student analyzes the way their position as a Colombian/Latin AmericanI (if they identify as such) affects their interaction with an interlocutor or a text.*

APPENDIX D

VIDEO TEXT 1

After completing the following video tasks you will discuss how people of different cultural groups are portrayed in the media in terms of behavior, clothing, language, etc. and how these representations may affect an individual or a group.

Task 1

Look at the images and write next to them the characteristics you attribute to each person. Then, share with your partners your impressions and answer the question below.

+lives in a the US	+is a successful executive	+ is vegetarian
+lives in a Spanish speaking country	+has two part-time jobs	+loves junk food
+doesn't have a religious family	+is very polite	+went to the university
+comes from a very religious family	+is a little impolite	+only finished high-school
+wants to travel to the US	+speaks English very well	+wears expensive clothing
+has travelled around the world	+speaks English poorly	+buys clothing on sale
	+drinks Whisky	
	+drinks beer	
		+ add other descriptions









What aspects/characteristics helped you describe those women?

APPENDIX E

<p>1. Fiona Reid was born in Whitstable, Kent, England; her father was a doctor in the British Army. She lived in Germany, Africa and the United States before settling in Canada with her family in 1964. She studied acting at McGill University receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1972 and at the Banff Centre for the Arts.</p> <p>Taken from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiona_Reid</p>	<p>2. Arisa Batista Cunningham, a native of the Republic of Panama, has an MBA from Ohio University and undergraduate degrees from James Madison University and Sta. Maria La Antigua University. Vice President, Global Diversity, for the Johnson & Johnson Comprehensive Care and Surgical Care Groups.</p> <p>Taken from: http://goo.gl/5waJGq</p>
<p>3. Lainie Kazan was born in Brooklyn, New York, to a Russian father and a Turkish mother. Lainie graduated from Hofstra University, in Hempstead, New York.</p> <p>She attended and graduated from Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. She teaches theater at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York.</p> <p>Taken from: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0443577/bio</p>	<p>4. Cristina Saralegui, Cuban, is known as the Latina Oprah. She inspired and motivated for decades with her self-titled hit Univision show. Known for ending each episode with the Spanish phrase, 'Pa'lante, pa'lante, pa'tras ni pa' coger impulso' (Move forward and never look back) the Cuban journalist instantly won over the hearts of millions.</p> <p>Taken from: http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/inspiring-latina/latina-women-who-have-changed-world#3</p>
<p>5. Whitney is a babysitter. She started babysitting when she was 14 years old and continued as a nanny in the summers between college. She is currently a freelance fashion designer here in L.A. who works from home. She spent the 2009-10 school year living/working in Seoul, South Korea as a kindergarten teacher to 10 wonderful students.</p> <p>Taken from: https://www.urbansitter.com/find-babysitters/ca/los-angeles?page=2</p>	

APPENDIX F

Death Rituals	
Fantasy Coffins	Posthumous marriage
	
Post-mortem photography	Professional mourning
	
Sky Burial	Irish wake
	

1. _____
 The deceased is dismembered by a rogyapa, or body breaker, and left outside away from any occupied dwellings to be consumed by nature. The ceremony represents the perfect Buddhist act. The body is but an empty shell and the worthless body provides sustenance to the birds of prey that are the primary consumers of its flesh.
 Taken and modified from: <http://goo.gl/TNv9Ly> and image taken from: <http://goo.gl/WHlcE>

2. _____ or paid mourning is a mostly historical occupation practiced in Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures and many other parts of the world. Professional mourners are paid to cry in funerals when few people are expected to attend.
 Taken and modified from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_mourning and image taken from: <http://goo.gl/vkvN4T>

3. _____

_____ is the practice of photographing the recently deceased. These photographs of deceased loved ones were a normal part of American and European culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These photographs helped in the grieving process and represented the only visual remembrance of the deceased. They were among a family's most precious possessions.

Taken and modified from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-mortem_photography and image taken from: <http://goo.gl/PACVvV>

5. _____

_____ lasted through two or three nights. Food, tobacco, snuff, and liquor were plentiful. Out in the countryside, the liquor served consisted of whiskey or poteen, which is a very potent and illegal Irish homemade brew. Laughter and singing as well as crying filled the air as mourners shared humorous stories involving the deceased. In addition to this seeming merriment, games were played. The traditional Irish Wake was commonplace around Ireland up until about the 1970's.

Taken from: <https://goo.gl/Ec8ABr> and image taken from: <http://goo.gl/PvancY>

4. _____

_____ is a marriage in which one of the participating members is deceased. It is legal in France and similar forms are practiced in Sudan and China. Since World War I, France has had hundreds of requests each year, of which many have been accepted.

Taken and modified from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posthumous_marriage and image taken from: <https://goo.gl/ecfcXN>

6. _____

The _____ from [Ghana](#), are functional coffins made by specialized carpenters in the [Greater Accra Region](#) in [Ghana](#). These colourful are not only coffins, but considered real works of art. Ga people believe that death is not the end and that life continues in the next world in the same way it did on earth.

Text taken and modified from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasy_coffin and image taken from: <http://goo.gl/F9cXtO>

APPENDIX G

Task 2

Watch video segments 1 and 2 and fill in the blanks with the required information



Use images to help infer what is said in the video. It is not necessary to understand every single word.

1. What's the situation taking place?

Video segment 1:

Video segment 2:

2. What is the relationship between the people in the video?

Video segment 1:

Video segment 2:

3. What do you think is the nationality of the people from the video segments? What aspects made you think that?

Video segment 1:

Video segment 2:



Identifying key words is essential to understand what a text is about. Once you identify a key word, you can order the sequence of a series of events as you did in the exercise above.

Task 5

Based on the video segments, how can the Greek and the American wives be described? Focus on the aspects below. Look at the example.

Language: EX:

Greek wife: She has a strong accent and speaks a lot.

American Wife: She is quiet and corrects the pronunciation of the Greek wife.

Physical appearance:

Clothing:

The greetings:

Behaviour:

Task 6

Now read some personal information of the women in the pictures in Task 1. Were you right in your descriptions? Which ones?

Task 8

In the same group, discuss the following questions related to the video segment:

1. Based on the video, how are Greeks and Americans described? Complete the chart:

Greeks	Americans
They are...	They are...

2. Whose perspective is presented in the movie segment: The Greek or the American one?

3. Do you think stereotypes have effects on the people of a particular culture?

APPENDIX H

Task 6

Research about what to do or not to do when you go to Colombia, answer the questions and prepare to report your ideas to the class.

1. What tips about customs or social events called your attention? Mention 3
2. How are Colombians portrayed according to those tips?
3. Do you think Colombians are portrayed accurately? Explain
4. Compare the tips to go to US and the tips to come to Colombia. What differences and similarities do you find?
5. Which of these tips would you recommend to a foreigner?

You can check these websites as examples or look for others:

- <http://matadornetwork.com/trips/colombia/>
- <http://www.traveltaboo.com/colombia-travel-tips-dos-and-donts/>
- http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/South_America/Colombia/Warnings_or_Dangers-Colombia-TG-C-1.html

APPENDIX I

INSTITUTO xxxx

Universidad xxxxx

Master en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras

Protocolo de Entrevista

Natalia Alarcón Penagos

Título del estudio: Implementación de un enfoque intercultural crítico para promover la competencia comunicativa intercultural en estudiantes adultos de inglés

Pregunta de investigación: ¿Cómo puede un enfoque intercultural crítico en una clase de inglés ayudar a que se fomente la competencia comunicativa intercultural en estudiantes adultos?

Duración: de 30 minutos a 1 hora

La entrevista tiene como objetivo que los participantes:

- Expresen cómo se sintieron en la clase respecto al tipo de actividades y temas trabajados.
- Describan su experiencia durante el chat con una persona de otro país
- Reflexionen sobre su propio proceso.
- Den sugerencias y hagan comentarios sobre el curso

Preguntas

Sobre el objetivo de la clase

- En términos generales, ¿qué piensa del curso de inglés?
- ¿Cuáles de los temas y actividades que tratamos en clase recuerdas? ¿Cuáles crees que era el propósito estos temas y actividades?
- ¿Cuáles actividades/temas te gustaron más? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuáles actividades/temas te gustaron menos? ¿Por qué?

Sobre la experiencia en la implementación

- ¿Qué esperabas al principio de este curso y que opinión tienes al terminarlo?

- ¿Qué dificultades tuviste durante el curso?
- ¿Qué aprendiste de esta experiencia?

Sobre el chat con una persona de otro país

- ¿Cuéntame un poco cómo fue tu experiencia chateando con alguien de otro país? (¿Cómo te sentiste? ¿Qué te dio más dificultad? ¿Qué fue más fácil? ¿Investigaste más sobre el lugar donde esta persona vive después de la clase? ¿Qué aprendiste de esta persona durante la interacción? ¿Hubo algún problema en la comunicación? ¿Qué hiciste para superarlo? ¿Qué te llamó la atención sobre esta persona? ¿Qué ideas o prácticas de esta persona no compartes o son diferentes a tus ideas o prácticas? ¿Cuáles? ¿Seguiste hablando con esta persona? ¿Por qué?)
- ¿Cómo compararías esta experiencia con la experiencia que tuviste con Matthew?

Sugerencias y comentarios

- ¿Qué cambiarías del curso?
- ¿Qué cambiarías sobre tu participación en el curso?
- ¿Qué sugerencias le harías a la profesora?