The Importance Of Intercultural Communicative Competence In Teaching English As A Foreign Language To A Group Of Pre-Service Teachers In Colombia

González Oyola Sebastián Albert[a], Ramírez Valencia Astrid[b]

[a]Undergraduatestudent in education, Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8666-0259, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia.
[b]Doctor in Language and Culture, Director of English didactics and technology research group, Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3025-5982, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions and/or beliefs that a group of future English teachers (24) had about intercultural communicative competence and its teaching, asking them about the subjects that were within the study plan that train them as an English teacher. Then, they were asked about the application of this knowledge in the space of teaching practice, in the methodological approach a qualitative analysis was chosen, using an interview to collect the data. In conclusion, a fraternal call is made to the programs that train English teachers so that within their study plans they include subjects that give the possibility of strengthening the cultural issues of the language and its teaching, always seeking to rescue those that correspond to their mother language, to ensure that these future teachers can address them pedagogically when they are immersed within the space of teaching practice.

Keywords: intercultural speaker, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Pre-service Teachers, cultural identity.

1.Introduction

The topic of globalization has been a phenomenon fostered by the interconnection and convergence of disciplines, which converge and influence its strengthening, as referred to by Romero (2002), who considers technology as a determining enabling factor for globalization. It demands direct communication among businesses, science, and the world of knowledge, visible in institutions that educate future teachers.

The implications of globalization in the fields of knowledge have been recognized, revealing new perspectives promoted by the communicative vessels of technological media. These have opened up opportunities for the encounter of languages and cultures, fostering alternative modes of communication that encourage the convergence of knowledge and thoughts, particularly in the global business world.

1.1. Globalization as an Intercultural Phenomenon

It is now understood why Roldán (2005) acknowledges the impact of political, economic, social, ecological, and cultural factors on global events. These factors facilitate communication and serve the interests of certain entities, which, through globalization, have hinted at the existence of a standardized world. This standardization does not accommodate local conditions, thoughts, and particular ideas of a people. Instead, it seeks to unify the ways of life of a dominant population, and in this case, is associated with the use of the English language as a foreign language. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the importance of the role of the English teacher, who is called upon to defend the cultural identity of their native language, especially when students intend to learn another language.

It is undeniable, in the face of recent phenomena such as the oil crisis that has affected the world and its dynamics, that technology and its development in terms of interconnectivity play a crucial role. Held (1992) emphasizes the importance of technology by providing links that facilitate new forms of communication, essential for the growth of the global society's economy.

Furthermore, Dewey (2010) argues that globalization is a multidisciplinary issue as it encompasses areas such as history, science, economics, and cultural theory. This is evident in the chart depicted in Figure 1, which showcases the new modes of assembly and communication driven in the global sphere, supported by the expansion of the English language. These modes combine diverse channels of communication among inhabitants.

These perspectives have led to the proposition of homogenization, resulting in a standardized world. However, this contradicts the local elements, as the planet cannot be unified in all its social, economic, and, above all, cultural conditions.

Figure 1. The multidisciplinarity of globalization. Source: Dewey (2010)

Economics: Global corporations, the new economy, and global capitalism in general.

Cultural studies: The global village and processes such as McDonaldization and hybridization.

Political Science: International relations, phenomena, and movements.

Geography: The relativization of space, time, and distance.

Sociology: The nation, global capitalism, and post-industrial societies.

Philosophy: Global ethics, universal human rights.

Political Economy: Capitalism and the World Market

Continuing this dissertation, Block (2006) emphasizes the significance of globalization in the field of education and specifies its scope. In line with this argument, the importance of bilingualism is recognized, driven by the need to learn the English language as a foreign language due to the new forms of communication in the globalized world. This trend has shaped language teaching processes in educational contexts, often making English a mandatory subject with significant instructional hours. The purpose is to meet the demands of the globalized world that imposes its dominance for commercial purposes and to integrate into the global job market, society, and culture.

Kramsch (2002) acknowledges the influence of globalization on current modes of communication and language use. It suggests that communication capability is the primary focus, mediated by technology such as smartphones. This implies that communicative competence may not necessarily require language proficiency but rather technological competence, enabling conversations through smart devices. These devices facilitate translation processes and discourse creation, overcoming limitations of time, space, and business lines when establishing commercial contacts.

The necessity of foreign language learning is underscored by the concept of cultural competence, as highlighted by Banks (2004). Mastering the cultural elements of a society is crucial for establishing communication with people from other nations, surpassing national borders. Thus, bilingualism has become a policy that facilitates recognition and encounters with other cultures, transcending language barriers. It is recognized that language speakers who possess foreign language proficiency have an advantageous position due to the opportunities that different contexts can offer in the job and commercial fields.

Once this precision has been made, it should be clarified that within the local context, there is evidence of a wide cultural diversity in Colombia, characterized by its multi-plurality of cultural expressions, corresponding to the regions of the country, constituting an invaluable wealth, which due to its wide range of traditions and existing norms, demand to be estimated as a heritage, for the promotion and appreciation of ancestral knowledge by young people, thus denoting that the wisdom of the past

is the wealth of the future, then, a call is made for its preservation in generations of the future, expanding their perspective, empathy, and capacity to accept the customs of the peoples that are part of our idiosyncrasy, with this it is expected to strengthen the acceptance of the other and the claim for culture.

Given this premise, it is necessary to address intercultural competence in detail, particularly for future teachers. This competence should be acquired through the curricular spaces offered within the study program. This assertion aligns with Nuñéz (2021) viewpoint that pre-service teachers find it challenging to reciprocally integrate communicative and intercultural competence in their classes and institutions tend to prioritize communicative competence over intercultural competence.

To verify this information, Rojas-Barreto (2018) acknowledges that this topic has been poorly studied in the Colombian context from a research perspective. A cyber graphic review reveals a limited number of articles related to cultural competence. This suggests that researchers and the academy should consider this topic as a challenge to enrich the field of knowledge and enhance pedagogical possibilities, particularly in the teaching of English as a foreign language by pre-service teachers.

Shifting the focus of this study, it becomes necessary to analyze, from the perspective of undergraduate students, the percentage of curricular spaces that allow the acquisition of intercultural competence and align it with the development of English classes during teaching practices. It is found that only 25% of these spaces enable such alignment, indicating a limited number of opportunities to achieve this purpose. Additionally, when the students initiated their pedagogical practices in a public school and later in a high school, it was discovered that their understanding of the cultural aspects of both the native and foreign languages was quite low. Therefore, it was challenging to find ways to implement this knowledge within the practice context.

Considering everything mentioned thus far, there is a need to delve deeper into the topic of intercultural competence from the perspective of a group of undergraduate students in the English teaching program. Their reflections have sparked an interest in this subject.

1.2. Intercultural speaker

An important concept that has emerged in recent times is related to the notion of the intercultural speaker, stemming from current theoretical conceptions in postcolonial discourse, interculturality, identity, cultural linguistics, critical pedagogy, and education in the field of foreign

languages. It is relevant to mention Byram (2000) in this context, who clarifies that this definition had been proposed by Byram and Zárate (1997) to specify that language learners draw upon their knowledge of the cultural values of their native language, indirectly establishing connections with transcultural aspects of the foreign language to communicate. By doing so, they expand their constructive and critical understanding of cultural topics, emphasizing the need to consider the context to identify sociocultural values and enrich their competence in this domain.

At this point, it is worth pausing to mention Corbett (2003), who argues that the intercultural speaker considers the various cultural possibilities offered by any contact they may have with the foreign language. This allows them to select a mode of communication that enables them to test and enhance their proficiency by analyzing which forms of expression are most useful in a given context.

Returning to this issue, Kramsch (1998) alludes to the intercultural speaker's ability to exchange words, demonstrating fluency within communities of speakers and enabling them to determine appropriate language use according to the context in which they operate. Odlin (1989) adds that possessing cultural knowledge of one's mother tongue is advantageous as it becomes a facilitating instrument for the cultural use of expressions in the foreign language, encompassing a wide range of sociocultural and linguistic aspects in both languages.

Coperias(2007) further expands on this notion, stating that the intercultural speaker possesses knowledge of the behavior and attitudes of speakers, allowing them to mediate and facilitate understanding of the connections among the different ways in which individuals comprehend the world around them. This aligns with Kramsch's (2009) concept of the third culture, emphasizing the importance of effective communication within a specific context that leads to an understanding of the ways of life within communities. Cultural wisdom plays a significant role for language learners as they need to grasp and comprehend the actions of communities in line with other political, social, and educational elements at play within discourse.

Building upon this idea, Byram (2008) associates the intercultural speaker with the role of intercultural mediator to underscore their engagement, which should entail certain attitudes, knowledge, and skills that foreign language learners need to grasp, acquire, and apply when interacting with that community.

1.3. Intercultural communicative competence

The tumultuous world we live in has brought phenomena such as globalization, which, as explained, promotes the encounter between cultures and languages. Therefore, anyone wishing to learn a language faces diverse realities and perceptions that, combined with the cultural conceptions of their native language, create an environment for the configuration of knowledge. This enables them to interpret, communicate, and act appropriately within the context of the foreign language.

In this regard, it is recognized that globalization is an event that transcends borders, acquiring a universal character that demands a new conception of the world and its ways of living, driven by the new forms of social interaction imposed by technological advancements.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to present Byram's (2000) concept of the intercultural speaker, which establishes the development of intercultural communicative competence as a condition. In other words, expanding on this concept, an intercultural speaker is someone capable of establishing intercommunication with people from other countries and cultures in a foreign language. They adapt their communicative behavior in that language by drawing on their knowledge of the cultural norms and patterns of their country of origin.

In this sense, it can be challenging to comprehend this term, as Walsh (2009) points out when explaining the tendency some individuals may have when living in a foreign context to assimilate cultural traits and characteristics that are not their own in an attempt to please others and seek acceptance within the foreign context they aim to navigate.

Lazarevic (2018) explains that the mastery of intercultural communicative competence is characterized as active and transformative. It is therefore expected that when a student completes a course, they may not have learned all the cultural traits necessary to be fully competent. Thus, it can be asserted that this knowledge is an ongoing process due to the multiple changes and dynamism inherent in language and its cultural features.

Additionally, Balboni (2006) places great importance on the cultural competence of language speakers, as it allows them to reconcile with the modes of communication in the foreign language by connecting linguistic and discursive competence with cultural knowledge, connotations, and values of the language they are learning. This combination of language proficiency leads to effective conversation.

Emphasizing this point, UNESCO (2002) recognizes the interaction of different cultures and the opportunities provided by this encounter, which dignify the forms of cultural expression that can be shared, especially when consolidating knowledge of a foreign language. It involves identifying similarities or stark differences between the native and foreign languages. In this context, English teachers must be aware of the importance of their role in helping students understand the significance of their cultural traits in comparison to those of the foreign language, which should also be approached with respect and consideration.

On the other hand, there is a need to possess knowledge about social groups and their ways of living and interacting to engage in dialogue with one's actions. This enables individuals to understand events occurring in other cultures and connect them to situations that may arise in their environment, facilitating effective communication. Mejía (2005) acknowledges that this type of knowledge allows us to have diverse representations of the world, broadening the intercultural horizon while recognizing those of the native context.

Furthermore, Bryam (1997) discusses the issue of cultural criticism, which refers to the overvaluation of foreign cultures in comparison to one's own, asserting that language learners must adopt a neutral and unbiased stance to avoid judging both their own culture and the foreign culture they are learning.
The notions of "inferiority" or "superiority" can be found in various research studies that have addressed the topic of marginalization, reflecting on the culture of the United States or the United Kingdom as an ideal to be achieved by language learners in order to attain recognition and prestige. Ramos (2013) illustrates this in one of their studies, where a significant number of novice teachers who participated in the analysis displayed a biased perspective. In some cases, they considered their cultural traits with prejudiced and ill-intentioned labels, while in other cases, they overvalued foreign cultural traits and undervalued their own.

Expanding on this idea, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) propose that intercultural communicative competence involves different components, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, and intercultural competencies, as depicted in Figure 2. This figure highlights various aspects that enable effective communication in a foreign language, establishing communicative mediation in an intercultural context.

Figure 2. Components of Intercultural Competence. Author: Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009)

Here arises the importance of the skill that the foreign language speaker must demonstrate, which encompasses a wide range of characteristics, emphasizing respect for cultural typologies of the native language. It underscores that this knowledge becomes a facilitating tool for learning cultural traits of the foreign language.

With this idea in mind, Walsh (2009) argues that even though the concept of interculturality is not fully developed or defined, exploration must continue to achieve a better understanding and appropriate approach. This exploration should always assume a stance characterized by respect, legitimacy, balance, equality, and equity, leading to the establishment of relationships between societies based on values. It is necessary to shift away from perceiving these societies as spaces, structures, conditions, and mechanisms of power where inequality, inferiority, and discrimination prevail, particularly in the context of migratory phenomena and individuals learning a foreign language. Therefore, the attitude of the English teacher plays a fundamental role as they are called upon to embody these values when teaching a foreign language, specifically English.

Thus, from a pedagogical perspective, it is not easy to identify ways to teach intercultural communicative competence. The most challenging aspect, as in any problem, lies in recognizing intercultural communicative competence, especially for young English teachers who, due to their role as educators, become mediators between cultural traits and the approach to language learning. Nuñez (2021) explains that novice teachers struggle to incorporate pedagogical elements that facilitate the teaching of intercultural aspects. Instead, they tend to focus primarily on developing linguistic competence, possibly because it feels more familiar and straightforward. As a result, they overlook the existence of multiple resources supported by the use of websites, music, literature, and film, which can promote the acquisition of intercultural communicative

competence. Such an approach is characterized by a high degree of acceptance among students, leading them to explore aspects that they may find fascinating, innovative, and interesting.

In the same line of argument, Rodríguez & Ramirez (2019) present another reason explaining why pre-service teachers fail to consider cultural traits within English classes. They attribute it to practitioners' lack of knowledge, which often leaves them feeling unsuccessful due to their unfamiliarity with cultural traits and the methodology required to teach them in the context of their teaching practice.

Building on this previous idea, Barletta (2009) supports this explanation by affirming that pre-service teachers possess limited knowledge of culture, which affects foreign language instruction. Therefore, a lack of communication between linguistic and cultural elements arises during English teaching. This argument is further supported by Cangalaya (2020), who believes that future teachers must develop critical thinking more comprehensively to engage in debates and show concern for the globalized world. They suggest maintaining a neutral, unbiased mindset that allows for personal discernment regarding interculturality.

Ultimately, it is essential to avoid predispositions and preconceived ideas about foreign and native cultures. In doing so, English teachers can prevent falling into patterns that hinder the integration of intercultural approaches in their classes.

1.4. Considerations on Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Context of Teaching Practice

It is crucial to note that cultural aspects are often overlooked in language teaching, as acknowledged by Byram (1989), who determines that in most cases, it is the teachers who decide whether to include them in English courses. This perspective aligns with the pre-service teachers' viewpoint, as they observe that even within their training programs, sociocultural themes are not taken into account.

Here Stern (1992) stands out, who considers the insertion of cultural elements into the English teaching process essential, crucial, and decisive, however, he examines that multiple circumstances make their inclusion impossible.

With this conceptual horizon, this author explains that this lack is due to three reasons: the first, because the cultural theme is very broad, the second, because in many cases it is not part of the objectives set for a

course. On the other hand, it is notorious, the lack of contact with the foreign language, as well as the little importance given to the subject, coupled with having to develop curricula imposed by government entities that are alien to the cultural issue, and finally, the difficulties regarding methodological and technological management by teachers.

Despite the situations previously exposed, it is exalted that some efforts have been made to respond to the need to include cultural aspects within the English teaching programs, to meet this need, Nostrand (1978) is cited for proposing the development of six categories, subdivided into various themes and sub-themes that should be considered within the English programs, in this sense, the themes proposed by this author revolve around these central axes: culture, society, and institutions, ecology and technology, conflicts, individual and multicultural environment, as shown in graph three (3).

Figure 3. Suggested cultural themes in an English program. Source: Nostrand (1978)
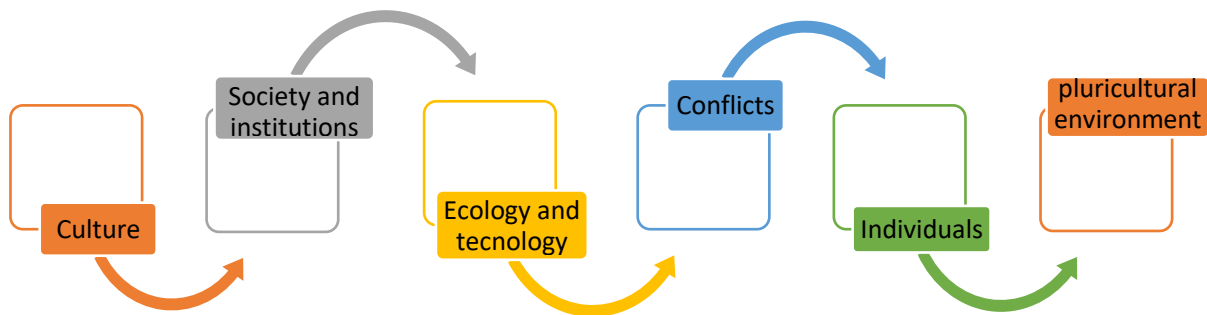
Denoting in this proposal, an emphasis on the cultural behavior of the population, which includes the following categories: personality, social relations, cultural patterns, and ecology, around which the elements that characterize a society can be clearly identified, placing them in the values, traits, and vision of the world, which contemplates all cultural manifestations, within a social group.

In Stern's (1992) perspective, Nostrand's (1978) proposal is based on a goal between cultures, based on a communication of the same type, which requires direct contact with native speakers, to generate a process of immersion in the foreign language, this author recognizes that affective and social factors are involved in the learning of cultural traits, a position shared by authors such as Seelye (1984), Tomalin and Stemleski (1993) and Valtte (1986), among others.
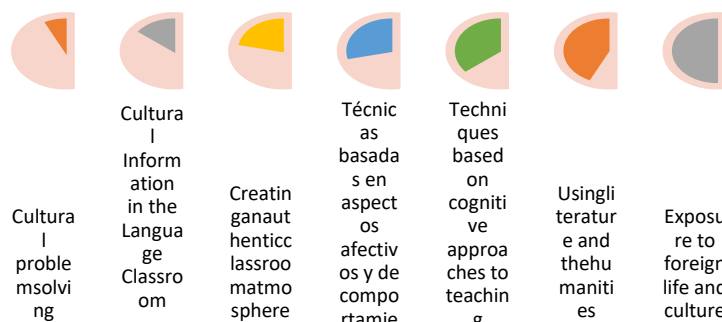
On the other hand, the culture teaching model proposed by Stern (1992) is identified because he considers that the previous classification list is

too extensive and complex, for which it is almost impossible to be developed within an English course explicitly, after all, it would be necessary to leave aside the improvement of communicative competence, which is why, then, an alternate, cultural, realistic and appropriate curriculum is proposed, which emphasizes the geographical position of the region, the study of individuals and lifestyles. Focusing on customs with a look of empathy, in front of the mother tongue.

It also highlights the adoption of a historical vision of the cultural development of the region, of the government, education, social welfare, economic, religious, and political institutions of the army, the police, and the media.

Finally, he considers that studies about culture should be focused on the arts, music, and literature, highlighting the most significant characters and publicizing their achievements, in this way, he is sure that by creating an authentic atmosphere in the classroom In class, cultural information should be directed towards the solution of cultural problems, behavioral and affective aspects, taking a cognitive approach, on the use of literature and the humanities, which allows exposure and contact with the real and cultural life of the foreign language, to focus on the cultural resources of the language to be learned, coming into contact with the media authentically and naturally, as shown in graph four (4)

Figure 4. Suggested cultural themes in an English program. Source: Stern (1992)

| Cultural problemsolving | Cultural Information in the Language Classroom | Creatinganauthenticclassroommatmosphere | Técnicas basadas en aspectos afectivos y de comportamie | Techniques based on cognitive approaches to teaching | Usingliterature and thehumanities | Exposure to foreign life and culture |

Let us continue this analysis, presenting the model of Byram et al. (1994) who conceive learning a language as a contribution, an emancipatory opportunity from customs and cultures different from the native language, allows knowing, taking into account, and investigating new values, delving into the culture of the mother tongue and the foreign language, in this way, criticizes the conversion that some teachers make of the messages and modes of expression from one language to another,

without contemplating the issues of social identity and culture, which turn out to be more effective.

To achieve this, a cultural curriculum is proposed that should focus on the identification of meanings, which may be similar between different languages, affirming that common characteristics must be recognized between languages.

In the same way, it urges the learner to access knowledge about the daily routines of a social group, selecting appropriately those elements that strengthen their communicative learning in the foreign language.

It also proposes that a culture course should include, among others, the following topics: social identity and social groups, social interaction, beliefs and behaviors, socio-political institutions, socialization and vital life, history, geography, and national cultural heritage, to this, has called it minimum cultural content, it should be noted that in each of these themes, there are sub-themes that emphasize cultural learning, pointing out that effective intercultural communication depends on the assessment made of these components.

Delving into this issue, Méndez García (2000), presents a curricular proposal on socio-cultural contents in the area of Spanish, where the learning context allows the strengthening of grammatical and linguistic knowledge, through the sociocultural study of the populations, emphasizing the need to have a neutral look, avoiding standardized thoughts, compared to the vision that one has of other cultures, in this case, the American one.

To conclude this topic, it is proposed to establish a comparison between their own culture and the foreign one, which leads them to be able to capture those cultural elements to be learned, focusing especially on the way of life of these inhabitants, in this way, the perception of the reality and takes an open look at the cultural issue, the aforementioned author thinks that the following issues should be addressed: the attitude towards foreign culture, physical and human geography, the context where these people live, that is, families and the other places, such as work, the region, as well as the area where people live and the daily routines, life cycles, forms of communication between inhabitants, values and modes of social interaction, which it manages.

2. Method

This section presents the research approach adopted for the development of this study, followed by the tools used for data collection. Subsequently, the identified findings are presented.

To conduct this research, a qualitative approach was used, based on the arguments presented by Ramirez et al. (2021), highlighting the importance of interpretation in this type of research. Combined with the theoretical framework, interpretation allows for the researcher's voice to be emphasized considering the problem addressed in this study.

For data collection, interviews were conducted to 24 pre-service teachers from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, considering the principles presented by Morales et al. (2021), who explain the high degree of flexibility offered by this instrument, allowing for the collection of diverse opinions on the topic at hand.

3. Results

Based on the objectives set within this study, the results are presented after applying the data collection instruments. Figure number five (5) illustrates the local cultural differences among the interviewees, who have had to migrate to the capital where people from all over Colombia and other parts of the world converge. These individuals are characterized by different ways of living in each region, thus recognizing the possibility of comparing these cultural aspects with those of the foreign language.

Figure 5. Local cultural differences. Source: own elaboration
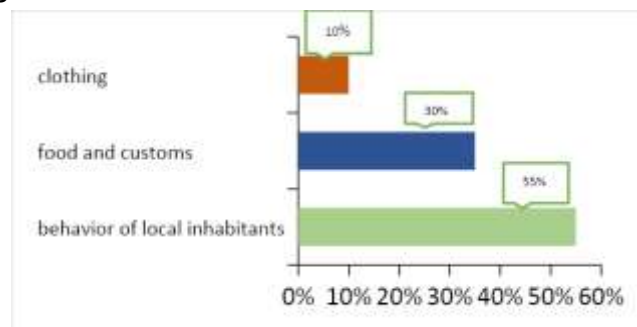
As observed here, 55% of the participants out of a group of 24 students assert that the behavior of the local inhabitants is considered a determining factor of regional cultural differences. Beliefs, values, norms, actions, and especially behaviors carry a meaning that characterizes a specific social group, in this case, the inhabitants of Bogotá. Those who migrate to this city need to understand these aspects to effectively navigate this social context. However, alongside this, the

existence of a variety of intercultural traits is acknowledged, leading individuals to adopt their behaviors based on their preferences, mood, and motivation to establish connections with the people in their environment.

Furthermore, it was observed that 30% of the participants considered that food and customs, that is, the ways of living in a large capital city like Bogotá, differ from those in other regions. This highlights the plurality of identities and expressions existing in our context, characterized by its richness and diversity, nurturing our Colombian identity. It is necessary to overcome prejudices and stereotypes expressed by some individuals, particularly those residing in Bogotá, by fostering an appreciation for and respect for differences. This can be achieved through intercultural dialogue, which enables the resolution of discriminatory and exclusionary practices.

All these considerations contribute to the strengthening of intercultural speakers, who, as explained by Byram (1989, 2000), adapt the cultural forms of their native language to align with those of the foreign language, facilitating assertive and effective communication. This perspective reinforces awareness of identity and the significance of perceiving and understanding other cultures within their local and foreign contexts, fostering a global cultural vision that promotes coexistence and acceptance of differences.

As Coperias (2007) suggests, it is important to contrast the cultural traits of the new language context with those of the native language when learning a foreign language. It is essential to be aware that language learning is an ongoing process that requires the development of intercultural competencies, shaping individuals into intercultural speakers with an open perspective toward new knowledge. This entails avoiding prejudice and considerations regarding stereotypes and instead displaying an attitude of respect, motivation, acceptance, and admiration for differences. This approach helps prevent communication errors when speaking in different contexts from one's origins.

It is now pertinent to present the results illustrated in Figure number six (6) regarding the cultural traits of the native language that facilitate being a cross-cultural speaker.

Figure 6. Cultural traits of l1 facilitate being a cross-cultural speaker. Source: own elaboration
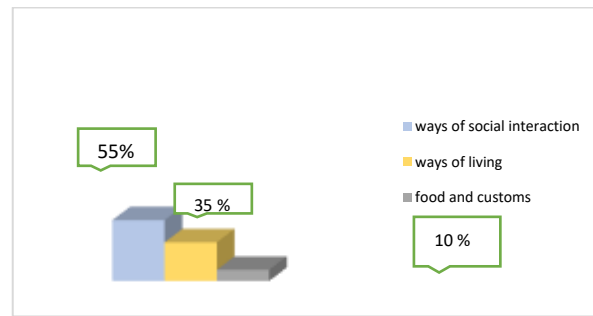
In this section, the forms of interaction within a speech community are emphasized, with 55% being a predominant factor that allows for the role of intermediary between their culture and the American culture. This enables the identification of elements that may lead to confusion or mistakes in the use of the English language as a non-native speaker. The importance of Kramsch (1998) is recognized here for highlighting the power of words in developing and appropriately using discourse through contact with other people who evoke empathy, curiosity, and a willingness to accept and understand modes of conversation and idea exchange among speakers from different communities. Consequently, this intercultural speaker becomes a mediator who enables understanding of their foreigner status, recognizing differences, and engaging in intercultural encounters accompanied by respect, support, and acceptance of others.

As a result, ways of living are highlighted, with 35% being seen as a significant component for approaching a foreign language. Therefore, it is relevant to understand how a community acts to comprehend their feelings, attitudes, and values in specific situations, which are influenced by geography, history, memory, and worldviews.

Lastly, but not less importantly, the results of the inquiry regarding the knowledge and effectiveness of cultural teaching models within an English program in public schools are presented in graph number seven (7).

Figure 7. Cultural teaching models Source: own elaboration
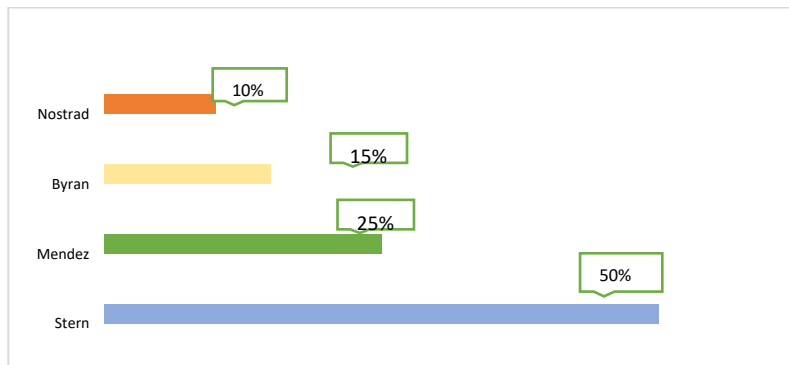
In this analysis, it was identified that Stern's model (1992) was prevalent in the interviews conducted with practitioners, accounting for 50%. The importance of studying the cultural traits of the native language to compare them with those of the foreign language is highlighted. Combined with knowledge about the daily life and customs of the language speakers, this examination of cultural traits allows for the adoption of a curriculum proposal that is appealing to students. However, the respondents recognized that their knowledge and processes of reflection related to cultural differences have been minimally studied in their curriculum, leading to doubts about their ability to navigate real-life situations where they come into contact with speakers of a foreign language. For example, their degree curriculum has not provided enough opportunities for direct contact with foreign language speakers, nor does it provide spaces for them to reflect, characterize, analyze, expand, and acknowledge their knowledge of culture.

They recognize the importance of this model but are critical of the limited possibilities to address cultural topics within the practice setting. When immersed in the practice setting, they must limit their pedagogical exercise to the topics given by the supervising teacher, which tends to focus on grammar rather than culture. In addition, there is a scarcity of available materials to address these topics, requiring them to resort to technology to access and share the experiences and ways of life of the American population in real contexts, even if it means using platforms like YouTube, provided they have the necessary technological means to do so.

It is also worth mentioning that the model that follows in terms of percentage corresponds to Méndez, with 25% recognizing the importance of context in English teaching processes. However, the only way to come into contact with that foreign context is through technology. For example, it is challenging to bring a native speaker as a guest or to find appropriate material where learners in the practice setting can visualize cultural elements in a real way through videos. This

is due to limited resources and digital devices in some institutions or, in some cases, the presence of devices without connectivity or logistical support for connection, making it impossible to achieve this objective.

All these arguments lead the teacher educator to plan cultural activities on their initiative or based on the accounts of others, where cultural traits of the foreign language are presented and, in some cases, compared with those of the native language. This primarily occurs within the context of the practice setting, as it is driven more by the emotional initiative of the pre-service teachers rather than being a topic suggested by the supervising teacher or included in the institutional curriculum, as highlighted in this study, as it was the practitioners who were able to identify this deficiency.

4. Conclusions

There is a lack of relevance of sociocultural environments in both the native and foreign languages. Therefore, teacher education programs are called upon to create spaces within the curriculum where the richness of Colombian cultural heritage is strengthened, safeguarded, promoted, and harnessed as facilitators of intercultural learning in a foreign language, thereby strengthening national identity.

Future English teachers are encouraged to promote cultural curricula that, complemented with other language competencies, foster the emergence of intercultural speakers who respect and preserve cultural heritage while acknowledging the cultural traits of the foreign language.

The phenomenon of globalization has had a significant impact on the implementation of programs that facilitate English language teaching processes, becoming an advantage for those who master this language, particularly in the job market. It has become a constant concern for the state, which, through policies such as bilingualism, has promoted the learning of the English language in the Colombian context. Hence, there is a need to create spaces that facilitate the integration of cultural knowledge from both languages to foster the role of intercultural citizens. This will enable learners to communicate effectively in the global world across various fields of knowledge and ensure the preservation of cultural heritage for future generations.

References

Barletta, N. (2009). Intercultural competence: Another challenge. Profile 11.

Cangalaya-Sevillano, L. (2020). Habilidades del pensamiento crítico en estudiantes universitarios a través de la investigación. Revista desde el Sur. vol.12 no.1 Lima ene./jun 2020. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.21142/des-1201-2020-0009 http://www.scielo.org.pe/scielo.php?pid=S2415-09592020000100141&script=sci_arttext

Coperías, M. J. (2007). Dealing with Intercultural communicative competence in the

foreign language classroom. En E. Alcón y M. P. Safont (eds.), Intercultural language

use and language learning. Dordrecht: Springer.

Esteban-Núñez, M. (2021). Pre-Service Language Teachers' Knowledge and Practices of Intercultural Communicative Competence. HOW Journal, 28(1), 11-29.

Fink, J. (2015). Researching culture and intercultural competence: Some reflections and suggestions. Language and Intercultural Communication.

Jardón-Hernández, E. R.-R.-B. (2015). Jardón- La entrevista a fondo como técnica de investigación cualitativa. Revista Internacional de Investigación en Comunicación aDResearch ESIC.

Kim, H. S. (2015). Using qualitative research to examine the intercultural communicative competence of Korean language learners. The Modern Language Journal.

Lazarevic, N. (2018). Assessment of intercultural communicative competence in pre-service English language teachers: challenges and practices. ResearchGate.

Méndez García, M. C. (2000). La Competencia cultural en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera: supuestos teóricos, análisis de su tratamiento en una muestra de libros de texto de inglés de bachillerato y propuesta de currículum sociocultural Tes.

Morales Triviño C, V. R. (2021). Luchas y competencias digitales de los profesores de inglés durante la pandemia de Covid-19. bol.redipe [Internet].1 de febrero de 2021 [citado 27 de febrero de 2023];, 98-108. doi:https://revista.redipe.org/index.php/1/article/view/1198

Nikolopoulou, K. (2022, December 01). What is purposive sampling? | Definition&examples. Scribbr.

Nostrand. (1978). Quienes explican el alto grado de flexibilidad que ofrece este instrumento, permitiendo recolectar diversas opiniones frente al tema tratado en esta investigación.

Rodríguez, S. A. (2019). Incidencia de la competencia intercultural en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera, en una Institución Técnica de Bogotá .bol.redipe [Internet]. 1 de diciembre de 2019 [citado 21 de mayo de 2023];8(12):71-88. Disponible en. doi:https://revista.redipe.org/index.php/1/article/view/874

Romero, A. (2001). "El Mundo de la pobreza"(segunda parte). En: Tendencias. Revista de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Administrativas. Universidad de Nariño. Pasto, Colombia. Vol. II, No.1, junio, pp.57-84.

Seelye, H. N. (1984). Teaching culture. Lincolnwood, II: National Textbook Company.

Stern, H. H. (1992). Issues and options in language teaching. Oxford: OUP.

Tomalin, B. y. (1993). Cultural awareness. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNESCO. (2002). Universal Declarationon cultural diversity. Cultural Diversity Series No. 1. Obtenido de UNESCO. Available from unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127162e.pdf

Valette, R. (1986). The culture test. En Valdés, J. M. (ed.), Culture bound. Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching (pp. 179-197). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Walsh, C. (2009). Interculturalidad crítica y educación intercultural. Aula Intercultural.