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**TÍTULO COMPLETO DEL TRABAJO:** Exploring Sixth Graders Perceptions about Language Learning and Cultural Awareness When Using Telecollaboration

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| 2. Conciencia cultural           | Cultural awareness |
| 3. Inglés como lengua extranjera | EFL                |
| 4. Telecolaboración              | Telecollaboration  |

**RESUMEN DEL CONTENIDO:** (Máximo 250 palabras)

Este estudio fenomenológico explora las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la relación entre el aprendizaje de un idioma y la conciencia cultural cuando se usa telecolaboración dentro de un contexto ILE (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera). El estudio se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de grado sexto de un colegio privado del municipio de Rivera – Huila. La población estaba compuesta por 9 hombres y 10 mujeres, con edades entre los 10 y 12 años. Las tres problemáticas que guiaron este trabajo son: La falta de estudios relacionados a la forma en que los estudiantes perciben la relación entre el aprendizaje de un idioma y cultura en un contexto local, la necesidad de explorar la incidencia (el rol) de la cultura en el aprendizaje de una lengua, y el rol de la telecolaboración en intercambios culturales y en la construcción de percepciones sobre el lenguaje y la cultura. Los datos se recolectaron por medio de grupos focales, artefactos realizados por los estudiantes (dibujos y rutinas de pensamiento), cuestionarios y dos encuentros virtuales. Los hallazgos muestran que los estudiantes reflexionan sobre su cultura y el concepto de la otredad mientras se usa la lengua extranjera para interactuar con el otro a través de medios virtuales. Por lo tanto, esto contribuyó para entender las percepciones de los estudiantes con respecto a la relación entre lenguaje y la conciencia cultural en forma de investigación fenomenológica donde ambos interlocutores se convierten en participantes empáticos.

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**ABSTRACT:** (Máximo 250 palabras)

This phenomenological study explores students' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context. It was carried out with sixth graders from a private school in Rivera – Huila with a population that consisted of 9 male and 10 female, 10 to 12 years old. The three main concerns underlying this work were: the lack of studies related to the way students perceive the relationship between language learning and culture in the local context, the need to explore the incidence of culture in language learning, and the role of telecollaboration in cultural exchanges and the construction of perceptions about language and culture. The data for this study was collected through interviews, focus groups, students' artifacts (drawings and thinking routines) and two online encounters. The findings reported that students evidenced insights about their culture and the concept of Otherness while using a foreign language to interact through online means. Furthermore, it contributed to make sense of their perceptions with respect to the relationship between language and cultural awareness by means of a phenomenological inquiry where both cultural interlocutors become empathic participants.

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Exploring Sixth Graders Perceptions about Language Learning and Cultural Awareness  
When Using Telecollaboration

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Master thesis presented as a partial requirement to obtain the degree of magister in English  
didactics

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Date of Approval: June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Dedication**

To Carmen Tovar Mosquera, who is my extraordinary and loving mother who has always believed in me and has given me strength, love and support to reach my goals.

Maria Alejandra Cabrera Tovar

To my beloved parents Iván Ramírez and Blanca Astrid Lizcano, who have always given me support, love and strength to overcome the difficulties in this process and to achieve my goals.

Natalia Ramírez Lizcano

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Last but not the least, we would like to thank God for being our guide, and whose blessings contributed to our strength and knowledge in the writing of this thesis.

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**Abstract**

This phenomenological study explores students' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context. It was carried out with sixth graders from a private school in Rivera – Huila with a population that consisted of 9 male and 10 female, 10 to 12 years old. The three main concerns underlying this work were: the lack of studies related to the way students perceive the relationship between language learning and culture in the local context, the need to explore the incidence of culture in language learning, and the role of telecollaboration in cultural exchanges and the construction of perceptions about language and culture. The data for this study was collected through interviews, focus groups, students' artifacts (drawings and thinking routines) and two online encounters. The findings reported that students raise insights about their culture and the concept of Otherness while using a foreign language to interact through online means. Furthermore, it contributed to make sense of their perceptions with respect to the relationship between language and cultural awareness as a form of a phenomenological inquiry where both culture interlocutors become empathic participants.

*Key words: Language learning, cultural awareness, EFL, telecollaboration*

### Resumen

Este estudio fenomenológico explora las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la relación entre el aprendizaje de un idioma y la conciencia cultural cuando se usa telecolaboración dentro de un contexto ILE (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera). El estudio se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de grado sexto de un colegio privado del municipio de Rivera – Huila. La población estaba compuesta por 9 hombres y 10 mujeres, con edades entre los 10 y 12 años. Las tres problemáticas que guiaron este trabajo son: La falta de estudios relacionados a la forma en que los estudiantes perciben la relación entre el aprendizaje de un idioma y cultura en un contexto local, la necesidad de explorar la incidencia (el rol) de la cultura en el aprendizaje de una lengua, y el rol de la telecolaboración en intercambios culturales y en la construcción de percepciones sobre el lenguaje y la cultura. Los datos se recolectaron por medio de grupos focales, artefactos realizados por los estudiantes (dibujos y rutinas de pensamiento), cuestionarios y dos encuentros virtuales. Los hallazgos muestran que los estudiantes reflexionan sobre su cultura y el concepto de la otredad mientras se usa la lengua extranjera para interactuar con el otro a través de medios virtuales. Por lo tanto, esto contribuyó para entender las percepciones de los estudiantes con respecto a la relación entre lenguaje y la conciencia cultural en forma de investigación fenomenológica donde ambos interlocutores se convierten en participantes empáticos.

*Palabras clave: Aprendizaje de una lengua, conciencia cultural, inglés como lengua extranjera, telecolaboración*

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### **Introduction**

One major theoretical issue that has dominated the study of human social interaction concerns the relevance of language and communication as key aspects of cultural development and awareness. In this regards, the debate about how language acquisition may influence cultural changes and development is still taking place in the field of language education. On account of this increased interest in the role of cultural identity and awareness, the acknowledgment of learners' perceptions in regards to the relationship between language learning and culture have contributed to the understanding and value of foreign cultures, as well as the understanding and recognition of their own society (Alvarez and Bonilla, 2009).

Though, in the specific case of the Colombian context, the literature suggests that the relationship between language learning and culture "seems hardly noticed and usually overlooked by EFL teachers" (Turizo and Gomez, 2006). Therefore, as stated by Alvarez and Bonilla (2009), one of the most frequently stated problems in the field of foreign language teaching deals with the fact that students' engagement to English learning seems to be far from the recognition of Otherness and their cultural identity. The above mentioned seems to be the case of Colombus American School in Rivera where students are exposed to the foreign language (English) ten hours per week but, in most of the cases, opportunities to use the language regarding intercultural purposes is being lost.

Based on our observation of the context and the main tenets established in the bilingual scheme of the school PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional), it was perceived that administrators and school policies are more concerned about developing communicative competence rather than giving students opportunities to engage in cultural understanding. This is supported, on one hand, by their particular interest in preparing students and requiring teachers to invest a lot of class time in national and international examinations. Besides, the



school policies emphasize their reliability in methodological approaches like total physical response, natural approach and communicative approach, which barely help students and teachers to explore the critical role of cultural awareness as an important component in the construction of learners' own identity. This information was based on the review of documents such as the PEI, lesson plans and field notes taken through the teacher's observation of classes.

Due to the lack of opportunities for students to engage in cultural understanding through their English classes and the recognition of their local culture in their learning process, this qualitative methodological research attempts to look into students' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness in the EFL context in the school in Rivera, Huila. As a pedagogical implementation, this study used telecollaboration to connect students with kids from foreign countries to explore the way they raise concepts in relation to otherness and the recognition of their own cultural identity.

This document consists of five chapters: The first chapter presents the statement of the problem, the setting and rationale, as well as the research question and the objectives of this study. In chapter two, there is a review of the literature that supports the main constructs of the research. The third chapter provides the methodological design which describes the type of study, the participants and the data collection procedure. Additionally, in this chapter there is a presentation of the pedagogical implementation and its components used in the investigation. Chapter four presents the data analysis process and the findings obtained from the instruments used during the whole study. Finally, the conclusions and pedagogical implications are drawn based on the findings of the study with the aim of identifying and describing sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship they make between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context.

## Chapter I

### Research Problem

#### Statement of the Problem

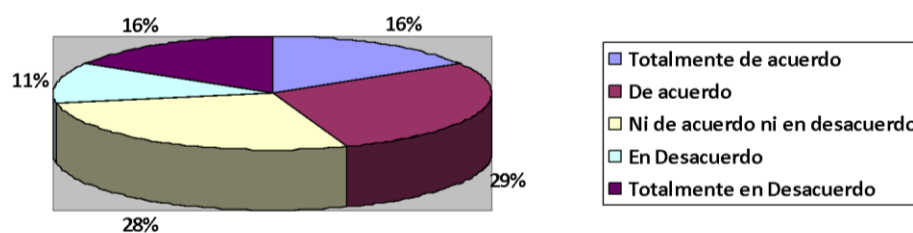
The main goal of this qualitative study was to identify and describe students' perceptions about language and culture when using telecollaboration in an EFL classroom. This study was carried out with 19, 10 to 12 year old sixth graders students from a private school who are interested in learning English, and who have a good level of language proficiency. However, due to students' socio-economic living conditions and the lack of opportunities to use the language regarding intercultural purposes, they seemed to be more interested in learning the language to obtain economic benefits and create more possibilities for future job alternatives by establishing international relationships.

Therefore, a growing body of literature that examines the emerging role of culture in the context of language learning nowadays acknowledges that communication in today's society implies the recognition of cultural aspects and diversity (McConachy, 2018). However, this relationship between language learning and culture has been hardly noticed and usually overlooked by EFL teachers (Turizo and Gomez, 2006). Thus, one major issue in the field of linguistics research is concerned with the tendency to focus on linguistic aspects of the language that often exclude culture from its concerns (McConachy, 2018). Consequently, as it was the case of our participants, students' engagement to English learning seems to be far from the recognition of otherness and the construction of their cultural identity (Alvarez and Bonilla, 2009).

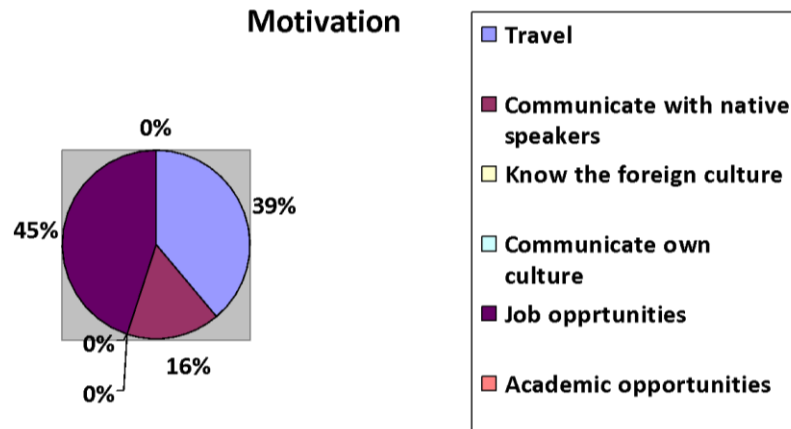
Grounded in a process of reflection, personal teaching experiences and the observation of classes, we were able to identify that students were exposed to some cultural aspects related to tourism, celebrations, food and typical dances; but those aspects emphasized culture as product of a community. Thus, those specific aspects limited students' perceptions from constructing their

own meaning of language and culture. In fact, it was evident that the exercises used in the classroom were just given them information about the biggest monuments or fairs in the world but these did not give them the chance to go beyond those cultural aspects.

To confirm these assumptions, we designed and administered a survey to collect qualitative and quantitative data, and provide an unbiased perspective of these problematic situations. The Likert Scale Survey was composed of 12 statements about constructs such as culture, language learning and motivation. The results of the survey suggested three main concerns: (a) Students' uncertainty about the understanding of culture itself, the role of culture in language acquisition and the tenets of culture, which represented forty percent (45%) of the students choices (See Figure 1); (b) the disjunction between language and culture supported by twenty seven percent (27%) of students who agreed that the relationship between culture and language was absent in the learning process and 28 % who did not know what to agree with or what to answer; and finally (c) students' motivation supported by the belief of English as the language of industry and education (See Figure 2). In fact, no evidence was found for claiming culture furtherance as the goal of foreign language acquisition.



*Figure 1.* Likert Scale Survey



*Figure 2.* Likert Scale Survey

In sum, the needs analysis results provided important insights that demonstrated a lack of cultural identity and awareness, and indicated that students did not perceive English learning as a mean for cultural development and furtherance. In the statements 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (See Appendix B), there was evidence to support that students perception of culture was not clearly developed since they had not been exposed to it in a way that help them recognize cultural values as relevant in their learning process. Thus, the outcomes reported a lack of students' cultural awareness (Their own and other cultures). This claim was supported by the survey results related to students' perception of local culture as an irrelevant issue in their English learning process. This also suggests, that they perceived the target language culture as more important in their learning process.

Finally, the findings reported a lack of students' recognition of their local culture as valuable in their English language learning process and their perception of global culture (English in this case) as superior and more relevant. In fact, the results of the needs analysis brought evidence of students' misconception of the term: intercultural competence, as the acceptance of the superiority of some languages and cultures. In this specific case, learning about English culture seems to be more relevant than fostering their national or local culture.

**Related Studies**

In this section, we present some related studies regarding the role of culture in language education, students' perceptions about language learning and the use of telecollaboration in language learning and the construction of cultural awareness, which are the main constructs in our work. Moreover, the studies here presented provide diverse conceptions, insights and analysis of data gathered with respect to the role of cultural awareness in language learning.

With respect to the role of culture in language education, the research literature has highlighted important contributions in the field of foreign language learning. Oviedo & Alvarez (2019), for example, carried out a qualitative study to explore the contribution of cultural related lessons at Universidad de la Amazonia in Colombia. This study is concerned with culture and the understanding of it. The results of Oviedo & Alvarez' study points out the importance of creating contextualized materials and integrating cultural contents. The findings here reported are pertinent to our study since the researchers acknowledge the importance of seeing language learning as no longer defined in terms of acquiring communicative competence, but as a means to promote intercultural skills.

Likewise, Genc & Bada (2005) conducted an action research study aimed to assess ELT students' perceptions of cultural awareness, native and target culture, attitudes towards the target language, and language skills in general after taking a culture course during one year. The researchers concluded that teaching culture to prospective foreign language teachers significantly contributes to improve their language skills, as well as to raise cultural awareness and to change attitudes towards native and target cultures. This study is related to ours since it recognizes the importance of including culture as a key aspect in the whole process of foreign language teaching and learning.

In regards to perceptions related to cultural issues, Olaya & Gomez (2013) have also explored perceptions and attitudes in pre-service English teachers about aspects of the culture and Intercultural competence at three universities in Colombia. The main reached categories of this research are related to the cultural topics achieved in English classes, students' preferences for any cultures, opinions about the importance of culture and cultures existing in the classroom. The obtained results show that their participants seem to be confused about the distinction of surface and deep culture levels; as in the concept of intercultural competence because they have not been exposed or trained to this levels and concepts. This study is relevant to our research due to its exploration and the understanding of students' perceptions in issues related to culture and intercultural competence in an EFL context. This led us to think about the possible misconceptions or perspectives that can be given related to culture.

Similarly, Melgarejo (2010) conducted an action research focused on the analysis of children's perceptions about writing in the EFL context and the improvement of writing skills. The findings presented in this study shed lights on the understanding of children's' perceptions on the learning process of writing skills and how it is conceived from their own interpretation of the world. Therefore, on the analysis and understanding of students' perceptions Melgarejo (2010) found that aspects related to *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation* were key factors in the way students' perceive language learning as well. Correspondingly, this aspect is relevant to our project since it explores language learning from the perspective of the students and the way these interpretations can be pertinent to their understanding of other aspects such as culture.

Regarding students' perceptions on language learning in general, the literature has highlighted several studies exploring the way students perceive the acquisition of foreign languages. A significant analysis and discussion on this subject were presented by Jimenez (2018) in an exploratory study aimed at understanding university students' perceptions about

language learning. The study reached different conclusions in regards to the participants' language learning styles and strategies, as well as their levels of motivation, commitment and autonomy in the process of learning English. The findings of the study reported that students' personal interests and reasons to study a language result more prominent regarding students' perception in language learning. The participants in Jimenez's exploratory research claimed different patterns of motivation that provide a significant contribution to the analysis of the categories we found more relevant in regards to motivational factors in our study.

Similarly, a number of other authors have considered the effects of students' perceptions on their language learning development. A descriptive study conducted by (Stepp-Greany, 2001) found that the perception of individuals about their own language learning experience significantly infer in the roles they attribute to factors such as cultural knowledge, or the performance and achievement of certain language skills. This study illustrates in somehow the reality of our participants since they reported beliefs and perceptions when working in a technological environment.

Although, a great deal of previous research into students' perception of language learning focused on motivational aspects, some scholars also debated about the implications that the students' experience as language learners has in the learning outcomes. Tse (2000) recalls this assumption by reporting the findings of a qualitative research study regarding students' perceptions of foreign language study. This research found evidence for assuming those students' positive or negative experiences in the FL (Foreign Language) classroom is related to their level of success or failure in language acquisition. Thus, this study is pertinent to us as it emphasis in the way students' perceptions of language learning can directly depend on the way they perceive themselves as successful learners or the way they relate this to positive experiences as learners.

Most of the findings of the previous studies here reported not only shed new light on the way students' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards languages learning may influence the development of language acquisition but also in the way teachers should start exploring this field. It is important then to reexamine our understanding of students' positive and negative perspectives and notions about their learning process as a contribution to help us improve our environment in the FL classroom.

### **Setting and Rationale**

This research study took place in an EFL classroom with sixth graders from a private school in Rivera – Huila. English is taught as a foreign language, since it is considered as an important tool that students, professionals, and population in general use to compete in a globalized world. This may be the case of the population we are interested in; moreover, students seemed to have a personal interest towards learning English since their socioeconomic status gives them more possibilities to be exposed to the language in real contexts. Motivation then, was not the main concern in this proposed study since students find English useful and interesting in their lifestyles. Nevertheless, issues related to cultural awareness and students understanding of culture as a mean for building their local identity appeared to be an issue of concern.

As noted by Sercu (2005), a considerable literature has grown around the theme of intercultural communicative competence; and the relevance of fostering cultural awareness towards the target language, as well as enhancing learners' own identity in relation to their beliefs, values and worldviews, have received considerable attention in foreign language education. Traditionally, a primary concern of language teaching was related to the development of learners' linguistic competence and their ability to identify and use grammatical structures. Nevertheless, this notion has recently been challenged and nowadays, the understanding of culture is being widely known in the language teaching field. As a result, there has recently been



a renewed interest in the understanding of learners' cultural identity and awareness through intercultural communicative competence development. Thus, the problems perceived address the relevance of exploring students' perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness to have an initial point to address in the near future a curriculum which involves intercultural understanding and communication.

There have been plenty of studies based on this specific approach in English as foreign language instruction. However, most of the previous explorations have drawn their attention to specific student's language skill performance. Therefore, the following research study aimed to explore sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context. Through this study some key concepts and definitions are going to be covered to have a wider perspective of the issues concerning language learning and cultural awareness, as well as the previous studies and the most important findings in the field.

### **Research Question**

Corbin and Strauss (2008), stated the importance of the research question by claiming its relevance in leading the researchers to consider and determine the specific inquiries to be addressed by the research. Besides, Corbin and Strauss (2008), emphasize the importance of framing the research questions within the parameters of the project since they also advocate the methods for data gathering and analysis. Thus, understanding the methodological approach of our study, and the basis of its development, we have set the following research question:

How do sixth graders at a private school in Rivera, Huila, Colombia perceive the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context?

**Research Objectives**

**General objective:** To explore sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context.

**Specific objectives:** (a) To identify and describe students' perceptions about language learning; (b) To identify and describe students' perceptions about cultural awareness; (c) To describe the relationship that students make between language learning and cultural awareness, and (d) To draw some pedagogical implications about the relevance of culture in the field of language education.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

In this chapter, we set the theoretical constructs that we took into consideration in our research. The main theoretical constructs that frame this study are: Language Learning, Culture (interculturality), and Telecollaboration in EFL.

#### Language Learning

The notion of language learning embodies a multitude of concepts which scholars have long debated as an attempt to understand how languages are culturally and linguistically constructed in the nature of human beings interaction. Hence, plenty of questions have been raised about the main factors that affect how individuals perceive or assimilate language learning. Different theories exist in the literature regarding the plenty of variables that should be considered when defining language learning (Chomsky, 1959; Skinner, 1957; Krashen, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Theoretical considerations related to the notion of language learning.** Historically, theorists have associated the notion of language learning to different areas of discussion and widely varying perceptions of the concept have emerged. In the literature, however, the different theories of language learning tend to be directly linked to the development of language teaching methods as well. This attempt to define how languages are learnt, assessed and promote has its roots in theories such behaviorist and universal grammar tenets (Chomsky, 1959; Skinner, 1957). The aforementioned views of language rely on learning approaches such Direct and Audiolingual methods, which basically prompted the notion of language learning like the mastering of linguistic structures as essential in learners' skills production.

On the whole, Chomsky's theory argues that human beings inherit an innate faculty for acquiring languages by developing general cognitive processes for language acquisition.

Nevertheless, since other factors found to be influencing language learning have been explored in several studies, there has also been wide research aimed to explore notions and methodologies of language learning addressing sociocultural perceptions. Krashen (1987; 2003), for instance, agrees on Chomsky's claims about the importance of distinguishing between language competence and language performance and also the proposed *Monitor Model* consisting of five main hypothesis of language acquisition which are also related to the central foundations of Universal Grammar theory (UG) stated by Chomsky (1959). However, Krashen added a component referring to the assumption of acquisition occurring when learners are exposed to *comprehensible input* which is acquired through learners' experience.

Likewise, some scholars also attempted to evaluate the impact of sociocultural oriented perspectives and acknowledged, for example, the role of *interaction* as a relevant aspect when acquiring a language. Vygotsky (1978) perceives language as a social construction and claims the importance of exploring and understanding social interaction in the process of language learning. Thus, the relationship existing between social factors and language learning has also been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of language learning.

**Variables affecting language learning.** Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the target language, as well as the cognitive factors and socio cultural issues have been among others, an area of concern with respect to individual differences and learning environments. Clément and Gardner (2001) suggested three main variables with regards to the factors that may influence second language acquisition. They first refer to *cognitive variables* such aptitude and learning strategies which are believed to highly affect individuals' development of language. The second variable is related to personality features (*personality variables*) that encompass, among other factors, anxiety and self-confidence. And finally, they acknowledge the *affective variables* as the ones involving factors such as motivation and learners' attitude.

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in exploring educational and social psychology. Hence, the area of inquiry about the existing relationship between motivational issues and language proficiency is becoming commonplace in the field of language teaching and learning. Even if attitude and motivation differ as concepts, the two constructs are closely related to each other, and they both play an important role in the language learning experience.

*Defining attitude and motivation.* The evolution of the concept of **motivation** involves several linguists and researchers who have explored the role of affective variables and their implications in language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) were among some of the first theorists who conceptualized the construct of motivation with respect to second language acquisition (SLA) and established a distinction between *Integrative* and *instrumental* motivation. Gardner (2006) attempts to define the construct of motivation, by first giving a very general perspective of it:

“It really isn’t possible to give a simple definition of motivation, though one can list many characteristics of the motivated individual. For example, the motivated individual is goal directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires (wants), exhibits positive affect, is aroused, has expectancies demonstrates self-confidence (self-efficacy), and has reasons (motives)” (Gardner, 2006, Manuscript submitted for publication, Universidad de Alcalá, España.)

However, when defining Integrative and Instrumental motivation, Gardner strictly refers to the characteristics that apply for the individuals’ desire to acquire a second language (Gardner, 2006). In that respect, the former attends to the desire an individual has to learn a second language because he/she is interested in getting close to the culture of the target language, or simply be part of it. On the other hand, instrumental motivation relates to the desire he/ she has to learn a second language for practical reasons such job or educational requirements and benefits.

Thus, instrumental motivated individuals aim at acquiring only those aspects of the language they consider as necessary for the level they want to achieve (Krashen, 1981).

Gardner (1968) also refers to **attitude** and its relationship with language learning. Based on the number of studies he and his colleagues have conducted, Gardner (1968) argues that *language attitude* is directly related to language acquisition. He declares that students' positive attitude towards the target language culture, for example, facilitates its acquisition and that is what he defines as *integrative motive* (p. 143). According to Gardner (1968) such positive (or negative, if it is the case) attitude is fostered at home, and parents appeared to have a very influent role in children's *attitudinal- motivational* development. Parents' *active* or *passive* (see Gardner, 1968) role is crucial when building interactively-oriented students. He concludes: "Second-language achievement is facilitated by an integrative motive, and that the development of such a motive is dependent upon a particular attitudinal atmosphere in the home" (Gardner, 1968, p. 145).

### **Colombian Context**

Talking about our particular Colombian context, English has been mainly acknowledged to be a foreign language, as well as an international language which has become a necessity or requirement in the academic field and for individuals' professional and social development. According to Dornyei (1990) the main purpose learners have when learning an international target language in FLL settings, is to communicate with others who have also learnt the language around the world. Different is the case from other settings where English or French, for example, are considered to be a second language so learners are directly exposed to it, having more possibilities for interaction.

In this regards, Dornyei (1990) also points out some other considerations that need to be taken into account with regards to the *motivational theory*. Dornyei first claims to understand the

importance of making a distinction between second and foreign language learning environments. The former understood as the context where the target language is the second official language of the country, while the latter refers to those settings where the language is usually taught at school as a subject, and some individuals acquired it because they are interested in it, or just because it has become a requirement for practical purposes.

However, being the case of foreign or second language acquisition, data from some research studies have claimed that attitude and motivation affect language achievement. “The nature and effect of certain motivation components might vary as a function of the environment in which the learning takes place” (Dornyei, 1990, p.48). All in all, the beliefs students hold towards learning a second language differ according to factors such their own expectations with respect to the target language learning, opportunities for interaction, socioeconomic status and even gender. Then, debate continuous about cultural utterance through language learning, and questions about how to integrate the cultural component in this field have been raised.

## Culture

This construct has been studied from different perspectives and forms as the table 1 below shows:

*Table 1. Culture definitions*

Culture	
<u>How?</u> <i>Culture is transmitted (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952; cited by Spencer-Oatey &amp; Franklin 2009)</i>	
Explicit: Achievements or products of actions.	Implicit: Ideas and values. Beyond actions.
Individually. Meanings formed by the individual based on their own experiences and what have been transmitted to them.	Collectively. Meanings transmitted from past generations. (Schwartz, 1992; cited by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009 )

<i>Culture as a social construction</i>	
Individually: The community influences behaviors and their meanings but do not determine them.	Collectively: Set of conventions shared by a community. (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009 )
Public meaningful form: it is what can be seen and what people create as a member of society.	Overt forms: interpretation and externalization of meanings as a member of society. (Hannerz, 1992; cited by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009)
<u>What?</u> Culture as national attributes and product of a community	
High culture National Artifacts: arts, literature, music; (Liddicoat & Scarnino, 2013) performances, a period in history.(Scollon & Scollon, 2001)	Anthropological Daily practices, social organization, language and custom. (Scollon & Scollon, 2001)
Big C General knowledge of the culture as Literature and arts.	Small or little c Everyday activities, beliefs and values (Kramsh,2013)
<u>Why?</u> Culture from an emic and etic framework	
Emic: to understand only one culture from the inside of its system	Etic: to compare and understand cultures from the outside. (Triandis, 1994; cited by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009)

As the review of the literature shows, culture can be seen from *How* it is acquired, *What* aspects it is composed by, and *Why* is it important to know about it. The first one involves the idea that culture is directly or indirectly transmitted and individually or cooperatively transferred from one generation to another. The second one is related to the cultural aspects of group individuals linked to the geographical position and the national or local attributes of a community



as well as some specific cultural characteristics such as the way of thinking, the concept of values and daily life behaviors.

On the other hand, as table (1) shows, culture can be also understood from multicultural perspectives where an *emic* interpretation is necessary to appreciate ones' own culture, either from the general to the specific or from the specific to the general. Besides, in the construction of intercultural interaction, having an *etic* perspective is important to understand others' culture as well. Culture is not homogeneous and established, it changes through time and it is important to understand its transformation (Trujillo, 2002). Therefore, culture can be differently conceived by every individual taking into account that every person is a unique entity, even if they belong to a community.

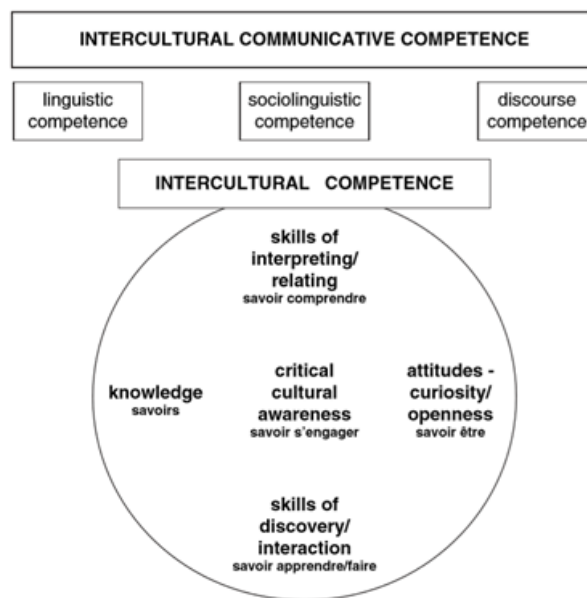


Figure 3. Byram's (1998) framework.

**Cultural awareness.** Correspondingly, when talking about culture we necessarily have to refer to cultural awareness as one of the principles of this construct. As we mentioned before, cultures interact in different local or international environments and then some aspects related to

cultural awareness become relevant in the development of intercultural skills. Some of these aspects are presented in Byram's framework for intercultural communicative competence. His model consists of 5 principles involving attitude (*savoir etre-Saber Ser*), knowledge (*Savoirs-Saberes*), the skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire – Saber hacer*), the skills of interpreting (*Savoir comprendre- saber comprender*) and the development of critical cultural awareness. This last principle involves the other four principles; in other words, cultural awareness is the result of an in-depth understanding of the culture after developing the stages mentioned by Byram's Framework.

### **The Role of Cultural Awareness in Language Learning**

In this section, we attempt to review the main constructs regarding the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness in foreign language acquisition, as well as related studies on the matter. To date, several studies have attempted to investigate and explain linguistic competence and the main components that embody the way it is taught and acquired. A number of authors (Chomsky, 1959; Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010) have considered the effects of language communicative competence, and a theoretical framework has been addressed to explain the implications of fostering learners' communicative skills. However, only in the past two decades have studies of language acquisition directly addressed the critical role of cultural awareness through language teaching and learning. Hence, the importance of students' language performance in relation to their understanding of the target language culture and their own is an increasingly important area of research nowadays.

**Understanding culture and language.** Culture and language are integrated and linked to human beings. The purpose of understanding culture and language is to recognize their complexity as well as to reflect upon activities that could be done in the classroom to make

students think not only of themselves but to recognize the Otherness. Thus, the construct of culture is of interest in education since it encompasses the set of values, beliefs and main features of human essence and their role in social interaction. As noted by Kramersch (1998), the historical and social layers of culture have been combined to address the sociocultural context of language study. Therefore, there is evidence that culture plays a crucial role in language learning and teaching as well. When teaching a foreign language, we as teachers usually show our students a different way to interact in a world in which they are not only exposed to linguistic differences but also to several cultural features that language encompasses.

However, empowering our students to value and accept those differences is the real challenge many educators face nowadays. In Gulbinskienė and Lasauskienė's (2014) words, when learning a foreign language students are not only in contact with a linguistic system but they may be exposed to a cultural system as well. Then, the debate starts when we as educators have to decide what to teach about the language culture, and how may we manage to establish that relationship between the language lessons and cultural awareness.

Scholars have long debated the impact of culture and the role it may have in language learning and teaching. Kramersch (2013) suggests that culture is closely related to the features of native members of a community who share a national language. However, she challenges this claim as well by addressing "the great spread of English as a Lingua Franca which suggests the notion of users of English in multiple global communities". (Kramersch, 2013, p. 70). Thus, the issue has grown in importance in light of the actual role of culture and how it is embedded in language.

In this regards, scholars like Baker (2009) have contributed to recent debates concerning the claim that English is no longer understood as exclusively belonging or connected to one culture which usually advocates a dominant English speaking country. Besides, he problematizes

the lack of previous investigations into the relationships between cultures and languages in the expanding circle ELF contexts. Baker (2009) highlights the importance of using English for intercultural communication and conceives *cultures* as “emergent resources that are in a constant state of fluidity and flux between local and global references” (p.568). Moreover, he acknowledges that examining the relationship between language and culture should take into account the correlation *Language- Culture- Nation* as an oversimplification of multicultural contexts (Baker 2009). Respectively, when talking about cultures and languages Baker (2009) suggests that the term *linguacultures* is relevant “to highlight the language–culture connection and the importance of different languages and cultures in communication” (Baker, 2009, p.569). Remarkably, such communication accepts a plurality of forms and the Otherness.

Similarly, by drawing on the concept of culture, Canagarajah (2005) has been able to show that from a global perspective “cultures are hybrid, diffuse, and deterritorialized. English learning and teaching processes need to be understood from a perception of fluidity and mixing of languages, cultures, and identities. Learners of English are not in the process of learning just to join a single language community, but are “*shuttling between communities*” (p. xxvi), between the local and the global, in which a variety of norms and a repertoire of codes are to be expected.” (as cited in Baker, 2009). Thus, the recognition of diversity and the development of abilities such as negotiation, mediation, and adaptation are as important as systematic knowledge of languages and their specific relationship with other cultures in intercultural encounters.

***The idea of otherness.*** As we have mentioned before in this chapter, culture is defined by the different characteristics that a group of people usually share but that it can be also understood from the particularities of individuals within those communities. Therefore, the idea of otherness is of importance in the understanding of how cultural identities are constructed as well. In the field of language learning, and specifically in the exploration of intercultural communication,

some scholars have commented in the recognition of this idea. Dervin (2011), for example, refers to this concept within the anthropological understanding of culture and defines *otherness* as individuals' perception of *Other learning the Other's* (p.79). That is, in the process of language learning individuals can develop interactional skills that *contribute to mediate them to others* (P. 85) by promoting a vision of the other and the self while interacting. This concept is of interest for our study since cultural background knowledge and the recognition of one's and other's identity is central in foreign language learning and teaching process, then in the perception students build on the matter.

From a postmodern ethical discourse, Mineva (2007) suggested that otherness "is a human attitude in the sense of human" (p.33), in other words, otherness is the willingness to interact or have an interrelation in reference to the other. Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman (1993) refers to otherness as the care for the *Other*, which in turns underlies the essence of human life (co-existence with the other and common or shared experiences). That is to say, "no human life, not even a hermit's, is possible without a world which testifies directly or indirectly to the presence of other human beings: everything we do, know or feel has meaning only if we are able to share it." (Arent, as cited in Mineva, 2007, p. 37).

Otherness is also one of the main concepts related to the development of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. In that sense, as Alvarez and Bonilla (2009) stated: Otherness can be conceived as "the understanding of the existence of diversity and respect for it" (p.160). However, the understanding and recognition of diversity not only involves the *Other* but also the conception of *Myness*. Accordingly, this interrelation between *Otherness* (*The way Other is seen or who they are*) and *Myness* (*The way I see myself or who I am*) alludes to the nature of interaction among social groups, individuals and identities. In sum, we can say that it is only

through *the encounter of cultures, subjects, systems of thought, and social practices* that we can understand who we are and who is the *Other*.

Collectively, these conceptions about **Otherness** outline the existence of a dialogic dynamic among identities, cultures, systems of thought, social practices, *Myness* and *Otherness* that contribute to the negotiation, mediation, and adaptation in intercultural encounters. Accordingly, the recognition of the notion of otherness highly influences the understanding of culture and the way it is perceived in relation to society and the individual (Alvarez and Bonilla, 2009). Likewise, these studies evoke anthropological, ethical, sociological and ontological perspectives in regards to the idea that humans can testify their existence through the presence of the *Other*.

**Culture and language in the EFL classroom.** One of the most important issues in education has been to understand how students learn, and which way or methodology is the most appropriate for them to learn. In regard to this concern, it is necessary to understand that learners are human beings who are complex. Thus, every single student has particularities as they develop psychological, cultural, social and physical dimensions. As stated by Byram (1998) giving learners the opportunity to understand the relationship between the phenomena of culture and language help them to acquire the necessary skills to understand and interact in different contexts.

To date there has been little agreement on what and how to teach in relation to culture. One major concern recalls the relevance of fostering and strengthening learners' identity in the whole process of interacting in a different language. Kramersch (2013) supports the idea that learners L1 identity sometimes feels "threatened" when there is much emphasis on culture (Kramersch, 2013, p.59). That is, since culture remains as one the aspects that mainly influence the construction of individuals' personal and social characteristics of their identity, sometimes the

process of learning the target language and emphasizing aspects of its culture evoke feelings of local culture inferiority and the idea that more importance is given to the foreign language culture. However, on the contrary, a myriad of students may also reject their own culture since learning the target language gives them access to a different way to live and see the world.

Barletta (2009) states a general view of this issue in regards to the development of intercultural competence in the Colombian context. According to her study, in Colombia, although some schools' initiative encompasses cultural goals which include *respect for two types of culture: their own culture and that of "native English countries"* (p.152), there is still a limited representation of potential interlocutors influenced by ideologies such as *nativeness*. Hence, after her work with some Colombians teachers, she concluded that there is a *discomfort with Unfamiliar Cultural Materials*, due to the lack of a "uniform representation of the relation between language and culture, of what the cultural dimension is or should be in the teaching of a language and what the concrete achievements for foreign language teaching should be in terms of cultural gains" (p.153). In addition, she also highlights the fact that the Basic Standards of Foreign Language Competencies in Colombia are based on a European model that recognizes the cultural component of language but still limits the cultural elements to big and small c dimensions of culture. In this regard, Barletta (2009) argues for the interpretation of others' identity and the value of the English-speaking culture supporting the idea that *one nation-one culture* denies the plurality that a multicultural country like Colombia has.

Finally, she claims that both: sociolinguistic and pragmatic components are an essential part of language teaching, however "educators have found themselves with a limited notion of culture and culture teaching within the communicative approach" (Barletta, 2009, p. 144). Furthermore, she reported some of the difficulties and challenges when integrating culture and English language learning, including among other aspects, how teachers perceive the relationship

between culture and language as simplistic. These results, however, as many other studies have barely reported students' perceptions about the connections between language learning and cultural awareness, being then our main interest for this research study.

### **Telecollaboration**

Globalization has brought several tools that can be applied in the classroom nowadays. Social networks and Internet, for example, allow learners to connect with other cultures and broaden the access to a huge amount of information worldwide shared. Therefore, the phenomenon of Internet has increased the need to understand different experiences such as intercultural interactions where people from different countries get closer (Meei-Ling & Bunn-le, 2010). Thus, in the effort of understanding interculturality, the term telecollaboration emerges as a form of intercultural communication (Meei-Ling & Bunn-le, 2010).

O'Dowd (2010) offers an overview of the historical perspective of telecollaboration in relation to intercultural communication. In this regard, he first defines the concept of telecollaboration as a phenomenon that involves collaborative interactions or tasks to developed online communication (O'Dowd, 2007). Similarly, these interactions are built upon different purposes regarding the needs of individuals for communication through online mediums. In the 1920 and 1960, for example, online exchanges were mainly based on the interchange of information from a place to another, and interaction among cultures were barely explored. However, time went by and the interactional needs of humankind changed, a new technological era and the spread of Internet increased the possibilities to ease communication. In the last decade, between 2005 and 2009, intercultural tasks or projects started to play a role in telecollaboration through synchronous and asynchronous communication. On the subject, O'Dowd and Ware (2009) categorized twelve collaborative tasks into three main categories: *Information exchange, comparison and collaboration* (p. 345). However, throughout time, the



objectives of telecollaboration have implied exchanges, collaboration in tasks, comparisons between cultures, knowledge about other culture, awareness of cultural rules, identifications of cultural similarities and differences, and reflection. All these changes have allowed an evolution of the term depending on the thought tendency of people, place and time.

Authors such as Guth and Helm (2010) and O' Dowd (2007) describe telecollaboration as a virtual exchange of two different foreign language groups from distant locations. Belz (2007) views telecollaboration based on two goals: Linguistic interactions and intercultural collaboration (Belz & Thorne, 2006). In an updated article, Chun (2015) states that telecollaboration in the field of Second Language and Foreign Language learning frequently focuses on sociocultural perspectives and provides learning opportunities for interaction. These views on telecollaboration provide the two main purposes of it in the field of English as a Foreign Language.

In regards to telecollaboration purposes, Chun (2015) reviews the importance of teaching culture and language through time. In her state of the art about it, she expresses that language theories have changed from a cognitive perspective (focused sound systems and grammatical structures) to an ecological one (cultural aspects and language are equally important). In regards to the latter, she states that authors such as Agar and Whorf agree that “studying language and studying culture were the same thing” (p.7). Consequently, telecollaboration purposes are directly linked to the theories and models of SLA as Chun Shows in table 2.

Table 2. *Theories and models of SLA and development of ICC. Taken From Chun (2015)*

Theory/model	Perspective	Conceptual principle	Relative importance of language vs. culture
Psycholinguistic/ cognitive	Linguistic competence	Grammatical aspects of language can be learned cognitively, by instruction	Language more important
Sociocultural/ social	Communicative competence	Social interaction is key to language acquisition	Focus on social, contextual, and cultural factors in L2 learning and use
ICC/rich points in LC1 and LC2	Critical cultural awareness; dynamic, heterogeneous view of culture	Dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs (of both language and culture)	Language and culture equally important; concept of LC "languaculture"
Ecological	Broad perspective of studying organisms in their relations with their environment	<i>Affordances</i> (tools in the learner's environment) and <i>scaffolding</i>	Focus on naturalistic contexts, with language and culture equally important

The *table 2* shows that from a Psycholinguistic perspective, telecollaboration is a medium to understand linguistic features (grammar, lexical) and language functions. On the other hand, from the sociocultural theory, language is social and it takes place on a cultural context, thus, the virtual interactions are not merely linguistic but pragmatic, dialogic and intercultural. Besides, an intercultural communicative model gives to language and culture the same value or importance. Thus, telecollaboration also works as a medium for the understanding of commonalities and differences of both language and culture through the negotiation of meanings among different interlocutors. Finally, the ecological approach incorporates multiple organisms or perspectives such as "sociocultural theory, semiotics, ecological psychology, and the concepts of self and identity." (p.10)

Publications by the cited authors on this review show that the Internet-mediated communication facilitates the interaction of participants from different countries or locations. That is to say that the purposes of telecollaboration are twofold in relation to language learning and intercultural development. Telecollaboration interactions are also pedagogical interventions

for foreign language learning that allow reflection and collaboration (Fernandez & Morollon, 2016). Correspondingly, collaborative interactions are key elements for intercultural communication and reflective learning (Pawan, Paulus, Yalcin, & Chang, 2003, as cited in Meei-Ling & Bunn-le, 2010). For instance, some telecollaboration based projects such *Cultura Project* or *The Penn State Foreign Language Telecollaborative Project* demonstrated that the use of some website materials helped students to interpret and reflect on their learning process. Therefore, these type of projects also showed the raise of students' awareness and researchers found that students' understanding of cultures increased through the use of different tools and modes of communication such telecollaboration by enabling different levels of connectivity and interactivity (Meei-Ling & Bunn-le, 2010)

Finally, telecollaboration allows the analysis of the language used by the participants to understand the connections and the perceptions that they build while they are part of virtual interactions. Having in mind that:

“Analyses of language uses in intercultural communication settings have shown that during interaction, participants of different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds would increasingly constitute themselves as a community, speak in a collective voice, converge on a linguistic style and concur on topics of conversation, the goals of the group and even strategies for achieving them” (Cassel & Tversky, 2005, as cited in Meei-Ling & Bunn-le, 2010).

That is to say, telecollaborative sessions do not only allow the connection of participants but also help to understand how participants build up perceptions individually or collaboratively according to the conversations, their language use, and their cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

In this chapter, we have described and explored some of the constructs that provide support to the different stages of the development of this study and the data analysis of the information gathered. Taking into account the importance of exploring what has been inquired in the basis of our research, in this chapter, we set the theoretical constructs that we addressed in the different chapters of this study.

### Chapter III

#### Methodological Design

In this chapter, we describe the essences of the study such as the research approach, the type of study, the participants, and the instruments used to gather information. Furthermore, we describe the instructional stages of our research, and the main purpose of them aligned to the process of data collection and the research approach of the study.

#### Research Design

Adopting the appropriate research design leads the researcher to reach “valid findings, comparisons and conclusions” (Kumar, 2011, p. 41). Besides, as stated by Kumar (2011), the purpose of the research design is to provide the researcher with an explanation of how the answers to the research questions will be found. Kumar (2011), draws on a specific set of characteristics that should be included as part of the research design. He suggests that an explanation of the process in the design should include “the study design per se... the measurement procedures, the sampling strategy, the frame of analysis and the timeframe” (Kumar, 2011, p. 42). Therefore, this section focuses on the research design and methodological propositions that underpin the analysis of the data, and provide a description of the different stages of data gathering.

**Research approach.** There are plenty of possibilities for collecting, classifying and analyzing information. However, Kumar (2011) claims that research studies can be classified from different perspectives in regard to *application*, *objectives* or *mode of inquiry*.

“For example, a research project may be classified as pure or applied research (from the perspective of application), as descriptive, correlational, explanatory or exploratory (from the perspective of objectives) and as qualitative or quantitative (from the perspective of the inquiry mode employed).” (Kumar, 2011, p. 29)

Guided by elicitation data collection methods as more useful for identifying and characterizing the participants' perspectives in our study, this proposal relies on a qualitative research approach due to its parameters to gain insights into this type of information. According to Creswell (2007) qualitative based methods provide a means of data gathering that rely on some characteristics such: collecting data focused on the natural setting of the problem and participants' perceptions; using theoretical lens to review and provide support to the study; and analyzing data requires the interpretation and organization of gathered information by patterns or categories.

Consequently, qualitative methods offer an effective way of providing elements that support the importance of exploring students' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness.

**Type of study.** The selection of the type of study is framed within different issues such as the research purpose and approach, the data collection methodological propositions and the nature of the research phenomenon. Creswell (2007) claims that one of the reasons for conducting qualitative research study is *to empower participants to share their stories* and make their voices be heard, as well as to understand the setting in which individuals experience the phenomenon under study. As noted above, this view of research relates to our study since the understanding of the context through interaction can give us insights in the participants' perception of language learning, as well as in their conceptions of culture.

Since we found a qualitative research approach as particularly useful in understanding these perspectives, we decided to undertake a phenomenological study as the type of qualitative research aligned to the idea of describing and exploring individuals' connotations of those experiences (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, by drawing on the essence of qualitative research approach, Saldaña (2011) recognizes a qualitative phenomenological type of study as the

possibility to capture and deeply understand the essentials of how humans experience something which can be reviewed through participants' observation and the use of interviews.

Accordingly, as noted by Saldaña (2011) and Creswell (2007), the essence of the phenomenological research study focuses on the understanding of a common phenomenon from the perspective of a group of individuals as it is intended to be done in this study. Hence, the participants of the study were carefully selected to guarantee that they all had experienced the phenomena studied (Creswell, 2007).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Based on the general characteristics of qualitative research approach, Creswell (2012) suggests 5 steps (as the table 3 shows) application in the process of data collection. We decided to guide our data gathering procedure on Creswell's proposal since it relates to the basis of our research and gave us insights on how to administer the process from an ethical perspective.

*Table 3.* Steps of Data Collection. Adapted from Creswell (2012)

STEPS OF DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	1. Selection of participants
	2. Management of Ethical issues
	3. Defining type of data to collect, and the instruments
	4. Design of instruments
	5. Gathering information

The *first step* alludes to the process of selecting the participants and the setting that best help us understand the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012)

**Students.** The population that took part in this study were 19 sixth graders from a private school in Rivera – Huila, Colombia. The group consisted of 9 male and 10 female, which ages ranged from 10 to 12 years old. Taking into account the principles of phenomenological research

study, and with the intention of analyzing a phenomenon from the perspective of a homogeneous group of individuals, the selection of this population was guided by the acknowledgment of students' similarities as language learners. According to Creswell (2012), homogenous samples consists of selecting participants whose personal characteristics or attributes vary very little. Our participants conform a homogeneous group of individuals who share similar socioeconomic conditions, academic grade, ages and language learning experiences.

Therefore, the group of 19 students took part in the needs analysis stage and in the telecollaborative sessions. However, only 6 students were chosen as a "purposeful sampling" in the process of data analysis, and as the participants in the last focus group. As stated by Creswell (2007), the purposeful sampling is a strategy that researchers can use as way to "maximize differences in the study and to increase the likelihood that the findings will reflect different perspectives" (Creswell, 2007, p. 126).

**Telecollaborative partners.** On the other hand, taking into account the aims of this study, and with the intention of understanding our Colombian participants' co-creation of experiences as language learners, a 12 years old boy from France and a 12 years old girl from Sweden took part in this study as well. These students volunteered to participate and shared similarities with the ones in Colombia like the age range and the condition of being language learners who have had similar language learning experiences. In contrast, the differences regarding cultural settings and backgrounds gave our participants in Colombia the possibility to maximize the deep understanding of language learning and its relation to cultural issues.

The *second step* proposed by Creswell (2012) advocates the need to obtain permission and get access to the information that the participants provided. During the whole study, sixth graders were informed about the purpose and the stages of the research project in which they would take part. Besides, the participants' parents were notified about the aims of the study,



the data collection methods and the implications of this research. Thus, we were able to obtain parental consent to use and analyze the information that students provided during the needs analysis and the different project stages (See Appendix A). In the report of the results of this study we guarantee that students' identities were protected, since the information here presented relies on academic research purposes only.

The *third step* proposed by Creswell (2012) corresponds to considering what type of information will best answer the research question. As stated before, our study is framed into a qualitative phenomenological research method, and the data collected was supported by elicitation techniques in which the participants engaged in different stages where their experiences were described and analyzed. Therefore, the design and implementation of the stages developed in this research were addressed towards the understanding and description of language learning experiences in relation to cultural awareness built upon the perspectives of the participants. We planned the intervention in regards to the regular English lessons students took ten hours per week, and the telecollaborative session held with the two international partners. Accordingly, the stages we designed and the implementation of telecollaborative sessions were intended to offer an attractive environment where the participants felt comfortable and interested when sharing details regarding their experiences.

### **Data gathering instruments**

There are a number of instruments available for measuring and organizing the information reported by the individuals participating in the study. The *fourth and fifth steps* (Creswell, 2012) comprise the design of instruments for gathering and recording the information. In this section, we describe the techniques we used to gather this information and the reasons to choose them based on the nature of this study.

Table 4. Data Gathering

Research question	Objectives	Instruments
How do sixth graders at a private school in Rivera perceive the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context?	To identify and describe students' perceptions about language learning	Questionnaire 1 Focus group 1, 2 and 3 supported by field notes and video recordings Students' artifacts: thinking routines 1 and 2 Telecollaboration 1 and 2-
	To identify and describe students' perceptions about cultural awareness	Questionnaire 2 focus group 1, 2 and 3 supported by field notes and video recordings Telecollaboration 1 and 2- Students' artifacts: thinking routines 1 and 2
	To describe the relationship that students make between language learning and cultural awareness	Focus group 1, 2 and 3 supported by field notes and video recordings Telecollaboration 1 and 2-

As the table (4) shows, we used instruments such as questionnaires, focus groups, video recordings, students' artifacts and field notes to collect data in this study.

**Questionnaires.** Broadly speaking, Brown (2001) defines questionnaires as a series of written questions or statements to which respondents are intended to react. Though, questionnaires have been presented as a very insightful instrument in qualitative research as they offer the researcher the possibility to understand a phenomenon from different inquiry perspectives. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) for instance, claims three different types of data that

can be measured through questionnaires in second language research: *Factual, behavioral and attitudinal*. The former comprises a more specific description of demographic or socioeconomic features, as well as other background characteristics. Therefore, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) note the importance of factual questions to determine relevant information related to language learning experiences in L2 environments.

Correspondingly, behavioral questions give the researchers acknowledgment about personal habits, lifestyles or personal histories that reflect particular past experiences. Attitudinal questions on the other hand, advocate information regarding *attitudes, beliefs, opinions and interests* related to L2 learning experiences (Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010). Accordingly, we decided to use questionnaires with factual, behavioral and attitudinal statements to illustrate the type of individuals participating in our study, and to get insights about their previous interactions in language learning environments as well as their initial perceptions of cultural awareness. (See Appendix C and D).

**Focus group.** Litosseliti (2003) defines focus groups as small organized groups of participants usually guided by a moderator or the researcher. According to Litosseliti (2003), focus groups allow the researcher to observe and explore multiple perceptions, views or attitudes through ongoing interaction. In contrast to carrying out personal interviews, this instrument gave us the possibility to provide a more natural interactional environment to our participants, and as moderators we guided the discussion using different open-ended questions. However, students were given the opportunity to share more details about their experiences based on the flow of the conversations.

Similarly, focus groups allowed us to collect the data within a group interaction (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988), and gave us the opportunity to explore the participants' views, beliefs or

perceptions in depth by constructing meaning through the process of interaction (Richards, 2003). Three focus groups were carried out in this study. (See Appendices G, H and I).

**Video recordings.** Commenting on the advantages of video recording, Heigham and Croker (2009) argue that researchers can find this instrument very useful when keeping a record of students' interventions during different types of interactions. The purpose of using video recording in this study was to back up the notes taken during the focus group, have the chance to transcribe students' voices and avoid bias. In addition, video recordings allowed us to capture the expressions and reactions of the students when commenting on their language learning experiences and their perceptions of culture.

**Artifacts.** During the data collection process, students' were involved in thinking routine activities (See Appendix E and F) where they were asked to draw, represent and explain what cultural awareness and language learning meant to them. Thinking routines were also used to know students' reactions during the telecollaborative encounters, and to explore which aspects they perceived as more relevant during those encounters. Correspondingly, the products resulting from those activities (especially drawings and small phrases) were analyzed as participants' artifacts as a way to complement the discussion in the focus groups. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) state that these type of elements (such as pictures) can reveal information that leads the researcher to understand the phenomenon studied.

**Field notes.** Teachers' field notes were used to record students' interpretations, attitudes, interaction and reactions during the telecollaborative encounters and the focus groups (Heigham and Croker, 2009). Additionally, field notes helped us to collect "descriptions and accounts of events in the research context" (Burns, 1999, p.87) as a strategy to enrich our insights in the understanding of the phenomenon under study. (See Appendix J)

**Instructional Design**

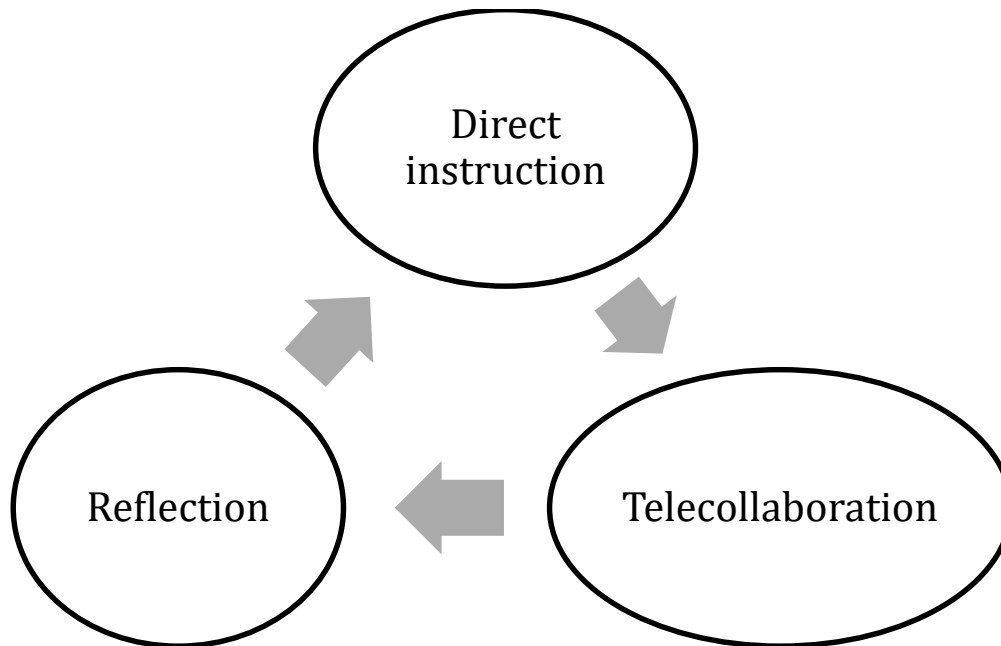
This section is concerned with the explanation of the pedagogical intervention, including the encounters descriptions, the topics students discussed during the sections, and the pedagogical objectives.

**Pedagogical intervention.** This study comprised the implementation of three instructional stages (Direct instruction, Telecollaborative interaction and Reflection) to explore sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context.

These stages were conducted throughout a period of six sessions, divided into four direct instruction sessions and two sessions framed within telecollaborative interaction and reflection. Finally, this pedagogical strategy took advantage of the regular English classes as an opportunity to integrate telecollaboration as a tool for intercultural encounters and a medium to understand students' interest and perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness.

**Instructional objectives.** The purpose thus, was to provide opportunities for the students to understand and develop all the affective, social and cognitive language skills to foster interaction within the tenets of intercultural communication. The goals were set up as follows: (a) To create and provide opportunities for the students to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds and broaden their experience as foreign language learners; (b) To foster students' appropriation of intercultural competence skills to articulate ideas related to the understanding of otherness and the development of identity; and (c) To provide a diverse environment for students to share and discuss ideas with respect to cultural differences by comparing and contrasting them with their own context.

**Procedure.** A phenomenological based method provided us with the possibility to inquire about the phenomenon by means of planning an intervention from the perspective of different stages. Hence, we thought this intervention from three instructional stages: *Direct instruction*, *Telecollaborative interaction* and *Reflection*.



*Figure 4. Intervention Stages*

***Direct instruction stage.*** This stage was intended to relate and take advantage of the regular English classes that our participants normally took during the week. The teacher adjusted the topics and grammar from the lessons and gave the students the possibility to contextualize these learning experiences in relation to their local setting. The students' interaction and participation during the classes helped them to have a broader understanding of language learning in relation to culture. Besides, some areas of interest and topics were chosen to offer the participants interesting information to exchange during the telecollaborative sessions.

Table 5. Direct Instruction Stage.

<b>DIRECT INSTRUCTION STAGE</b>	<b>Lesson 1 “Wild World” – class 1</b>	<b>Lesson 1 “Wild World” – class 2</b>
	The main topics were concerned with the description of animals, plants and places.	Students created a leaflet about the animals in their school and city, as well as a poster of their pets.
	<b>Lesson 2 “Getting Away” – class 1</b>	<b>Lesson 2 “Getting Away” – class 2</b>
	Students discussed topics related to weather conditions, holidays, travelling experiences, and future plans.	Students related these topics to their life by sharing experiences about their previous travelling experiences and their expectations for the future.

**Telecollaborative interaction.** During the two telecollaborative sessions, students’ interaction with international learners from France and Sweden was prompted. Although some topics had been set already, our participants had the possibility to lead the conversation towards topics of their interest, especially if those fostered an intercultural interaction. These sessions took place after finishing lessons 1 and 2, in the direct instruction stage respectively. Moreover, our participants had the chance to write and prepare some questions related to the topics they considered more interesting and that would contribute to pursue an insightful conversation. The sessions were video and audio recorded.

Table 6. Telecollaborative Interaction.

<b>Telecollaborative session 1 – French student</b>	<b>Telecollaborative session 2 – Swedish student</b>
First skype encounter with an international learner from France. 10- 20 minutes sharing their learning experience and talking about different topics:	Second encounter with an international learner from Sweden. 10- 20 minutes sharing their learning experience and talking about different topics:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily routine</li> <li>• Travelling experiences</li> <li>• Subjects</li> <li>• Free time activities</li> <li>• Soccer</li> <li>• Celebrations</li> <li>• Food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily routine</li> <li>• Travelling experiences</li> <li>• Subjects</li> <li>• Free time activities</li> <li>• Famous people</li> <li>• Celebrations</li> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Food</li> </ul>
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**Reflection.** During this stage, students had the possibility to reflect about the encounters and complement their insights when participating in the focus groups. The discussions were guided by the researchers and based on a set of questions regarding the intercultural experience and the main issues that students identified as more meaningful during the encounters. These sessions were developed after the first and second telecollaborative encounters and the participants were asked direct questions that guided us to find the answer to our research question.

*Table 7. Reflection.*

<b>Reflection – Focus Group 2</b>	<b>Reflection – Focus Group 3</b>
This focus group interview was carried after the first encounter to explore in depth the participants’ views, beliefs or perceptions and to construct meaning through the process of interaction. (Richards, 2003)	The last focus group interview took place after the last encounter. Students answered some specific questions related to the relationship they perceived between language learning and cultural awareness.

**Intervention as innovation.** This research study attempted to understand students’ perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness and to include telecollaboration (intercultural encounters) as a way to expand the learning experience beyond the classroom. In



addition, our purpose relied on the possibility to enrich the language learning experience not only for academic development but to promote intercultural understandings between local and global communities. This sociocultural and postmodern view of language learning and the use of technological tools to promote international and mutual understanding are innovative in the EFL context since it helps students' to explore the notions of *Otherness* and *Myness* within multicultural integration. Additionally, as Hino (2012) and Matsuda (2002) suggest, English classes should become a starting point to expose students to varieties of English and cultures as a strategy to promote international understanding.

Thus, we consider that teaching should also become an opportunity to raise awareness of English varieties (including English as a lingua franca), the importance of local and global communities and the conception of equality. Besides, it is important to provide learning settings where students have the opportunity to explore different cultures and countries, as well as the relationship among them. To put in Matsuda (2002) words: "If students are exposed only to a limited section of the world, their awareness and understanding of the world may also become limited" (Matsuda, 2002, p.16), that is to say that promoting a broader view of the world is relevant to better understand how it works.

**Methodological approach underlying the pedagogical intervention.** To develop this research study and the pedagogical intervention we took into account the qualitative nature of the study and the intercultural approach which guide the telecollaborative encounters. As we already mentioned, the intervention had three stages (Direct instruction, Telecollaborative interaction and Reflection) to achieve three aims: (a) To create and provide opportunities for the students to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds and broaden their experience as foreign language learners; (b) To foster students' appropriation of intercultural competence

skills to articulate ideas related to the understanding of otherness and the development of identity; and (c) To provide a diverse environment for students to share and discuss ideas with respect to cultural differences by comparing and contrasting them with their own context.

All of them, under the idea of providing an interactive space that promotes international understanding and the development of learning skills considering Byram's (1998) 5 principles: *savoir etre* (Saber Ser), *Savoirs* (Knowledge), *savoir faire* (skills of discovery and interaction), *Savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting saber comprendre) and *Savoir s'engager* (cultural awareness).

**Connection of the pedagogical intervention with the research question.** This study looked into sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context. Thus, our pedagogical intervention involved two telecollaborative sessions where students talked about cultural aspects based on the regular topics of their English classes and got involved in reflective sessions intended to explore their perceptions through group conversations guided by the researchers.

This method resulted particularly useful in the way we wanted to determine the main categories for answering our research questions. That is, it was necessary to guide our students through a process in which they had opportunities to broaden their perspectives of language learning, cultural awareness and the relationship between them (language learning and cultural awareness). Based on the type of data collected and the analysis of language learning experiences, this pedagogical intervention mainly relies on the evaluation of the students' process of reflection and the possible variables that determine their perspectives.

## Chapter IV

### Data Analysis and Findings

This section is concerned with the process we followed to analyze the database from qualitative and *interpretive* research analysis procedures after the six sessions of our pedagogical intervention. We also showed the findings of this study based on the three emerging categories: language learning: variables and role; cultural awareness: visible and invisible attributions; and language and culture are bound together, as well as its subcategories with the data that supported them.

#### Data Analysis Procedure

To collect the data and answer our main research question: How do sixth graders at a private school in Rivera perceive the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context? We used data collection instruments such as questionnaires, focus groups, video recordings (of focus groups and telecollaborations), teachers' field notes and students' artifacts (drawings and thinking routines). We transcribed the video recordings and digitalized the other instruments. The data analysis of this study is divided into two stages: the *initial stage* of data collection was carried out before the telecollaborative encounters, so we handed two questionnaires to gather general information from the participants and to identify their initial perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness. Additionally, the database was expanded by fostering students' participation in thinking routine activities where they were asked to represent cultural awareness and language learning through a symbol, a color and an image. Finally, students were asked to take part in a focus group interview to complement the information presented in the drawings and their perceptions about the two main concepts.

After having recorded students' initial perceptions about cultural awareness and language learning, we implemented telecollaborative sessions as part of our pedagogical implementation as the *second stage* of our data collection to prompt interaction between our students and two international partners from France and Sweden. Besides, we used this strategy to provide our learners with an interesting environment where they could use the language and engage in conversations and share personal language learning experiences. Two focus groups were set after the two encounters respectively so the participants were able to talk about their insights, opinions and reactions when interacting with kids from other countries. Besides, we designed some open-ended questions to lead and monitor the focus groups and elicit students' perceptions about cultural awareness, language learning and the relationship they observed between them.

To analyze the gathered information, we decided to guide our data interpretation based on a descriptive type of analysis. We started the data analysis by systematizing the questionnaires (Q1 and Q2); and by exploring, reading and familiarizing with students' artifacts (thinking routines- AR1 and AR2), teacher's field notes (FN), the transcription of 3 focus groups (FG1, FG2 and FG3) and two telecollaborations encounters (T1 and T2). Similarly, as a way to identify codes and categories, we used the color coding technique which Stottok, Bergause, and Gorra (2011) define as the way to assign codes, concepts or categories with colorful fonts. This technique was applied to the audio and video transcriptions from the focus groups, as well as to the teachers' field notes recorded during the telecollaborative encounters.

Having in mind the qualitative nature of our research, the interpretation of the database demanded an *interpretive* process to make interpretations of the information condensed into categories (Creswell, 2012). We also relied on inductive processes and systemic steps such as: creating codes and categories from the gathered information, positioning categories within theoretical lens and explaining the interconnection of these categories and the theory (Corbin &

Strauss, 2008). Finally, we used Creswell's (2012) *simultaneous and inductive* processes to analyze the data that goes from particular and detailed data to the representation of general codes and categories that represent a bigger and more consolidated perspective of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012).

Moreover, we conveyed the findings from the triangulation of the different data sources of information. This triangulation process refers to the interpretation of different sources of data like interviews, observation or questionnaires where participants have shared stories or experiences in order to give the analysis more validity. (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Subsequently, three categories emerged from grouping and assigning values to the responses of the questionnaires, the interpretation of students' artifacts, the insights from the focus groups discussions, teacher's field notes, and telecollaborative encounters. These categories were organized by means of answering the sub-questions and achieving our general objective: to identify and explore sixth graders' perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL classroom, at a private school in Rivera, Huila. However, to explore the connections students established between these two notions: cultural awareness and language learning, it was necessary to inquire into our participants' perceptions of each one separately and together.

### **Research Categories**

As this research study aims to explore sixth graders' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context, three categories emerged from the data analysis, with its corresponding categories: language learning: variables and role, cultural awareness: visible and invisible traits, and language and culture are bound together (See Table 6). Further, an interpretation of each category will be given supporting the information presented with theory and students' voices. It is

important to highlight that the categories evoke the three specific aims of this study: (a) To identify and describe students’ perceptions about language learning; (b) To identify and describe students’ perceptions about cultural awareness; (c) To describe the relationship that students make between language learning and cultural awareness, and (d) To draw some pedagogical implications about the relevance of culture in the field of language education.

Table 6. Research categories.

Research question	Categories	Subcategories
<p>How do sixth graders at a private school in Rivera perceive the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context?</p>	<p>Language learning: Variables and Role.</p>	<p>Language Learning and the Influence of English from Inner Circle Countries</p>
		<p>Language Learner’s Attitude towards the L2 Promotes Language Learning</p>
		<p>Language Learning as an Instrumental Need</p>
	<p>Cultural Awareness: Visible and Invisible Traits.</p>	<p>Cultural Awareness as a Visible Path of Cultures</p>
		<p>Cultural Awareness as an Invisible Path of Cultures</p>
	<p>Language and Culture are Bound Together.</p>	<p>The Presence of Otherness and Myness in Language Learning</p>
		<p>Telecollaboration as a Means to Reflect Upon Culture and Language</p>
		<p>English as a Medium for International Understanding</p>

**Language learning: variables and role.** The first sub-question in this study sought to determine and identify students' perceptions about language learning by providing relevant insights into individuals' learning experiences, motivation patterns, and the participants' overview of language learning. Taking into consideration the setting, the participants in this study have mostly and strictly been exposed to language learning instruction in English. That is, their opinions, attitudes and insights about language learning correspond to their previous experience as English language learners. Thus, the initial questionnaire and first focus group included specific questions about learning English as an equivalent to their experience as language learners. Therefore, we drew on the following subcategories considering our participants' perception about language learning regarding their lived experiences as English learners.

*Language learning and the influence of English from inner circle countries.* This subcategory contributes to answer our main research question since the relationship that our students established between language learning and culture has been influenced by the perpetuation of a notion that relies on language learning as tied to a specific American or British culture, as it is the case of our participants. Taking into account the school context, and analyzing the database from students' experience as English language learners, this subcategory explores the widespread and perpetuation of English in our setting. The phenomenon of the expansion of English language in Colombia has provided a set of significant insights about the influence of inner circle varieties like American and British English (Kachru as cited in Schmitz, 2013) in educational policies of language learning and teaching.

This held view among the participants, in which learning a language or bilingualism are strictly ascribed to learning English, may support the hypothesis that students relate language learning to the perpetuation and worshiping of a dominant language. We could first emphasize on this assumption when the participants were asked to work on the thinking routine “Color, symbol, image” and to relate learning English to a symbol, a color and an image. The following are some examples of students’ drawings during the first thinking routine workshop where their initial ideas of what learning English evoked for them were captured:



*Picture 1.* Students' artifacts (AR1), Color-Symbol- Image

These associations were partly explained by the relationship participants established between English and colors such as blue and red, or images like the English speaking countries flags and their symbols. Besides, during the first focus group, we asked the students to explain the different images, colors and symbols they chose and the relationship they had established between them and English language. A variety of perspectives were expressed by the students and we could better understand the comparison and the connections students made of the drawings with the idea of English as strictly associated to dominant countries such U.S or



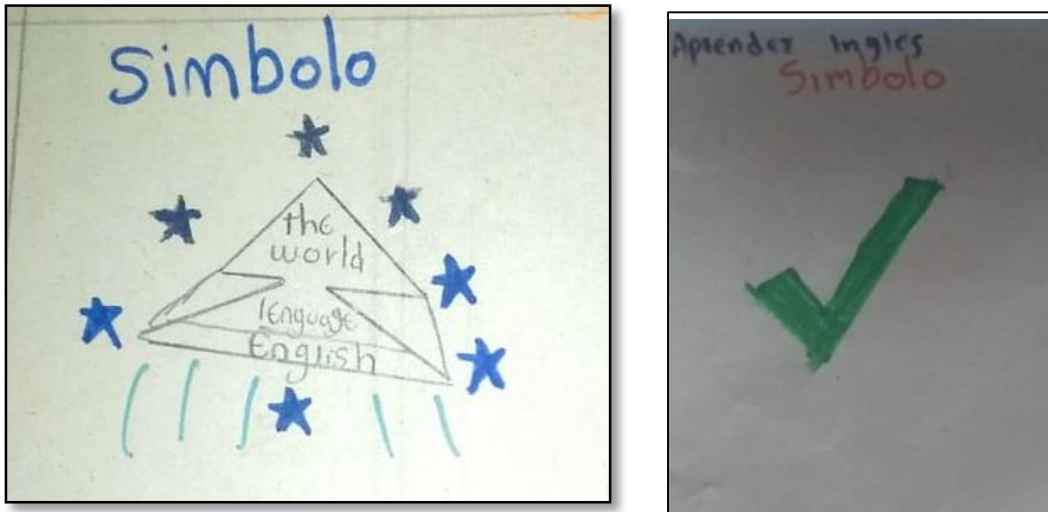
England. The excerpts below were taken from the first focus group and help us illustrate the aforementioned associations:

“My color is blue too, when I think about English I think in blue because of the flag”

(Nick, FG1, 2018)

“I chose the colors red, blue and golden because English is like a light in my life, and red and blue because of the flag of England and U.S” (Crack, FG1, 2018)

Besides, the relevant number of students who indicated a connection between learning English and the dominant status of English speaking countries such U.S, England and Canada, also suggests that a strong link may exist between their perception of language learning and their notion of academic and professional development and success. As the increased spread of English as a global language has perpetuated the field of education, industry and media, in most cases, the participants reported learning English as an opportunity to access educational advantages, employment benefits or social and cultural opportunities. Especially in the “symbol” column for the thinking routine workshop (AR1), some of the drawings evoked the concepts of *growth*, *development* and *success* that were later explained by the students in relation to the advantages that learning a broadly spoken like English could bring to their academic and future occupational life.



Picture 2. Students' artifacts (AR1), Color-Symbol- Image

Therefore, the comments below also explain this perspective and offer evidence on how students relate language learning to academic and professional growth:

“My symbol is a flame and a start with a message ENGLISH IS THE WORLD LANGUAGE, and my image is a tree because English is the first language we have to learn before the others” (Crack, FG1, 2018)

“My experience learning English has been good because I had the opportunity to learn about the language as it is the world language. The language that most people speak” (Dry, FG1, 2018)

There are, however, other possible explanations. Although we intended to relate their previous experience of learning English as a foreign language to the general idea of language learning, in the third focus group when asked about a specific definition of language learning, only a small number of participants indicated that learning a language could be also linked to intrinsic motivation. With respect to these personal reasons to learn a language, one individual stated:

“Hay algunos idiomas que si nos favorecen tanto economía, trabajo y todo eso, pero hay otras lenguas que uno las aprende es como por saber un segundo idioma además del nativo” (Nana, FG3, 2018) [There are some languages that helps us having economic development, getting job opportunities and that stuff, but there are some other languages you learn only because you are interested in learning a second language different from your mother tongue]

Correspondingly, the connections that our participants established between language learning and cultural awareness are concerned with the complexity of understanding how students interpret culture from a narrow view in which the target language growing condition underestimates the local one. Taken together, these results support evidence from previous observations (Velez, 2013; other) who claims that in Colombia, acquiring proficiency in the English language has become by some means a requirement for academic and professional international prestige. Hence, the observed correlation that our participants make between language learning and the perpetuation of a dominant language might be also explained from the perspective of English as the language of the most powerful, and economically developed nations whose language needs to be learnt to understand the way they succeed (Mahboob, 2011).

Therefore, this first subcategory advocated other interpretations for our main research question by giving us important insights on how students established relationships between language learning and cultural awareness from the complexity of interpreting this experience as useful and important in their educational and professional development. That is, students perceive language learning as a meaningful experience, especially since it is connected to a language that is worldwide recognized and valued.

*Language learner's attitude towards the L2 promotes language learning.* In addition, respondents were asked to suggest reasons for learning a foreign language. With respect to the questionnaire statements related to the students' interest in language learning, the participants, on the whole, agreed with the postulation that learning English is important or relevant for their lives. The aforementioned corresponds to a way of explaining the possible motivational patterns that students may have to learn languages. Clément and Gardner (2006) suggested three main variables affecting language acquisition: *cognitive, personality and affective variables*. The last one relates to this subcategory since it implies aspects such as motivation and learners' attitude. Here, we found that students' attitude towards a particular language is a key aspect that makes them perceive language learning as important or valuable in their academic process.

We firstly acknowledged this perspective when the students were asked to answer and complete the first questionnaire about language learning. During these experience we were observing the students, taking notes and asking them some questions while responding to the questionnaires. Thus, our observation field notes also gave us insights to establish this subcategory. We reported the high motivation of the students towards the language due to their positive experience as English learners, and some comments that expressed their interest towards learning English because they felt happy or motivated when they had the chance to use the language in other settings rather than the school.

3. ¿Qué te motiva a aprender inglés como lengua extranjera?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Viajar y conocer diferentes lugares	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tener mejores oportunidades laborales o académicas en el futuro
<input type="checkbox"/> Conocer sobre la cultura de la lengua extranjera	Otra
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comunicarme con personas de otros países	

5. ¿Has utilizado la lengua extranjera inglés para alguno de los siguientes propósitos? (Más de una opción es posible)

Comunicarte con hablantes nativos o no nativos (pedir información, hablar por teléfono, hacer una reserva, entablar un diálogo)

Presentar u obtener algún puntaje en una prueba internacional

Tener una entrevista de ingreso a una institución

Comunicarte por redes sociales o juegos online

Participar en programas de intercambio en otros países

Otra \_\_\_\_\_

Picture 3. Excerpts from questionnaires (Q1), Question 3 and 5

Los estudiantes se sienten motivados a aprender inglés y cuando se les pregunta sobre su motivación lo relacionan a experiencias pasadas en el colegio, por ejemplo "ha sido chereche como nos enseñan y sirve mucho." Viajar, trabajo y el colegio son motivos. Sin embargo, el tener la oportunidad de usarlo cuando viajan y que sus papás los feliciten es mejor que una buena nota o algo relacionado al colegio.

Picture 4. Teacher's field notes

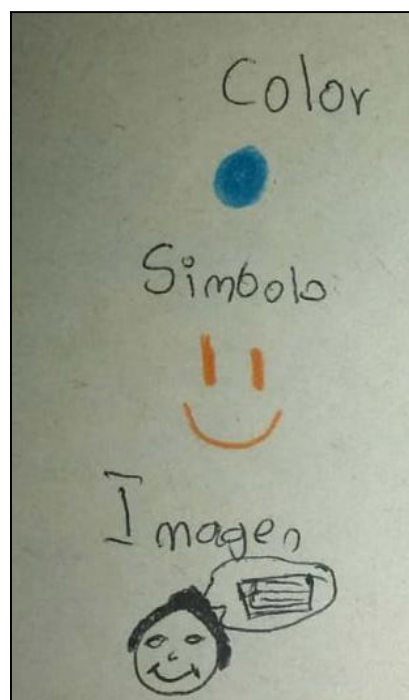
[Students feel motivated to learn English and when they are asked where that motivation comes from they usually associate it to past learning experiences in the school: "It has been interesting how we were taught and it is very useful as well". Travelling, work and the school are some of the reasons, however, having opportunities to use the language when they travel abroad and that they parents congratulate them because of that is better than getting a good grade in the subject] Teacher's observation field notes written during the application of the questionnaires (FN, August, 2018).

Moreover, throughout the focus groups, there were also some propositions that helped us characterize the significant correlation learners established between language learning and

positive attitudes. Some participants felt that learning English evokes some happiness to their life, while others considered that learning a language such as English was related to different things they like or enjoy. In the “Color, Symbol, Image” thinking routine activity developed before the focus group interview, one participant, when asked to explain the image related to language learning stated: “The symbol is a happy face because I really like the language”. This view was echoed by other interviewees who alluded to the notion of language learning as beautiful, colorful and interesting.

“I feel happy when I speak English and I think is like a funny language” (Nick, FG1, 2018)

“I think the same as –student- because I think that when I speak I can express my feeling and I feel happy” (Dry, FG1, 2018)



*Picture 5.* Students' artifacts (AR1), Color-Symbol- Image

These results provide further support for understanding that students' perspective on language learning are built by means of the positive impact this experience has brought to their lives, and this has resulted in evoking their positive attitude towards the language as well. This

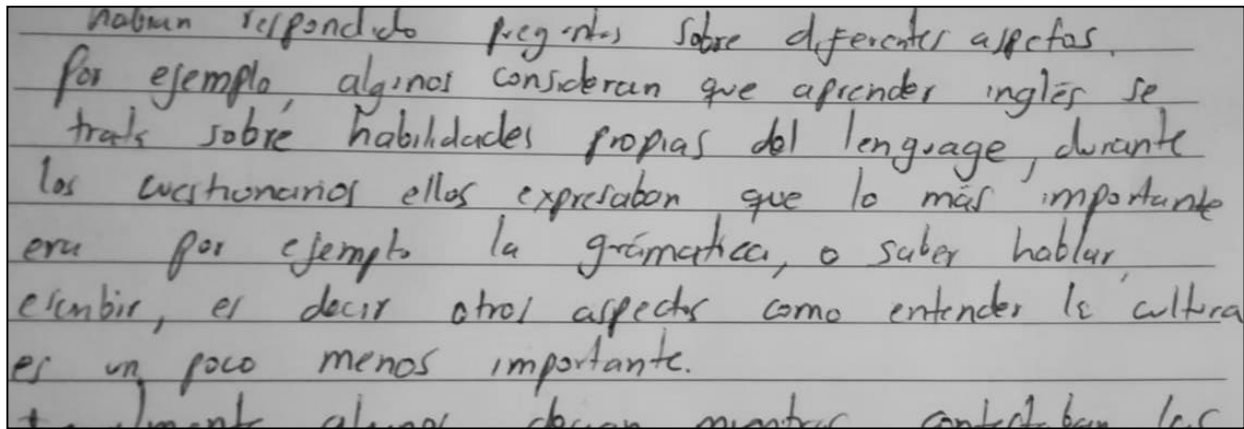
result may be explained by the fact that the language learning experience of the participants in this study, in most of the cases, has been lived in other settings different from their classroom. For instance, most of our participants have had the possibility to use the foreign language where it is spoken, or have interacted with relatives and friends that use the target language. In this regard, the possibilities to directly integrate *language learning* to their lives provide the students with a better understanding of language learning as an integrated process, not only for exploring meaningful communication but also for building relationships and personal attitudes towards the target language.

In general, students demonstrated favorable attitudes to the target language and the way they perceive language learning can be explained because of this. Gardner (1968), for example, comments on the definition of attitude in relation to language learning and states that learners' positive attitude towards the language facilitates its acquisition. Thus, our participants perceive language learning as a positive experience they that they want to undertake since they feel motivated toward it and they perceive as significant and valuable in their lives.

In this subcategory, students defined language learning as something they liked or enjoyed to do since the experience of learning a new language was something interesting no matter the advantages it could take. From a broader perspective, this students' interpretation of language learning establishes connections to the interpretation of cultural awareness as well, since students' experience of learning a language could result equally interesting as the involvement in the culture of that language.

***Language learning as an instrumental need.*** Interestingly, the emerging insights of participants throughout the focus group discussions also indicated a very instrumental understanding of language learning. However, at first, we could ascertain in some of these perspectives based on the questionnaires and the opinions students had before the focus groups

discussions and the telecollaborative encounters. From our observation it was possible to comment on this assumption and compare the answer of the students in the questionnaires and their insights during the focus groups. Some of them agreed in the idea that language learning strictly relied on acquiring language skills and being able to understand its grammar, or learning how it is spoken and written.



Picture 6. Teacher's field notes

[For instance, some of the students thought that learning English was about learning language skills. During the questionnaires they reported that grammar or learning how to speak and write, for example, were the most important aspects. That is, knowing about other aspects of the language such culture was less important] Teacher's observation field notes during the application of the questionnaires (FN, August, 2018).

Estilo de aprendizaje  
Elige una única opción para cada uno de los siguientes enunciados o preguntas

4. Cuando aprendes inglés consideras que se debe hacer énfasis en:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gramática y vocabulario	<input type="checkbox"/> Situaciones generales (Hablar por teléfono, disculparse, pedir información)
<input type="checkbox"/> Expresiones coloquiales	Otro _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Temas relacionados a la vida cotidiana	

Picture 7. Excerpt from questionnaires (Q1), Question 4



On the other hand, in the last focus group, when specifically asked for giving a definition of what language learning encompasses, some students argued that it is a process that merely relies on individuals' capability or need to listen, speak, read or write in a foreign language.

“Es la capacidad de hablar en otro tipo de lengua para poder comunicarse con otras personas que hablen ese idioma” (Lala1, P2, FG3). [Is the ability you have to speak in a different language and to be able to communicate with other people who speak that language too]

In this regard, the notion of language learning as an instrument to accomplish certain practical purposes that the learner may have is related to what Gardner (2009) defines as *instrumental motivation*. In this case, a small number of our participants claimed that language learning relies on acquiring only those aspects of the language they need for achieving different purposes whether they are related to academic requirements or not. Thus, language learning is perceived as the process of internalizing aspects of the target language that a learner can use whenever it is necessary. Other responses that illustrate this perception included:

“Expresarlo, escribir, comprar cosas, ósea usarlo en un contexto” (Crack, Nana and Lala, FG3, 2018) [To express, write, buy things. I mean, use the language in context]

As described by the previous participants, it is therefore perceived that students establish connections between language learning and language functions, language forms and skills development. Although this relationship was not particularly prominent, we can infer that on the whole, the idea of language learning is still assumed as strictly related to learners' internalization of grammatical structures, and their ability to use them in specific situations. However, a possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate teaching strategies to help students distinguish and properly develop the different components of communicative competence in language learning.

The data analysis of this study was exploratory and interpretative in nature. Thus, the first category and its corresponding subcategories we analyzed in this section correspond to an interpretation of the data collected from different sources in relation to our experience as researchers in this specific context. On the whole, our participants' views on language learning were identified based on their experience as English language learners. Nevertheless, the research has also shown significant findings in our participants' general interpretations of the role of languages in the social and economic development of our country, as well as the possible motivational factors towards a target language, and an overall conceptualization of the language learning:

**Cultural awareness: visible and invisible traits.** The second sub-question in this study sought to determine and identify students' perceptions about cultural awareness by providing relevant insights into individuals' conceptions of their culture, themselves and the other. Taking into consideration the setting, the participants' in this study have had the opportunity to travel or interact with people or family who live in foreign countries; or while on holidays or in daily activities. That is, their opinions, attitudes and insights about cultural awareness correspond to their previous experiences and backgrounds (cultural, linguistic and socio-economic). Thus, instruments included questions to identify and understand participants' perceptions about cultural awareness. Therefore, as a result of the data analysis in this main concept, the participants demonstrated that they see cultural awareness from the visible and invisible aspects of cultures.

To identify participants' cultural perceptions we first used a content analysis of the focus group transcript (FG1) and the answers from the questionnaire (Q2). As a result of it, we discovered that students used two sets of words to express their understanding of culture. The first set of words involves nouns and adjectives such as "Typical", "History", "Celebrations", "Dances", "Popular" "Places" and "Food" which denote visible aspects of the culture. On the

second set they used words such as “Natural”, “Mind”, “Respect”, “Different” and “Be” which represent invisible cultural attributes.

In the process of content (words) analysis, we found out that our participants perceived culture as a set of visible aspects rather than a set of invisible ones, however, they do not perceive culture from both sides simultaneously. As evidence of this assumption, 7 students just made use of nouns and adjectives related to the product or what they can see, learn, enjoy or obtain without a deep understanding of it, and the other 3 employed words making emphasis on the human being, the respect of the diversity and way of thinking. This constitutes our subcategories *Cultural awareness as a visible path of cultures, and cultural awareness as an invisible path of cultures.*

***Cultural awareness as a visible path of cultures.*** This subcategory represents the participants’ perceptions from what is more visible (“History”, “Celebrations”, “Dances”, “Popular” “Places” and “Food”) in a community or a country. With respect to these visible aspects of students’ cultures, in one case, a participant thought that:

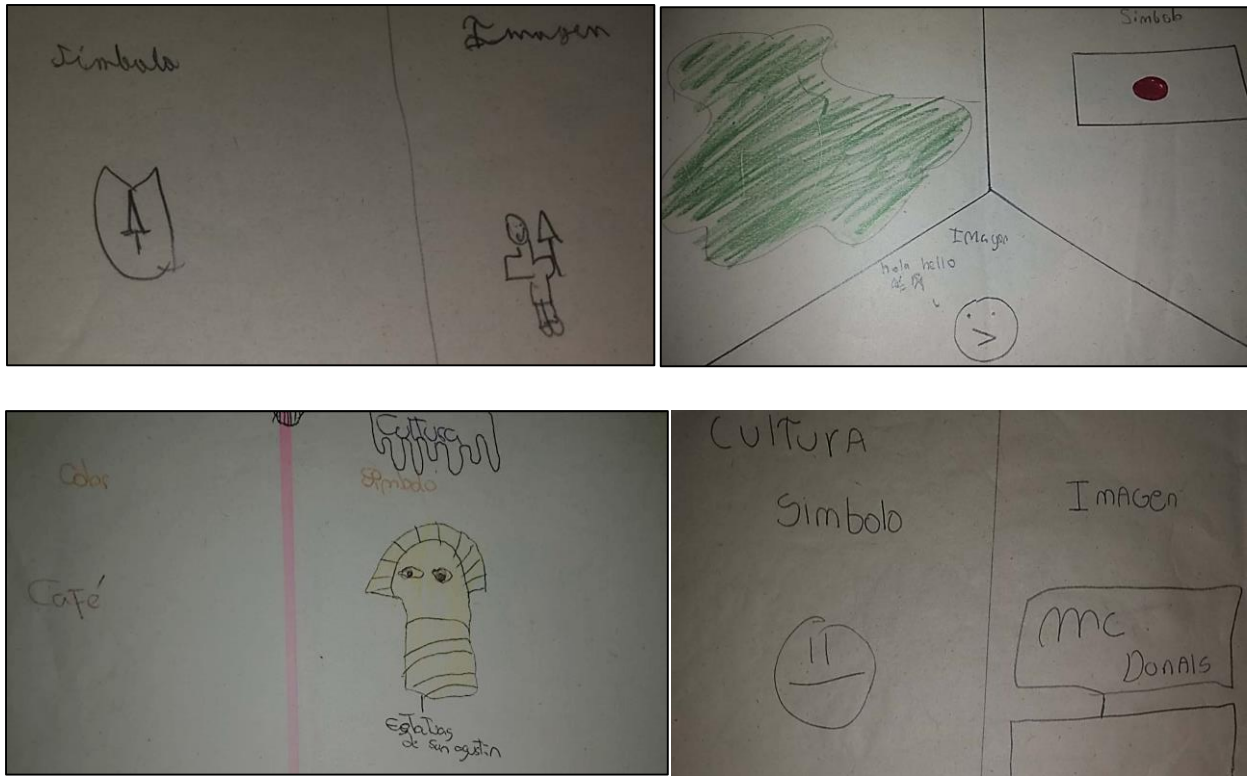
“Culture is the group of history, arts, typical food, typical dances and things representative of a country or a context” (Gandal, FG1, 2018)

These were the words used by a participant in a focus group (FG1) when answering to a question related to their understanding of concepts such as cultural awareness or culture. His answer represents 70% of the participants’ replies to the questions related to cultural perceptions. This view was echoed by another informant who made emphasis on visible aspects as well:

“Para mí, la cultura es como la parte típica de un país....como sus bailes típicos o todo lo que tenga que ver o realizado ese país.” (Lala1, FG1, 2018) [For me, culture is the typical part of a country... such as its typical dances or all the things you can see or that the country has done].

In the same line of thought, other participants' artifacts of thinking routine *Color, Symbol, and Image* (See picture 8) pictured the idea of culture as represented by colors such as brown, golden and green, which for them, resemble the history and some important places. Besides, they reinforced this idea by drawing symbols and images such as flags, soldiers, shields, restaurants, and monuments that also exemplified their perceptions about culture. In fact, when analyzing the data, we supported the interpretation of these representations with some answers to the second questionnaire (Q2).

When asked about the sources where they have learned about culture, our participants expressed that these perceptions were built upon their interactions with different sources acquired from their learning experiences at school, by travelling abroad or through the interaction with different media sources (See picture 9). Thus, the influence of the above-mentioned sources illustrates that cultural perceptions can be individually and collectively constructed (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009).



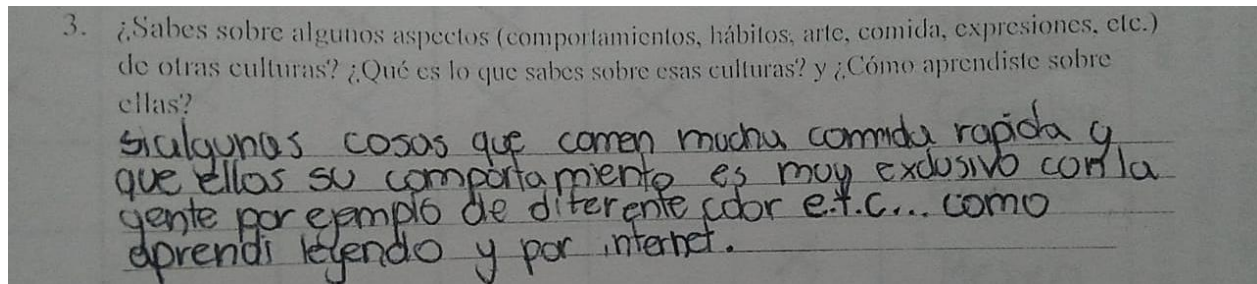
Picture 8. Students' artifacts (AR1), Culture

3. ¿Sabes sobre algunos aspectos (comportamientos, hábitos, arte, comida, expresiones, etc.) de otras culturas? ¿Qué es lo que sabes sobre esas culturas? y ¿Cómo aprendiste sobre ellas?

Alemania: haya su vaite tipico es el Seuchuplater, una de las celebraciones mas grandes y famosas de haya es la fiesta de la cerveza y aprendi esto por una familia mia que vive haya

3. ¿Sabes sobre algunos aspectos (comportamientos, hábitos, arte, comida, expresiones, etc.) de otras culturas? ¿Qué es lo que sabes sobre esas culturas? y ¿Cómo aprendiste sobre ellas?

si se sobre la cultura mesopotamica que sus habitos son buenos aligual que la comida y aprendi eso en la clase de sociales



Picture 9. Excerpt from questionnaires (Q2), Question 3

Accordingly, the excerpts from these questionnaires and illustrations in the artifacts made reference to some visible and representative aspects of culture. To this respect, Seelye (1984) states that all the aspects of the culture that are visible refer to Big C, which means that the most noticeable of a culture such celebrations, dances, foods and so on are part of it. Moreover, after the two telecollaborative sessions, one thinking routine and two reflective sessions to collect more data to answer our research questions, we found out that some participants still conceive *Cultural awareness as a visible path of cultures*, as evidence of this, one interviewee said:

“Cultura para nosotros es lo que representa a nuestro país, como por ejemplo la economía, la comida, las danzas, los bailes, las festividades.” (Migue, FG2, 2018) [For us, culture is what represents our country, for example, the economy, food, dances, celebrations]

In this response, the participant’s voice captures some of his partners’ perceptions. It showed us again that part of their perceptions about culture are based on national and regional artifacts, which are created and promoted by the country or region as a national patrimony that represents the country or region (Kramsh, 2013). In this order of ideas, our participants show the importance of what is traditional for their cultures naming elements such dances, food and celebrations. The permanence of these elements in their lives through time and their sensory experiences make students perceive cultural awareness from a visible aspect.

The following excerpt (1) taken from a telecollaborative encounter (T1) reflects participants' cultural schemata and interest in surface aspects such as celebrations. Here, the participant asked Thomas (their international partner) about a Christmas celebration:

**Excerpt 1.**

Migue: How do you celebrate Christmas?

Thomas: We do not celebrate Christmas.

Migue: why?

Thomas' mother: How can I explain? We meet at Christmas but we just have something to eat and we do not give presents.

Nana: Curious. We did not know that. Why just a meeting?

Thomas' mother: Here, people is quiet and try to give more importance to the interaction with their relatives. That's all. You can continue talking with Thomas

Dry: Thanks... Thomas, do you like it?

Thomas: Yes, I like it. But, I love going to Colombia for Christmas because the food is delicious and I receive presents.

Although, the excerpt of the conversation shows participant' interest in knowing if both cultures celebrate Christmas in the same way, we could also perceive that the participant started to inquire more details that are not only focused on surface aspects but also on the understanding of why people behave or celebrate in a different way, and was interested in Thomas' opinion about this aspect of his own culture as well.

According to Byrams' framework, we can say that this first expansion on participants' perceptions was given, in this study, by their openness and their positive attitudes (*Savoir etre-Saber ser*) during the interactions. Also, their motivation to use English to communicate with young teenagers of their same age from another country was one of the elements that stimulated students' positive reactions and attitudes. Moreover, another affective variable like *curiosity* was

relevant when students expanded or changed their perceptions. Excerpt 1 also exemplifies this assumption as it illustrates one moment of the interaction when participants want to inquire more about Thomas, and where curiosity allows them to identify and understand some cultural differences.

*Cultural awareness as an invisible path of the culture.* Even though 70 % of the participants expressed that culture was the historical, typical and tangible products of a country or nation, 30 % of the participants claimed that culture implies other aspects such as the understanding of what is *natural* (common), and the respect of differences. “Culture represents the natural” (FG1) and “Cultural awareness is when you know the things that they do and you respect those things” (FG1) were the words of two participants that highlight: (1) “the natural”, which for them represents who they are (roots, behaviors, likes, dislikes, feelings) and their ways of thinking. And (2) “the Respect” which makes reference to the recognition of the different ways of thinking, acting and all the things that some countries do not have in common. In regards to the latter, Nick also drew the word “Respect” on his thinking routine (AR1) with capital letters which denotes how important he may consider this aspect of culture (See picture 10).

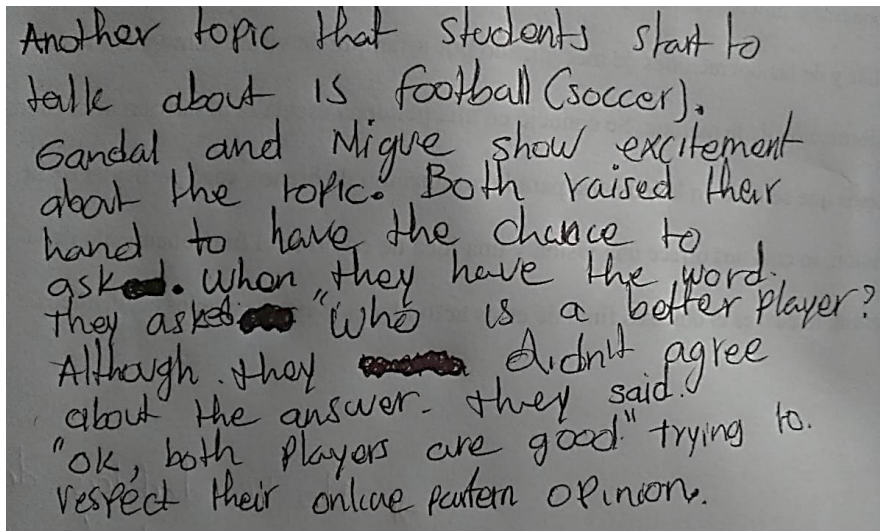


Picture 10. Students' artifacts (AR1), Culture

During the telecollaborative encounters one of the teachers also registered some students' attitude and opinions that supported this idea (See picture 11 from FN). Gandal and Migue, for example, showed signs of respect when they expressed their opinion about a topic (sports) by saying: “Ok, both players are good”. Taking into account the richness of cultural aspects that can



be framed within this kind of topics, these words can be a clear example that denotes students' empathy and intention to accept that their opinions differ from other, but which is not a barrier to interact. In addition, this moment of the conversation also alludes to one of Byram's principles: *savoir etre*, which is represented through students' openness and willingness to interact within the plurality of forms and thoughts.



Another topic that students start to talk about is football (soccer). Gandal and Nigue show excitement about the topic. Both raised their hand to have the chance to ask. When they have the word they asked "Who is a better player?" Although they didn't agree about the answer they said "ok, both players are good" trying to respect their online partner opinion.

Picture 11. Excerpt from teacher's field notes (FN)

After the first telecollaboration, some participants started to be more confident and shared their perceptions about culture. Thus, on the second focus group (first reflective session) students expressed:

“Respecto a la educación en cada país me imagino que es diferente porque cada uno tiene su forma de apropiarse su manera para educar en su país.”(Bala, FG2, 2018) [Regarding education, I imagine that every country has its own way of teaching]

“Es la característica de cada comunidad cosas aparte de las típicas (la comida, o la música) como las creencias... la creencia en un ser superior o incluso si se es ateo.” (Nickname, FG2, 2018) [It is the characteristic of every community, things different from the typical (food or music) such beliefs.... Beliefs in a superior being or atheism]

From these segments, we can suggest that the participants' perceptions are not only built based upon the products of culture as Seelye (1984) and Kramsh (2013) state. Correspondingly, they also perceive cultural awareness from their symbolic and invisible aspects, which involve "ways of behaving, eating, talking, their customs, their beliefs and values" (Kramsh, 2013). Additionally, these voices showed us their skill of discovery (*Savoir faire- saber hacer*) when they relate and take into account the interaction with Thomas to express what they consider is part of the culture.

To conclude this category, we can say that our participants' perceptions of cultural awareness are guided by two perspectives. One refers to the general aspects of the culture which are spread by the state, and the other makes reference to more specific aspects such the way people act and their beliefs based on the community where they belong to.

**Language and culture are bound together.** This third category aims to achieve the general objective of this study and offer some important insights into students' perceptions about the relationship they established between language learning and cultural awareness in the EFL context. The qualitative nature of this study allowed us to explore each concept or phenomenon from the description and understanding of participants' notion about them separately. However, this section is concerned with the analysis and the understanding of the link students make between both elements, and their perceptions based on two encounters via Skype and WhatsApp as well. Having presented the categories for language learning and cultural awareness from our participants' perspectives and their (categories) corresponding data analysis, now we want to explore the relationship both constructs: language learning and cultural awareness.

With respect to this category, a much-debated question in the field of language teaching is whether culture should be viewed as strictly related to language, or if it may be mainly perceived as an independent phenomenon. Nowadays, the controversy continues, however scholars like

Kramersch (2013) and Baker (2009) have long debated and highlighted the possible correlation between the two notions as mainly interacting, rather than being separated from each other. The participants in this study contributed to this assumption by observing language learning and cultural awareness as interrelating concepts. Our students noted that the fact of being aware of cultural issues is necessary to enhance the language learning process. In reference to the previous statement, participants commented:

“Es que la lengua de por si también hace parte de la cultura, ya que es todo lo que representa un país, la lengua también ha de representar un país” (Gandal, FG3, 2018)

[Language itself is part of the culture. As culture is everything that represents a country, language also represents a country].

“Learning a foreign language not only helps us understand that language, but also how the people behave in a different country” (Crack, FG3, 2018)

These pieces of evidence helped us examine students’ understanding of how language learning can convey culture. In addition, these perceptions explore the possibility of language learners to involve in meaningful communication linked to their cultural reality and the acknowledgment of its significance. In the case of our research, the telecollaborative encounters allowed the participants to approach different cultures, and their insights were evidence of the complexity of the way language and culture interact. All in all, based on students’ reflection, we can infer that learning language also encompasses the understanding of human beings as members of a community, and that in either case, they coexist as one supporting the other.

***The presence of Otherness and Myness in language learning.*** This first subcategory mainly emerged after the telecollaborative sessions and it involves participants’ perceptions which are beyond the surface culture. It also highlights elements that our participants identified

within the concept of cultural awareness referring to the recognition of diversity and singularity as important when using the language for communicating within different communities.

Firstly, participants' perceptions highlight that people from foreign countries are different, do many things in a different way, but sometimes, there could be commonalities among those differences. However, no matter if there are commonalities or differences between cultures, the respect and the recognition of the other must prevail. As evidence of this, when asked about their perception of cultural awareness, one participant expressed:

“Es lo que nosotros tenemos en la mente y lo que sabemos del otro país y pues respetar las diferencias porque no todos los países son iguales y tienen diferentes cosas que no tenemos en común”. (Juanis, FG2, 2018) [It is what we have in our minds and what we know about another country. The respect for the differences because not all the countries are similar, they do have differences]

Similarly, regarding the recognition of commonalities among cultures, after having a conversation about soccer with one of the telecollaborative partners, a participant also expressed:

“Una cosa que tenemos en común las dos culturas es que somos muy competitivos” (Migue, FG2, 2018) [One thing that both cultures have in common is that we are very competitive].

On the one hand, we could identify that this particular interest to find commonalities represents our participants' intention to create understanding and negotiate meanings with their telecollaborative partner by using the language as a medium to express their ideas and thoughts. Besides, the fact that our respondents previously emphasized on the importance of recognizing individuals' particularities which makes them unique, but at the same time, citizens of a country or nation, alludes to the fact of perceiving how others and own identities can be constructed in a community.

On the other hand, to illustrate the importance of singularity, Migue for example defined cultural awareness as the understanding of their own culture when he commented that:

*“Conciencia cultural es como saber y entender la cultura de uno” [Cultural awareness is to know and understand our own culture] (FG2)*. Furthermore, in the same line of thought, our participant Nana also expressed that it is important to learn about one’s own culture and to know about our roots to share our history with the world, in her own words she expressed: “es muy importante saber de nuestra cultura y digámoslo así, saber de nuestros orígenes” [It is very important to know about our own culture, that is, to know about our ancestors] (FG3).

In the previous examples, both participants let us identify their interest in understanding who they are, recognizing elements of their own culture, and knowing where they come from. Their comments denote their desire of being part of a wider community, as well as being recognized by other communities.

Finally, after recognizing that it is important to know about their own culture and others’, participants also expressed that language must be appropriately used to show respect towards others’ singularity and diversity. Consequently, in this scenario, we found that students not only perceived language as a tool to share and express ideas about their own culture, but also as a medium to understand others’ particularities. In regards to this perception, they provided some examples:

“Por ejemplo, digamos que uno va a estado Unidos, y uno les recuerda sobre la caída de las torres gemelas eso sería muy triste para ellos si vivieron eso y entonces se colocarían mal”  
“Es decir, saber que mencionar cuando uno va y que no, es importante.”(Migue and Nana, FG3, 2018) [For example, let’s say I am at the United States and I mention something about the twins’ tower attack, it would be very sad if they experienced that event] [I mean, we should know what it is appropriate to mention, and what is not]

With respect to the examples provided, we can comment about concepts such as: *Empathy*, which shows the participants' reflections about cultural backgrounds of the other to avoid making them feel uncomfortable, using the appropriate language. Additionally, the sense of empathy was evident during and after the interactions when both, sixth graders and online partners, showed interest in knowing about each other likes, preferences, daily lives and behaviors (See Excerpt 2 from T2). In fact, both interlocutors were constantly looking for commonalities between cultures (including personal preferences and experiences) while they were interacting (Also See Excerpt 5 on page 86).

**Excerpt 2.**

Migue: Anika, what languages do you speak? Do you speak Spanish?

Anika: I know a few words in Spanish but I don't speak it. I speak English and Swedish.

Migue: Nice.

Anika: Can we speak in English?

Nana: Yes. Anika. Anika, what celebrations do you like the most?

Anika: Halloween and Christmas and you?

Nana: I like them too. How do you celebrate them?

Anika: Halloween is celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> November. People dress up and carve pumpkins. And Christmas is not as cheerful as in Colombia.

Finally, to summarize this subcategory, what the participants expressed led us to recognize the relevance of two concepts: *Otherness and Myness*, which are defined by Bonilla and Alvarez (2009). The former refers to the recognition of diversity and the importance of showing respect towards the differences, and the latter makes reference to the understanding of ones' own culture which can be individually and socially built (Bonilla and Alvarez, 2009). To sum up, culture and language are linked through the recognition of singularity and diversity, the

respect and understanding of *Otherness* and *Myness*, and the appropriateness of language use in social and cultural interaction. Thus, human beings as complex unities, have particularities and commonalities with others based on the humans' dimensions which are inherited or learned.

In this study, we can say that culture is individually and socially built and learned. Savignon (2007) commented on this matter by arguing that culture is “a dialogical self-consciousness of every civilization; and dialogue is the very essence of humanity and mutual understanding” (p.212). In other words, culture is learned and built through the interaction and the permanent dialogue between the individual, his/ her closest contexts and the interaction with others (family, friends, teachers, and so on). In fact, this subcategory let us identify that participants' start to recognize singularity and diversity when they confront another culture and interpret their interactions with the other.

*Telecollaboration as a means to reflect upon culture and language.* In this study, participants' initial perceptions constituted the core of their conceptions about cultural awareness and language learning. These initial perceptions also helped us to understand and explore students' perceptions about the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in an EFL context. In this regard, telecollaboration became a valuable tool that facilitated interaction between our students and their international partners (Thomas and Anika). In this way our participants had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations and expand their thoughts about their own culture and other cultures. Consequently, the telecollaborative experience allowed reflection, and some initial perceptions were complemented, expanded and even rebuilt during this process.

Firstly, in this subcategory we want to comment on students' reflections about culture and language, and also the transformation and rebuilding of some perceptions in and after the telecollaborative encounters. Prior to the engagement in the telecollaboration our participants

Migue and Gandal, for example, in the initial Focus group commented that cultural awareness and culture were the same, which was for them all the things that represent a country and that are produced there (See Excerpt 3). This shows that they exclusively conceived culture from a surface or visible perception.

**Excerpt 3.**

“Culture is the group of history, arts, typical food, typical dances and things representative of a country or a context” (Gandal, FG1, 2018); “Cultura para nosotros es lo que representa a nuestro país, como por ejemplo la economía, la comida, las danzas, los bailes, las festividades.” (Migue, FG2, 2018) [For us, culture is what represents our country, for example, the economy, food, dances, celebrations]

During and after the telecollaborations, participants’ perceptions did not change substantially but in some particular cases, changes or transformations in these ideas occurred. Migue and Gandal were the students who showed a bigger expansion of their perceptions about language and learning. Through the telecollaborative experiences and their curiosity, they identified that culture does not only refer to a product of a region and language, but it implies the understanding of who is the other or them, singularities, diversities, commonalities, ways of thinking, empathy and cultural and historical backgrounds (See Excerpt 4).

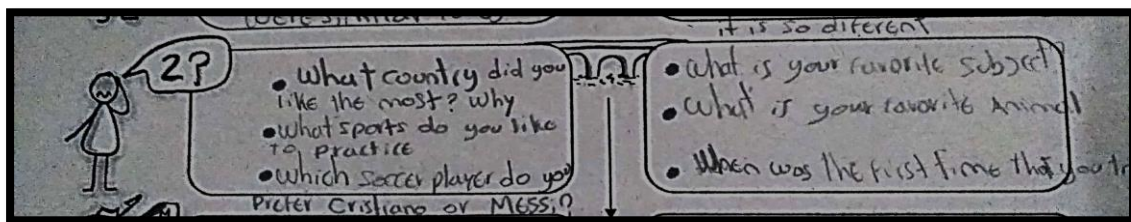


**Excerpt 4.**

“Por ejemplo, digamos que uno va a estado Unidos, y uno les recuerda sobre la caída de las torres gemelas eso sería muy triste para ellos si vivieron eso y entonces se colocarían mal”(Migue, FG3, 2018) [For example, let’s say I am at the United States and I mention something about the twins’ tower attack, it would be very sad if they experienced that event];

“ al principio a mí la cultura no me interesaba, pero luego digamos que me empezó a interesar ya que es nuestra historia, y empecé a investigar más, y descubrí que no solo es la historia sino todo lo que somos” (Gandal FG3, 2018) [At the beginning I was not interested in culture, but then I started to be interested in it because it is our history, so I started to search about it, and I discovered that it is not just our history but all that we are]

Migue was an active participant in our study and he showed his constant interest in interacting with Thomas and Anika. This interest in asking and interacting helped him to expand his perceptions (See Excerpts 1, 2 and 5). While Gandal showed his interest in a more passive way, as evidence of this, after the first telecollaboration he still showed their interest in exploring more about Thomas through questions related to preferences and likes (See Picture 12 ) and culture as well (See Excerpt 4).



Picture 12. Students' artifacts (AR2)

Finally, after their interactions with Anika and Thomas (Telecollaborative partners), both participants interpreted and reflected upon their conversations to the point of expressing that

language is part of the culture naturally and politically, and acknowledged that language has to be properly used to understand cultural singularities and diversity. On the other hand, Migue and Gandals' expansion of perceptions is related to the concept of *Interculturality* which alludes to the ability to positively deal and understand the cultural differences (Fantini, 2000). Therefore, *Interculturality* entails the understanding of cultural forms, practices in intercultural communication, and the ability to put that understanding into practice while communicating with the other (Baker, 2011).

On the other hand, both telecollaborative encounters and the last two focus groups brought to the analysis concepts such as: *stereotypes*, *reactions* and *cross-cultural comparison*. In relation to the first notion, *stereotypes*, students had the opportunity to compare and relate background experiences and knowledge about culture. Thus, some previous perceptions and initial ideas about their international partners' culture changed or were broadly discussed during the telecollaborative sessions. In regard to the concept of *reaction*, participants demonstrated that the telecollaborative sessions motivated them to promote their culture, and arose positive reactions that were later expressed in the focus groups. Finally, *cross-cultural comparison* was perceived, especially after the telecollaborative encounters where participants made comparisons between the cultures and attempted to find differences or commonalities between them.

With respect to cross-cultural comparison, excerpt 5 from T1 shows students' interest to know more about their online partner and his culture. The conversation shows the comparisons that students make between the time they spend in the school, and at the same time they found commonalities regarding their experience as foreign language learners. Additionally, participants confront and overcome two *stereotypes*. The first (1), referring to "One culture, one language", here, participants realized that people from a country do not only speak the country's language

but other languages, and that French do not stop being French because they speak another language. The second (2), is related to specific manners and behaviors of the country.

**Excerpt 5.**

Nana: What do you usually do in your days?

Thomas: Yo voy al colegio. Allá, estudio 8 horas, tomo clases en francés y clases de inglés. [I go to school. There, I study 8 hours I have classes in French and I take English classes]

Nana: Nosotros estudiamos solo 6 horas. Ósea que estudias inglés como nosotros. Y donde aprendiste español. [We just study 6 hours .So, you study English like us. And, where did you learn Spanish]

Thomas. Tengo familia en Colombia. Y mi mama habla español. [I have family in Colombia. And my mother speaks Spanish]

Migue: Yo pensé que la gente en Francia solo hablaba francés. Pero veo que pueden hablar varios idiomas o solo francés. Thomas es verdad que los franceses no se bañan? [I thought that French people just spoke in French. But, I see that they can speak different languages or just French. Thomas is it true that French people do not take showers?]

Thomas: Jaja yes, they take showers. In France, people take showers too. In winter, sometimes you do not want to take a shower but we do take showers.

In regards to *reactions*, Migue and Dry echoed positive reactions among their partners voices when they expressed that the encounters with their foreign peers were meaningful experiences because it allowed them to know their opinions about their (French and Sweden) culture, to identify some aspects about both cultures for future possible encounters or interactions, and to feel proud of their own (Colombian) culture (See picture 12). To dig into their perceptions about using telecollaboration, we asked them what was meaningful during the online encounters, as responses we obtained the following voices:

“Me pareció muy llamativo que nos contara sobre sus opiniones sobre su cultura”

(Nickname, FG2, 2018)” y a mí me pareció muy chévere porque gracias a hablar con él conocimos más sobre la cultura de Francia, sobre lo que es comúnmente y lo que se

realiza comúnmente allá.” (Lala1, FG2, 2018) [In think it was very interesting that he told us about his opinions of other cultures] [And y think it was interesting because we could know more about French culture, about what is common there, and what the usually do there]

“Pues sinceramente me gusto que Thomas hubiera destacado nuestra cultura” (Migue, FG2, 2018) [Honestly, I liked that Thomas acknowledged our culture]

“Yo me sentí feliz ya que viene de una persona de otro país y pues me siento muy honrado porque está hablando o diciendo aspectos positivos de Colombia y su opinión” (Nick, FG2, 2018) [I felt happy because it was someone from another country, so I was proud because he highlighted positive aspects of Colombia]

These positive reactions also motivated students to know more about their own culture and deeply investigate about their partners’ one. Besides, this interaction helped them to recognize that both interlocutors have their own opinions about a foreign culture, as well as insights about their own. Then, as we stated in previous subcategories through their voices, respect for ideologies and opinions prevailed in the interaction.

Finally, some of the changes in students’ perceptions come from the *cross-cultural comparisons* that students made during the reflective sessions. To illustrate this, we present here an excerpt (6) from a reflective session (RS2/FG3), which took place after the second telecollaborative session with Anika (a young teenager from Sweden who did not speak Spanish). During the telecollaborative encounter, English was used as a *Lingua Franca* to allow communication among the students and the international partner. However, in the focus groups participants were free to choose English or Spanish to express their ideas.

**Excerpt 6**

R1: Entonces, ¿Cuáles serían las diferencias culturales entre Suecia y Colombia? [So, what would be the cultural differences between Sweden and Colombia?]

Lala1: Pues que en la navidad no era como tan alegre así que bailen, era como un poco más seria, solo comer, celebrar, pero mientras que acá uno en Colombia canta, baila. [Christmas was not too cheerful to dance, it was a little bit more serious, just eat and celebrate. But, in Colombia, we sing and dance]

Migue: Pues Suecia es más serio en las fiestas y nosotros tenemos como ese “toque”, ósea felicidad. [Sweden is more serious in the celebrations than us. And we have like a “Toque” I mean happiness]

R2: ¿Qué es el toque para ti? [What is toque for you?]

Migue: El “toque” es que tenemos más sabor (risas) más sabor como bailamos, como cocinamos, cosas así. [*Toque* is that we are more cheerful, we have more rhythm at dancing, our food is tastier, and things like that]

R1: ¿Y tener diferencias culturales es malo? [And having cultural differences is bad?]

Lala1: No lo es. Todos somos diferentes aun siendo del mismo país. [It is not. We all are different even if we are from the same country]

Within the talk we can see that students compare both cultures to find cultural differences. Although their initial focus is on Christmas celebration (a visible or surface attribution), then they comment on the individual’s personality as a part of the culture and start recognizing singularity. Participants also demonstrated that they started to include aspects related to singularity (what characterize the person- personality and who they are) and diversity (varieties in the ways of acting, being and thinking) to their core concept of culture. In this regards, from another reflective session, our participant Migue expressed:

“una cosa que tenemos en común las dos culturas es que somos muy competitivos a nivel internacional. Por ejemplo los deportes, en el futbol somos muy competitivos que allá por ejemplo para él, el mejor equipo parís Saint-Germain, algunos que el real Madrid, para TP es

mejor Francia para mi es mejor Colombia” (Migue, P3, FG2). [Something that we have in common is that we are internationally competitive. For example, we are competitive in sports, for him the best team is Saint-Germain, other think is Real Madrid, for Thomas is France, and for me is Colombia]

In this piece of evidence, students perceived that even within general commonalities, there are some specific differences which do not affect their interactions.

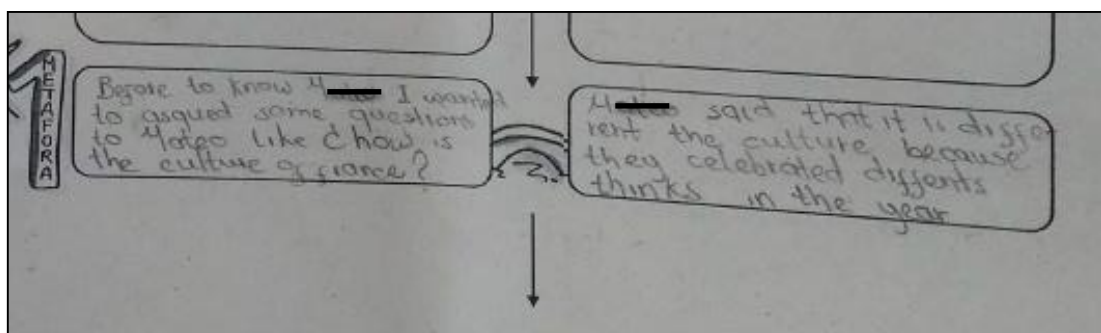
To conclude this subcategory, it is important to say that this study focused on exploring participants understanding of language learning and cultural awareness from a sociocultural perspective in telecollaboration where participants are part of a dialogic process where the foreign language becomes a tool for the exchange of ideas and discussions (O’Dowd, 2012). Telecollaboration then, triggered meaningful group and individual reflections that rebuilt our students’ perceptions and also arose new insights in the understanding of the relationship between language learning and culture.

***English as a medium for international understanding.*** Finally, taking into account that our participants’ perceptions on language learning mainly rely on their experiences as English learners, a common view amongst interviewees was that learning a broadly spoken language like English would serve as a tool to communicate with other people from all around the world. With this subcategory we want to comment on our participants’ view of English as a medium to understand what it means to live in a globalized world.

Although there was a significant number of participants that reported a tendency to acknowledge the prevalence of standard American or British English, their attitude and motivation towards this language also relies on the possibility that it gives them to interact and connect with other nations from all over the world. For example, when asked what learning a foreign language means, one participant commented:

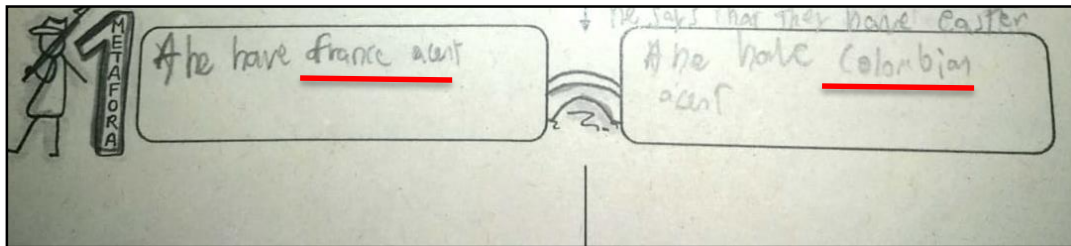
“...Además de eso, poder conocer mejor la cultura más a fondo y digamos que a explorar un nuevo mundo, no quedarnos solo aquí, digamos que ósea no hacerlo como en el pasado en el que literalmente tu podías decir que solo Colombia existe y toda la gente podría decir: tienes razón, ahora podemos decir: mira esto también existe y tal, no solo quedarnos acá sino explorar” (Gandal, FG3, 2018) [Apart from that, we can deeply know about the culture and explore a new world, not only here, not like in the past that you could literally say that Colombia was the only place in the world and they thought you were right, now you can say there are more things to explore].

Similarly, we could draw on the relationship established between language learning and culture from the students' perspective as English learners since it was reported as an option to global interaction and cross-cultural communication in different settings. During the thinking routine workshop (2) “3, 2 1 bridge” and in the discussions in the focus group 3, our participants acknowledged that it was possible to identify and compare some cultural aspects with their international partners because they could both speak English. Correspondingly, they recognized the differences between Colombian and French accent when using English during the telecollaborative encounters:



Picture 13. *Students' artifacts (AR2), 3, 2, 1 Bridge*

[Before knowing Tomas I wanted to ask some questions to him like: How is the culture of France/ Tomas said their culture was different because they celebrated different things during the year]



Picture 14. Students' artifacts (AR2), 3, 2, 1 Bridge

[He has French accent / We have Colombian accent]

On the other hand, although we did not deepen in the participants' recognition of other varieties of English in this study, we considered it must be taken into account in our analysis since the acknowledgment of *World Englishes* is important to raise awareness in cultural aspects as well. Moreover, as expressed by some of our participants learning a foreign language like English also represents an opportunity to share their own culture. When asked about the importance of English, one participant stated:

“Es poder compartir nuestra historia con todo el mundo, no solo en Colombia, sino poderla llevar a diferentes países y hasta continentes” (Nana, FG3, 2018) [Is about sharing our history around the world, not only in Colombia, but also in different countries and other continents]

Correspondingly, the relationship that our students perceive between language learning and cultural awareness is not only framed within the use they give to English as a tool to raise understanding of global settings but also as an instrument to develop local, national and regional identity. That is, learning a language like English is also perceived as a possibility to



communicate important aspects related to our country and that can result meaningful in certain situations or contexts.

The following excerpt 7 from a reflective session is a clear example of what students understand as the importance of English in a global scenario where the language is used as an international tool for communication and interaction. In this case, they used English as the core language to interact with an international partner whose mother tongue was different from theirs.

**Excerpt 7.**

R2: Ok, she speaks Swedish as her mother tongue, and you speak Spanish, what if you couldn't speak a foreign language like English? You would not probably understand. But you both spoke English, what does it mean for you?

Gandal: It is like the means, the importance of English.

R2: It is the means for what?

Lala1: To communicate

R2. And what is to communicate?

Lala1: To be able to talk and express yourself in front of other people

Nickname: To share ideas with someone who speaks English

According to this data, we can also allude to the concept of *English as Lingua Franca* (Kramsch, 2013) in which English is used as a mean of communication among speakers from other different languages. These results provide further support to this notion as well as our participants' perception of it. Although they were not familiarized with the concept itself, there is clear evidence that during the telecollaborative sessions they used English in this way. Although their international partners were native speakers of a different language from Spanish, it was possible for them to interact using English. Therefore, we acknowledged that the idea of English used as a tool for international understanding was echoed among our participants understood as the means that they use to communicate with people from other places in the world no matter their mother tongue.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The main goal of the current study was to understand the relationship that sixth graders from a private school in Rivera, Huila established between language learning and cultural awareness. The analysis we presented in regards to the data collected relied on students' shared experience as learners of English since this was the main characteristic that our participants had in common. Besides, we decided to implement telecollaborative sessions with international students from France and Sweden who shared similar characteristics with our participants in Colombia such as: ages, academic grade and experiences as language learners. The telecollaborative sessions were intended to trigger students' better interpretation and understanding of intercultural experiences when learning languages, and to encourage a more insightful reflection during the focus group and thinking routine activities.

Since the nature of this study was based on a phenomenological type of inquiry, we used elicitation data gathering instruments to analyze and understand the phenomenon from the perspective of our participants (Creswell, 2007). The findings we reported and the categories here discussed contributed in several ways to our understanding of the connections students make between cultural awareness and their lived experiences as language learners. However, taking into consideration that individuals' perceptions are dependent on many factors that influence them, culture awareness and language learning can be described regarding the specific language students have been learning as well. Therefore, the perception of culture can be conceived from students' understanding of their language. For this reason, the participants in this study were asked to define and answer questions regarding the two concepts separately and together to find commonalities or differences among their perceptions of cultural awareness and language

learning. Therefore, we could also identify if our participants conceived language and culture as two linked, separated or complemented ideas.

To begin with, we sought to explore and understand students' perceptions of language learning. For this first inquiry we set one main category: "Language learning: Variables and Role" that allowed us to recognize students' interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon of language learning based on their own experience. In conclusion, we acknowledged that the participants in our study related language learning to the influence and perpetuation of a global language (English in this case) and the idea of language learning as an opportunity to access educational, employment and social opportunities. We first based this assumption on the data collected from students' artifacts taken from the thinking routine workshops, and from students' insights during the focus groups where they explained their representations of language learning. In general, our participants claimed that the drawings of Anglo-speaking countries flags and the use of certain colors were associated with the possibility that learning a language like English could offer in different fields.

On the other hand, the data collected also helped us to identify students' perceptions of language learning as more related to particular and personal interpretations of their own experiences as language learners. Some students claimed that their language learning process evidenced a good experience for them, and they manifested to feel motivated towards this practice. We assumed these students' interpretations from their perspective of the phenomenon of language learning as imbedded to a positive experience itself regardless the benefits it could bring. However, our participants also perceived language learning just as a process of conveying structural information about a language which does not go beyond learning how to pronounce, write, read or listen something in the target language.

In regards to cultural awareness, students' perceptions are aligned to their conception of culture itself which is based on their learning experiences in the school, the relationship with their family, and the opportunities they have had to directly and indirectly interact with others. Our study allowed us to understand that participants perceived cultural awareness from the perspectives of *visible* and *invisible* aspects of culture that picture this concept from what is tangible and what is not. In reference to these perspectives, students expressed that culture is all the things produced by a community or a country, such as dances, history, food, celebrations and touristic places. However, they claimed that culture may also refer to the way a community or an individual behave, and involves many other aspects that constitute humans' beings essence.

On account of the data gathered for answering the main question in this study we acknowledge the assumption of students' perceiving the phenomena of language and culture as inevitably embedded to each other. Our participants acknowledged this assumption and expressed that the connection between language learning and culture can be explained from the fact that learning and interacting using another language necessarily involves relating to the culture of that language. The telecollaborative sessions allowed our students to connect with different cultures from the perspective of other language learners, so our participants in Colombia could reflect about their telecollaborative experiences and build their own understanding of the way language and culture interact. Therefore, some of them expressed that languages cannot be profoundly understood without acknowledging the complexity of their culture as well.

Accordingly, the recognition of *Otherness* and *Myness* in the process of language learning helped us to illustrate our participants' effort to understand the complexity of human beings as part of culture through the recognition of individuals' or a community diversity and singularity. In this sense, we concluded that our participants also conceived language learning as a medium to recognize aspects of their own culture and to understand others' particularities. Correspondingly,

students observed that getting familiar with the culture of the target language gives them more possibilities to attain communication and understand language learning from a more meaningful perspective.

During the study students' perceptions were socially and individually built and rebuilt. The former (socially) relates to the way students showed the transformation of their perceptions before and after telecollaborations where students perceived culture and language separately but that were later conceived as two linked constructs. Though, we could notice that some students kept their initial perceptions due to their level of reflection or the strength of their previous conceptions or beliefs.

It has previously been observed that cultural factors have found to be influencing foreign language acquisition and learners' performance of the language itself. Hence, more than exploring our participants' perspectives on the role of culture in language learning and its relationship, it is relevant to recreate and analyze their insights while having a real and meaningful exposure to language in regards to the socio-cultural nature of it. In this regard, our role as researchers is crucial when planning, selecting and discussing different teaching strategies. Hence, we have identified a major advantage of telecollaborative environments (Belz, 2007) in the way they promote language learning and intercultural skills development simultaneously and can contribute to the understanding of the cultural diversity in the EFL classroom.

Respectively, beliefs, behavior, values and languages skills themselves need to be shared during interaction. Nevertheless, intercultural communicative competence will not be naturally acquired but it requires teaching strategies that help students recognize and value other cultures and their own. In this regard, the articulation of students' own culture needs to be strengthened as

a valuable process in which learners also shape their identity by understanding and fostering cultural awareness.

Finally, this study has identified the importance of using English as a means for international understanding by giving individuals the possibility to access experiences in a globalized world. This is another insight our participants expressed regarding their language learning experience in which English is perceived a tool for promoting international communication among people who speak different languages. This perceptions correspond to their experience using telecollaboration as well, and the possibility to interact with students from different countries and whose mother tongue was different from English and Spanish. Although the current study does not explore the concept of English as a lingua Franca, we allude to this idea in this interpretation since the common experience shared among our participants shed light in the fact that other varieties of English must receive attention, as well as the cultural background of different nations that can be shared through this language.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

This research study has provided relevant contributions from students' perceptions regarding the recognition of the cultural dimension in language learning. Therefore, the insights gained from this study have important pedagogical implications in the field of language education and for the community of the school where the study was undertaken. Through this study, we first want to note some implications about the relevance of culture and interculturality in language learning, as well as its important role in language study (Kramsch, 1998). Besides, since the relationship between language learning and culture has, in some cases, been hardly taken into consideration in the EFL field in our country (Turizo and Gomez, 2006), we attempted to illustrate how it is perceived from the perspective of students from a private school in Rivera, Huila. Then, we also want to highlight some pedagogical implications for teachers from the

school where we undertook the study based on students' perception and attitudes regarding the relationship between language learning and cultural awareness. Finally, we want to highlight some implications related to the specific field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the discussion about the spread of English and its importance in international understating.

**Pedagogical implications about the relevance of culture in language learning.** On account of the importance of recognizing the role of culture in language learning, we reported findings that suggest implications for understanding this phenomenon from the perspective of our students. In our setting, students perceive language learning from different views, interestingly, culture has been stated as a special concern for them. In our actual teaching practice these attitudes and perspectives are sometimes overlooked since we take for granted that we are integrating culture into our classroom just because we are teaching them about Anglo speaking countries art, music or literature. However, as Baker (2009) states, foreign language learning like English cannot be exclusively understood from the perspective of one culture, usually one of a dominant English speaking country since this may also influence the way we understand how students perceive this relationship.

Similarly, we can highlight aspects regarding the importance of planning and implementing a foreign language system that integrates the understanding of the role and relevance of culture in the students' learning process. Although we found that the students participating in this study reported to be conscious about the significance of cultural aspects in language learning, we can also state that information related to the target language culture(s) and the local one, is sometimes absent in our classroom practices. Then, from our perspective as teachers and researchers, we could identify that our students might be more immersed in the cultural dimension of foreign languages. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study was carried out with a small number of students from a particular setting where we found

individuals motivated toward the target language, and who have been studying a foreign language for a long time with an intensity that probably gives them more possibilities to identify the importance of these other aspects like culture.

**Pedagogical implications for the school.** In this regard, we want to consider some pedagogical implications for the setting where we carried out the research. Since the majority of the students participating in our study see cultural differences, similarities and general features as significant for developing their communicative skills in the target language; recognizing and incorporating learners' expectations with respect to the foreign and local culture(s) into the language learning curricula is a possibility to strengthen the learning process. Therefore getting students engaged in different cross-cultural activities, as we did with telecollaboration, is a possibility to integrate different cultural settings, even the local one, in an interesting way. However, from our point of view, this also supports the fact that there is an intercultural dimension in language acquisition that we as teachers are still struggling to reach.

In this regard, teachers are called not only to innovate in their classroom practice but also to start reshaping the way in which culture is perceived. That is, it is important for teachers to define what culture means in foreign language learning and integrate the different aspects of it in terms of what is meaningful for their students. In the case of the school where we decided to carry out this study, we perceive that taking into account students' perspectives about culture and language learning is a good opportunity to identify and integrate their expectations towards their learning process and foster motivation towards the language. Therefore, this is a good opportunity to allow students to engage in a learning process where they can recognize the importance of others' culture, and also to promote and value their own when using a foreign language.



Moreover, this particular setting has the necessary technological and human resources to develop activities that promote cultural awareness and understanding in the foreign language classes. It is necessary that teachers start working with their students and taking into account their opinions when planning and integrating cultural issues that are meaningful in their learning process and to develop a sense of cultural awareness.

**Pedagogical implications for the EFL Community.** In our research, we realized that one of the important elements to connect with cultures is related to international understanding in EFL contexts. In Colombia, international understanding is one of the many possibilities to help the country overcome the subordination imposed by inner circle nations. It is also an opportunity to perceive people from all nationalities and cultures as equal and unique. Thus, the promotion of international understanding in EFL contexts draw pedagogical actions and implications such as:

- ❖ The recognition of English varieties through exposing students to varieties of English and perspectives such as *World Englishes*, English as a Lingua Franca and English as an International Language to promote a broader view of the world.
- ❖ Displacing the Native English Speaker fallacy and promoting Colombian English speakers, changing the notion that native speakers are better language teachers.
- ❖ Debunking teaching practices that promote linguistic imperialism and advocating teaching practices that raise awareness of varieties of English and the value of the local culture.
- ❖ Restructuring teacher education programs so that prospective teachers are helped to co-create with their students and reconstruct an international understanding from a broader view of the world.

Correspondingly, these actions will be only possible if we as teachers start to perceive and teach culture from a broader perspective and not only as exclusively aligned to the foreign

language. Therefore, it is important to let our students participate and give their opinions in our decisions about materials, topics and methodologies in their learning process since the way they perceive this issues highly influence the development of ideas about language learning elements like culture. To date there has been little agreement on what and how to teach in relation to culture. One mayor concern recalls the relevance of fostering and strengthening learners' identity in the whole process of interacting in a different language. Kramersch (2013) supports the idea that learner's L1 identity sometimes feels "threatened" when there is much emphasis on culture (Kramersch, 2013, p.59). However, on the contrary, a myriad of students may also reject their own culture since learning the target language gives them access to a different way to live and see the world. To our mind, the debate is also taking place around "*cultural inferiority*", which suggest the urgent need some learners and even teachers may have to prioritize one culture over the other. In this regards, intercultural competence needs to be fostered as a new pedagogical model that lead students to understand and value culture and its role in language learning.

**Limitations of the study.** Considerably, more work will need to be done to determine how foreign language contributes to students' understanding of the phenomenon of culture. Firstly, the small sample of participants in this study does not allow us to evaluate a general perspective of how the relationship between language learning and culture is perceived. Besides, the setting and the different aspects of this population differ from others in our country where language learning itself can be less significant as well as the cultural aspects involved in the process.

Another limitation was related to time issues. Taking into account that our intervention included technological resources, we needed a lot of time to set up the place, check the Internet connection and organize the students. It was difficult sometimes because the English class was over and it was necessary to take other teachers' class time. Moreover, because of the interventions and the school schedules it was not possible to carry out more focus groups or

individual interviews. It is unfortunate that the study did not include individual experiences explored deeply and more observation of the teachers' class.

**Suggestions for further research.** In general, it seems that further research needs to be done to understand the role of teaching culture through language as part of it and not as an isolated 'topic'. Scholars may aim to understand then, the relationship between context and language learning and the way it can foster the understanding and acceptance of their own reality as the first step to respect and tolerate others' worldviews.

We suggest that more broadly, research is needed to determine not only how the relationship between language learning and culture is perceived but also how it may influence the students' learning process, and how foreign languages can promote and enrich local culture.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Consent Form

#### FORMATO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

**Proyecto de Investigación:** *“Exploring Students’ Perceptions about the Relationship between Language Learning and Cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in the EFL context”*

#### MAESTRÍA EN DIDÁCTICA DEL INGLÉS - UNIVERSIDAD SURCOLOMBIANA

Apreciado padre de familia/ acudiente, su hijo ha sido invitado a ser parte de un estudio de investigación. Es relevante que lea y realice las preguntas que considere necesarias para obtener una clara explicación de los procedimientos y naturaleza del estudio, así como su rol en el mismo como participante. La legislación vigente establece que la participación de toda persona en un proyecto de investigación y/o experimentación requerirá una previa y suficiente información sobre el mismo y la prestación del correspondiente consentimiento. Establece igualmente que cuando el sujeto sea menor de edad la autorización será prestada por los padres, quien ejerza la patria potestad o, en su caso, el representante legal del menor después de haber escuchado a éste si tiene, al menos, doce años cumplidos. A tal efecto, a continuación se detallan los objetivos y características del proyecto de investigación arriba referenciado, como requisito previo a la obtención del consentimiento que habilita para la colaboración voluntaria en el proyecto.

Este proyecto tiene como propósito contribuir a la identificación y descripción de las percepciones que tienen los estudiantes con respecto a la relación entre la cultura y el aprendizaje del Inglés. Además, este mismo pretende proveer a la comunidad educativa de un análisis acerca de cómo estas percepciones podrían ser tomadas en consideración para la realización y puesta en práctica del currículo de lengua extranjera en la institución. Por este motivo al participante será observado en su clase habitual de inglés y se le solicitará igualmente ser parte de entrevistas grupales y/o individuales, las cuales requieren que sus respuestas y aportes sean grabados en audio e imagen.

La participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria y cabe aclarar que no se obtendrá ningún beneficio económico. Sin embargo, si contribuirá al mejoramiento de los procesos formativos de su hijo como aprendiz de la lengua extranjera: Inglés. Igualmente, la información obtenida será confidencial y no se usara para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de esta investigación y las respuestas e información serán codificadas usando un seudónimo que podrá ser elegido por el participante. Por otra parte, tenga en cuenta que el participante puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento sin que se le pueda exigir ningún tipo de explicación y sin que eso lo perjudique de ninguna forma. Además, si algunas de las preguntas durante las entrevistas le resultan incómodas, el participante puede retirarse, hacérselo saber al investigador o en su defecto no responderlas.

De esta manera, para que conste por escrito a efectos de información de los participantes y/o de sus representantes legales, se formula y entrega la presente hoja informativa. Así pues, hago constar que yo \_\_\_\_\_ identificado con cedula de ciudadanía \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_, en calidad de padre/tutor legal del/ la menor \_\_\_\_\_, he leído y entendido el procedimiento general del presente estudio, beneficios del mismo, así como la posibilidad de abandonarlo en cualquier momento y en conocimiento de todo ello y de las medidas que se adoptaran para la protección de los datos personales de los participantes **OTORGO** mi consentimiento para la participación del / la citado/a menor en la actual investigación *“Exploring Students’ Perceptions about the Relationship between Language Learning and Cultural awareness when using telcolaboration in the EFL context”*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma acudiente

C.C

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma participante

T.I

**Appendix B: Likert Scale Survey****Universidad Surcolombiana****Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés****Encuesta – Needs Analysis**

Nombre:
Edad:
Sexo:

En cada uno de los siguientes enunciados, encierre con un círculo el número que mejor exprese su opinión del enunciado. Siendo 1 el que indica que se siente totalmente en desacuerdo y 5 completamente de acuerdo.

Enunciado	Escala				
	Totalment e en desacuerd o	En desacuerd o	Ni en acuerdo ni en desacuerd o	De acuerdo	Totalment e de acuerdo
Considero que conocer sobre la cultura es relevante en mi proceso de aprendizaje del inglés.	1	2	3	4	5

Aprender sobre cultura implica conocer hechos y experiencias pasadas.	1	2	3	4	5
Aprender sobre cultura implica reconocer quién soy y de dónde vengo.	1	2	3	4	5
Aprender sobre cultura implica conocer fechas, festividades, personajes y lugares importantes de una región.	1	2	3	4	5
En mi proceso de aprendizaje del inglés, considero que aprender sobre la cultura de mi país es más importante que aprender sobre otras culturas.	1	2	3	4	5
En mi proceso de aprendizaje del inglés, considero que aprender sobre la cultura propia del idioma es más importante que aprender sobre la mía.	1	2	3	4	5
En mi proceso de aprendizaje del inglés, considero que es importante aprender sobre todas las culturas.	1	2	3	4	5
En mis clases de inglés he podido fortalecer mi conocimiento sobre la cultura de mi país o mi región.	1	2	3	4	5



Soy capaz de comunicar diferentes aspectos sobre la cultura de mi país o región utilizando la lengua extranjera – Inglés	1	2	3	4	5
Considero que mis docentes de inglés han fomentado el conocimiento de la cultura de mi país o región a través de sus clases.	1	2	3	4	5
La competencia intercultural se refiere a la habilidad de reconocer que algunas culturas son más importantes que otras en el proceso de aprender una lengua extranjera.	1	2	3	4	5

**Marca con una “x” una única opción de respuesta a la siguiente pregunta: ¿Qué me motiva a aprender inglés como lengua extranjera?**

- Viajar y conocer diferentes lugares
- Comunicarme con hablantes nativos del idioma
- Conocer sobre la cultura de la lengua extranjera
- Comunicar sobre mi cultura en un contexto internacional
- Tener mejores oportunidades laborales en el futuro
- Tener mejores oportunidades académicas en el futuro
- Otra \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C: Questionnaire – Language learning****CUESTIONARIO SOBRE EL APRENDIZAJE DE UNA LENGUA EXTRANJERA**

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

**Responde las siguientes preguntas en relación a tus experiencias, actitudes, sentimientos y opiniones respecto al aprendizaje del idioma extranjero inglés.**

**Motivación**

Marca con una “x” una única opción de respuesta a las siguientes preguntas:

**1. Consideras que el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera como el inglés es:**

- Muy importante
- Poco importante
- No es importante

Explica tu respuesta:

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**2. Marca con una “x” una única opción de respuesta para cada una de las siguientes oraciones**

<b>Enunciado</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>ALGUNAS VECES</b>
Estoy muy motivado(a) para aprender la lengua extranjera que me enseñan en el colegio			
Pienso que la lengua extranjera que me enseñan en el colegio es difícil de aprender.			
Conozco sobre la cultura (arte, comida, costumbres, sitios representativos) de los lugares donde se habla la lengua extranjera que estoy aprendiendo.			
Tengo una actitud positiva con las personas que hablan la lengua extranjera			

**3. ¿Qué te motiva a aprender inglés como lengua extranjera?**

Viajar y conocer diferentes lugares

Tener mejores oportunidades laborales o académicas en el futuro

Conocer sobre la cultura de la lengua extranjera

Otra \_\_\_\_\_

Comunicarme con personas de otros países

**Estilo de aprendizaje**

Elige una única opción para cada uno de los siguientes enunciados o preguntas

**4. Cuando aprendes inglés consideras que se debe hacer énfasis en:**

- |                                                                 |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gramática y vocabulario                | <input type="checkbox"/> Situaciones generales (Hablar por |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expresiones coloquiales                | teléfono, disculparse, pedir información)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temas relacionados a la vida cotidiana | Otro _____                                                 |

**Contacto o familiaridad con la lengua extranjera****5. ¿Has utilizado la lengua extranjera inglés para alguno de los siguientes propósitos?**

**(Más de una opción es posible)**

- Comunicarte con hablantes nativos o no nativos (pedir información, hablar por teléfono, hacer una reserva, entablar un dialogo)
- Presentar u obtener algún puntaje en una prueba internacional
- Tener una entrevista de ingreso a una institución
- Comunicarte por redes sociales o juegos online
- Participar en programas de intercambio en otros países

Otra \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Marca con un x con qué frecuencia realizas cada una de las siguientes actividades:**

	Frecuentemente	Algunas Veces	Nunca
Viajar a un país extranjero donde uses la lengua extranjera enseñada en el colegio (vacaciones, etc.)			
Ver canales de televisión en inglés			
Leer periódicos o revistas en Inglés			
Leer libros o literatura escrita por autores de países extranjeros.			
Usar internet para aprender más sobre un país extranjero.			
Comunicarme por redes sociales o usar juegos online			
Escuchar música a través de diferentes aplicaciones y páginas web.			
Usar youtube, skype, snapchat u otros para interactuar con personas de su región o de otros países hablantes del español o inglés.			
Leer instrucciones para utilizar algún electrodoméstico o aparato electrónico			

**Materiales y temáticas**

**7. De los siguientes materiales. Elija cuáles serían los que más le ayudan a aprender una lengua extranjera. (Más de una opción es posible)**

El tablero

El video Beam

Los libros de texto, de

Las revistas y periódicos: artículos, noticias, reportajes, anuncios

Posters, murales, láminas, Flashcards etc.

Objetos reales o en miniatura - “Realia”:

Diapositiva

Música

Teatro

Juego de roles

Viajes al país, visitas y excursiones: visitas a museos, monumentos, contactos con nativos, etc.

Juegos

Otros. ¿Cuales? \_\_\_\_\_

Responde a las siguientes preguntas:

8. Si fueras el profesor, ¿Qué temas elegirías para enseñar Inglés? Menciona como mínimo 5 temas.

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9. ¿Cómo crees que el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera inglés influye en tu vida actualmente?

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**Appendix D: Questionnaire – Cultural Awareness****CUESTIONARIO SOBRE LAS PERCEPCIONES DE CULTURA**

Responde a las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Has viajado a otro país? Menciona cual y que fue lo que más te impresionó o gustó sobre la vida en ese lugar.

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2. Si nunca has salido de tu país de origen, menciona algún lugar el cual te gustaría visitar y comenta que quisieras conocer acerca de la vida allí.

---

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3. ¿Sabes sobre algunos aspectos (comportamientos, hábitos, arte, comida, expresiones, etc.) de otras culturas? ¿Qué es lo que sabes sobre esas culturas? y ¿Cómo aprendiste sobre ellas?

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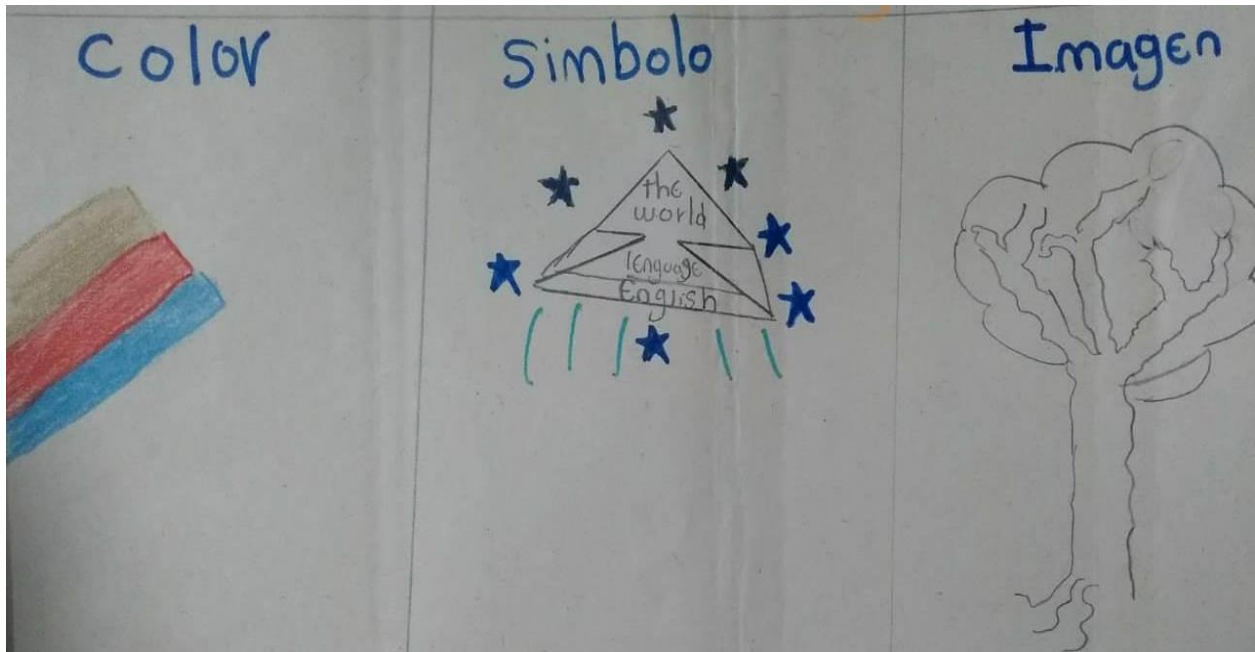




<p>Identifico que actividades hacen parte del día a día y cuáles son los estilos y condiciones de vida existentes.</p>										
<p><b>Turismo y atracciones</b> Se cuáles son los lugares representativos del lugar y las atracciones que este tiene.</p>										
<p><b>Comidas y bebidas</b> Conozco cuales son los tipos de comida, los ingredientes que usan en los platos, sus hábitos alimenticios y el tipo de bebidas que consumen.</p>										
<p><b>Geografía y Clima</b> Conozco los diferentes espacios geográficos, el clima y las estaciones de la región.</p>										
<p><b>Historia</b> Reconozco los diferentes acontecimientos o sucesos (guerras, épocas, vivencias) del pasado de el país.</p>										
<p><b>Educación</b> Conozco experiencias de rutinas, horarios, actividades, lúdicas, juegos, canciones que se utilicen en las instituciones educativas de este país.</p>										

<p><b>Economía</b></p> <p>Sé que actividades primarias y secundarias se practican para generar ingresos económicos al país.</p>										
<p><b>Artes, literatura y folclor</b></p> <p>Conozco los tipos de arte representativos del país, escritores, música, danzas, entre otros.</p>										
<p><b>Expresiones idiomáticas</b></p> <p>Conozco expresiones, dichos o frases propias de la región</p>										
<p><b>Grupos étnicos, raciales o sociales</b></p> <p>Conozco diferentes grupos que existen en la región, la relación entre ellos, el rol o el papel que cumple la mujer y el hombre en cada uno de ellos.</p>										
<p><b>Valores, tradiciones y creencias.</b></p> <p>Identifico los valores de la región, las actividades y eventos característicos de este y los tipos de religión que practican.</p>										

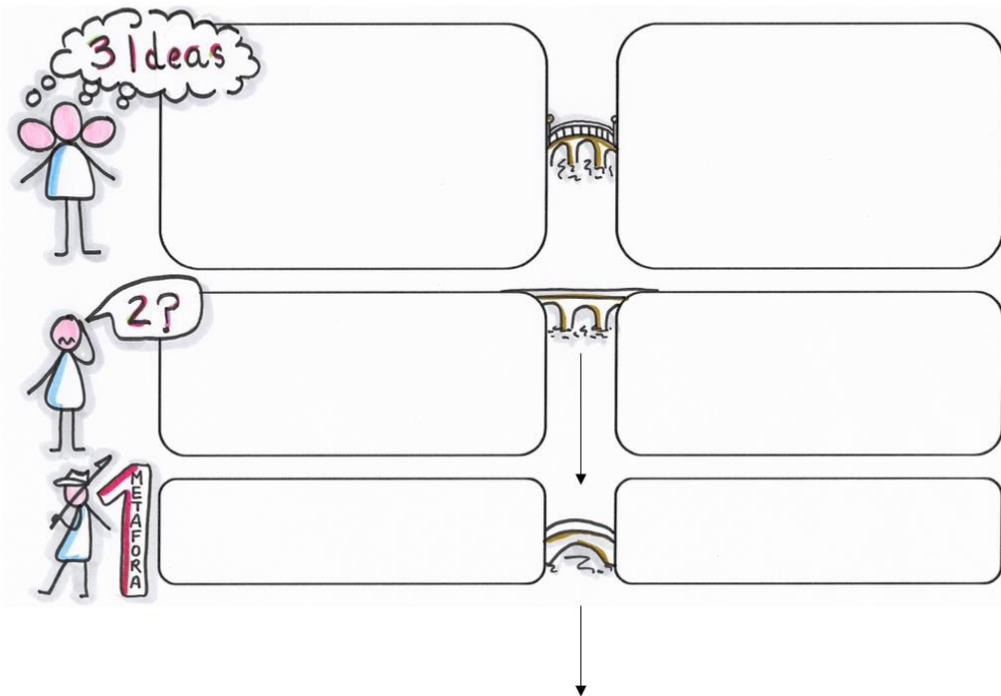
Appendix E: Thinking routine #1



## Appendix F: Thinking routine #2

*Students' perceptions about language learning and cultural awareness when using telecollaboration in the EFL context*

1. Complete the thinking routine using three ideas or facts that you think were more relevant during the skype encounter (Mateo – France). You can include information about any aspect you think was important or interesting for you. Follow your teacher instructions.



## Appendix G: Focus group # 1

### Before the encounters

- Greetings and introduction of the study. explain how the focus group is going to work
- Puedes por favor explicarnos tu dibujo y explicar porque usaste esos colores e imágenes.
- ¿Cómo ha sido para ustedes la experiencia de aprender inglés?
- Mencione tres pasos de ¿Cómo creen que aprendieron inglés o como aprenderían?
- ¿Qué se les viene a la cabeza con la palabra: conciencia cultural? ¿Qué es? ¿Qué implica eso desde su punto de vista?

**Appendix H: Focus group # 2****After the encounter # 1**

- ¿Qué te pareció más llamativo o interesante de poder interactuar con una persona de un país extranjero?
- ¿Qué conocimientos previos tenías sobre la cultura de este país extranjero y que fueron mencionados en el encuentro? ¿Cómo o dónde lo aprendiste?
- ¿Cuáles ideas o pensamientos iniciales acerca de la cultura del otro país cambiaron durante y después del encuentro?
- ¿Qué sentiste al saber que una persona extranjera destacó aspectos de la cultura de tu país como la comida, los deportes o los sitios turísticos?
- ¿Qué aspectos en común pudiste encontrar entre las dos culturas? ¿Cuáles fueron las mayores diferencias que encontraste entre la cultura u otros aspectos de ambos países?
- ¿Cómo crees que el aprender una lengua extranjera como el inglés permite que estos aspectos culturales puedan ser compartidos?
- Cuando has viajado a otro país, tenido encuentros con familiares extranjeros o utilizado medios de comunicación como chats o video llamadas con personas que se comunican en otro idioma ¿Cómo te ha ayudado la lengua extranjera a compartir o promover aspectos específicos de la cultura de tu país?

## Appendix I: Focus group # 3

### After the encounter # 2

- ¿Qué fue lo que encontraron más interesante o qué fue lo que más le llamo la atención?
- ¿Cuáles serían las diferencias culturales entre Suecia y Colombia? ¿Cuáles serían según la charla y según lo que ustedes piensan y lo que conocen?
- ¿ustedes se consideran que son conscientes culturalmente? ¿Si, por qué?
- ¿Para qué les sirve a ustedes saber de su cultura?
- ¿A ustedes les sirve para algo saber sobre culturas de otros países, por qué?
- Para ti, ¿A qué conlleva a prender una lengua extranjera?
- Para ti, ¿Cuál es la relación que existe entre aprender una lengua extranjera o un idioma y la cultura? ¿Cuál es la relación entre esas dos cosas?
- Por ejemplo con el chico, y la segunda niña, hablar con ellos interfiere entre esa conexión entre cultura y lenguaje ¿hay alguna conexión ahí que ustedes hicieron cuando hablaron con ella, entre la cultura y el lenguaje?

## Appendix J: Field Notes Sample

Another topic that students start to talk about is football (soccer). Sandal and Nigve show excitement about the topic. Both raised their hand to have the chance to ask. When they have the word, they asked "Who is a better player?" Although they didn't agree about the answer, they said "ok, both players are good" trying to respect their online partners opinion.