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INCLUDING LOCAL CULTURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM IN A RURAL CONTEXT: A REFLECTION FROM AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

INCLUSIÓN DE LA CULTURA LOCAL EN EL AULA DE INGLÉS EN UN CONTEXTO RURAL: UNA REFLEXIÓN DESDE UNA PERSPECTIVA INTERCULTURAL

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ABSTRACT

The challenge for teachers in the face of the new dynamics of education is to respond to a society immersed in a process of globalization and influenced by technological change. The dynamics of today's world require citizens with intercultural and foreign language communication skills, as well as skills in new technologies, among others. However, when examining the reality of rural educational contexts, the fact that teachers in rural schools face great challenges to carry out this type of training arises, due to the lack of technological resources. Thus, in the case of the implementation of intercultural skills, it is traditionally taught in the English class from the perspective of knowledge of the foreign language, leaving aside the recognition of one's own culture, especially given the cultural richness of these communities. This article reflects on the importance of incorporating intercultural competences in the language classroom from the knowledge of the native culture, and on the importance of rescuing customs and traditions of the local context, and their incorporation in the EFL class to enhance student's motivations in the development of communicative and intercultural competencies in English through a critical perspective. The development of intercultural competences should start first from the knowledge and appreciation of one's own culture, then from the knowledge of the foreign culture and the development of dialogue and respect; that is by being aware of oneself and then of the other's.

Keywords:

English as a foreign language, rural education, tradition and culture, local culture, communicative intercultural competences

RESUMEN

El reto del profesorado ante las nuevas dinámicas educativas es dar respuesta a una sociedad inmersa en un proceso de globalización e influenciada por el cambio tecnológico. La dinámica del mundo actual exige ciudadanos con competencias interculturales y de comunicación en lenguas extranjeras, así como competencias en nuevas tecnologías, entre otras. Sin embargo, al examinar la realidad de los contextos educativos rurales, vemos que los docentes de las escuelas rurales enfrentan grandes retos para llevar a cabo este tipo de capacitación debido a la falta de recursos tecnológicos. Sin embargo, en el caso de la implementación de habilidades interculturales, tradicionalmente se enseña en la clase de inglés desde la perspectiva del conocimiento de la lengua extranjera, dejando de lado el reconocimiento de la cultura propia, dada la riqueza cultural de estas comunidades. Este artículo reflexiona sobre la importancia de incorporar las competencias interculturales en el aula de idiomas a partir del conocimiento de la cultura nativa, la importancia de rescatar costumbres y tradiciones del contexto local e incorporarlas en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera, para potenciar las motivaciones del alumnado en los desarrollos de competencias comunicativa e intercultural, basadas en una perspectiva crítica. El desarrollo de las competencias interculturales debe partir primero del conocimiento y valoración de la propia cultura, después del conocimiento de la cultura extranjera y del desarrollo del diálogo y el respeto, tomando conciencia de uno mismo y posteriormente del otro.

Palabras clave:

Inglés como lengua extranjera, educación rural, tradición y cultura, cultura local, competencias comunicativas interculturales

INTRODUCTION

Current education faces great challenges as it must respond to an immense society in the process of globalization, permeated by the rapid advances of technology. Thus, the current education system must carry out educational processes based on innovation, active learning, and communities' well-being. These demands require human, physical, and financial resources. It implies qualified teachers, technological resources, and infrastructure investment to develop the teaching-learning process in an effective way to respond to the demands of the current society.

Especially in the process of teaching a foreign language, technological resources are becoming more and more necessary to enhance the learning process and improve the students' motivation, since students want to be more active and develop processes from learning by doing, for which technological tools become facilitators of their process. The lack of technological resources is an aspect that limits the conditions for teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom, especially because it deprives them of the opportunity to interact with the world and encounter other cultures.

In this sense, we can affirm that technology is a means that allows us to move around the world and dynamize the process of virtual mobility that contributes to the development of intercultural and communicative competencies in a foreign language. Due to the globalization process, today all professionals need to be open to the knowledge of other cultures since the dynamics of the current world require interaction with communities. In foreign language classes, it is necessary to carry out teaching processes for coexistence, where intercultural competencies are very important for future professionals' training, raising awareness of their own culture in relation to other existing cultures. Thus, students develop tolerance and respect for themselves and others, and critical thinking.

Regarding the phenomenon of globalization, Cely et al. (2023) mention that it has significantly impacted the reality of curricular changes and curriculum administration, due to social differences and the growth of poverty and social exclusion. Those factors affect the way individuals represent the world, society, social relations, and knowledge, among other aspects. Therefore, curricula must include the development of intercultural competencies that help the students understand their own reality in relation to the reality of others from a critical and respectful point of view. Learning English with a good intercultural perspective is supposed to help students recognize who they are, and

how learning can benefit from their cultures and the culture of others' (Sabilah et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, teaching in rural contexts becomes a great challenge for teachers due to their characteristics and the factors that affect educational processes, such as the lack of technology. Life in the countryside is a very relevant social aspect to consider when thinking about education. It is necessary to think about the differences and distinctive features that the population in the countryside have regarding their economic position, social status, interests, and few opportunities to access and use technology, more specifically in pandemic times. The lack of resources causes these areas to be marginalized and excluded from the dynamics of the modern world.

As (Novoa, 2021) mentions, while too many people around the world had to start using technological devices, in the case of our country, a lot of students from rural areas did not have the same opportunities to communicate with their teachers and classmates. Teachers had to deal with the lack of technology equipment, and broadband coverage, among other issues because too many of our students could not have their virtual classes.

For several years, the teaching of culture has been considered a key element in the learning of a foreign language, which brought about incorporating the development of intercultural skills in the learning outcomes. However, this approach to the learning of culture is traditionally based on the knowledge of the foreign culture being studied, leaving aside the knowledge of students' own culture.

Considering the importance of teaching intercultural competencies in the English language classroom, this article reflects on the approach to intercultural competencies, starting with the knowledge of one's own culture, based on the real social contexts students have, especially in rural areas. As well, the focus is on the challenges faced by teachers to carry out effective foreign language teaching processes, and the lack of technological resources available to institutions in rural areas in accordance with the country language policies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bilingualism policies in Colombia

Teaching English as a Foreign Language has become a relevant aim in Colombian education policies during the last four decades. The current policies to teach English started in the National Program of Bilingualism passed in 2004 by the National Ministry of Education, in order to focus effort in three lines of work. The first one was to provide bilingual education in indigenous communities, the second one was flexible models of educational institutions

for work and human development (Schools of languages), and the last one was English to be taught in bilingual and monolingual schools, with the purpose of improving current levels in the communicative competence (Cárdenas & Miranda, 2014).

These policies have included teaching English in public schools as a mandatory subject in syllabuses since 2004. However, it has been observed a lot of limitations to implementing those bilingualism programs, such as overcrowded classrooms, limited access to resources, reduced terms of teaching, low proficiency level of English in current teachers, and a deficit of English teachers in primary levels (Cárdenas & Miranda, 2014). It is also relevant to take into account that there are big gaps related to academic training in English as a Foreign Language, as Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila (2014) point out, teachers are underqualified, as well as not supported and poorly remunerated, some gaps between rural and urban systems of education.

Although teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Colombia is a relevant aspect of education, in public contexts, it is even more challenging. Public schools in Colombia face several obstacles related to language teaching and learning. Ramos & Aguirre (2016) point out how too many rural schools have decreased and have adopted urban school models which causes too many issues for teachers, students, and educative communities, such as demanding life conditions in difficult access areas, illnesses because of the weather, lack of resources in schools and distance from the family circle can become unfavorable aspects for teachers in rural areas. Students in rural areas are still at a disadvantage as compared to the ones in urban areas, because of the differences in their results in national standardized tests, showing that the lowest results are focused on rural areas schools.

It is important to note that these bilingual policies have been created for the entire national territory, without making any distinction between the different educational contexts and without considering the characteristics of rural areas. Indistinctly there are some guidelines and requirements regarding the level of English that each student must reach according to the educational level.

Fig. 1: English levels established by Ministry of Education in Colombia

Guia 22 (Estándares Básicos de Inglés en Colombia)

NIVELES SEGÚN EL MARCO COMÚN EUROPEO	NOMBRE COMÚN DEL NIVEL EN COLOMBIA	NIVEL EDUCATIVO EN EL QUE SE ESPERA DESARROLLAR CADA NIVEL DE LENGUA	METAS PARA EL SECTOR EDUCATIVO A 2019
A1	Principiante	Grados 1 a 3	
A2	Básico	Grados 4 a 7	
B1	Pre intermedio	Grados 8 a 11	• Nivel mínimo para el 100% de los egresados de Educación Media.
B2	Intermedio	Educación Superior	• Nivel mínimo para docentes de inglés. • Nivel mínimo para profesionales de otras carreras.
C1	Pre avanzado		• Nivel mínimo para los nuevos egresados de licenciaturas en idiomas.
C2	Avanzado		

Source: self made

Although there are clear policies and strategies to develop communicative competencies in English as a foreign language, recent research shows that the English level of students in Colombia is generally low. Students in the first and tenth semesters had low levels of reading comprehension. Benavides (2021) states that according to the results of the Saber Pro exam, the level of English among Colombian professionals is very low. Thus, there is a need to improve proficiency in English in higher education. This research paper suggest the need to review bilingual policies and the

implementation of alternatives to enhance English communicative competencies in Colombia.

Rural communities and implications in teaching foreign languages

According to (Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila, 2014), rural communities refer to areas of scarce population. However, the concept can be confusing except when understood from a geographical point of view. Rural areas can be considered based on the number of inhabitants living in them, claiming that an area can be considered rural if it has less than 2,000 inhabitants. In this sense, the aspects previously mentioned on bilingualism do not set out specific policies and contents for those contexts. Therefore, the teachers assigned to those schools are the ones who must adapt contents and activities to the specific necessities of the rural areas and students' interests and needs.

There are some aspects to keep in mind regarding the gaps between rural and urban education. On one hand, there is a lack of English teachers in rural schools; those areas frequently have just one teacher per institution who oversees all the subjects. Thus, exposure to a foreign language is scarce for both teachers and students. On the other hand, the foreign culture in curricular designs and syllabus is more relevant than local culture. This means that the students have some exposure to a strange culture that is unfamiliar to them, and they can just imagine how it is.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in rural contexts in Colombia is an interesting aspect to highlight, because of the challenges that teachers and students must face in the teaching and learning practice. Public education in Colombia has a lot of problems in terms of economic and social areas, but teaching English as a foreign language in rural contexts comprises a big difficulty because of the lack of resources and internet coverage. Teachers find serious differences between rural and urban education, noting that too many students leave the school because they have to work and help their families to improve their economic conditions, hence, the learning environments affect the education quality in those areas.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in rural areas

According to (Olleta, 2013) rural schools refer to a group of specific schooling that are denominated rural zones, where the main characteristics are related to grouped students from different levels, rural teachers disengagement, state schools predominance, high teachers' mobility and poor or inexistence of infrastructure for teaching. This author also points out, that some schools maintain their existence even with five students in elementary levels. To solve the issues mentioned before, the governments

have created an only school that is formed around a big scholarly environment; thus, it is possible to give solutions to the different difficulties presented in small schools. Despite the author's reflection related to an educational context in Spain, the reality concerned with education in rural areas in Colombia and around the world is closely related.

To this respect, (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016) asserts that teachers in rural areas also cope with cultural isolation, cultural adaptation, misconceptions rural families have about education, motivation, infrastructure, and violence are some of the shortcomings which inhibit English teachers from working in rural areas. The authors argue that one important fact is related to the lack of motivation that students have about the importance of studying because they hardly travel around their country. However, even when some of them have greater expectations and taste for learning English, it is not possible to move forward with this language because of the lack of resources to teach it and the vision of parents and communities.

Sometimes it is evident that even English teachers conceive their practice with rural populations as not relevant because of all the issues mentioned before. People in rural schools are less important than urban ones. As (Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila, 2014) states, being a language teacher in a rural area implies unbalanced sociocultural, economic, ethnic and political conditions.

Culture and traditions in teaching English

Through time, the concept of culture has been studied not only in educational fields but also in Social Sciences research. (Kostikova, 2018) states that the concept of culture is an integral part of foreign language teaching, and a wide range of cultural topics are covered in a modern language classroom. The author highlights that the term is difficult to define because cultural groups are always heterogeneous, hence, it must be conceived as a dynamic discursive process constructed and reconstructed in various ways by individuals engaged in struggles for symbolic meaning and for the control of subjectivities and interpretations of history.

Similarly, (Rico, 2018) defines the concept of culture as not static but dynamic, which is changing continuously and being transformed, and it is determined not only by internal influences but also external ones from other cultures and individuals. Therefore, the concept that everyone has about culture is a wealth of experiences that depends on how much human beings have internalized attitudes and values taught by the different groups. Not only the languages that we speak and our way of thinking, but also what we see, listen to, taste, touch, and smell are

conditioned by the culture in which we have grown up. Nowadays, most authors agree that culture can be understood as the set of patterns regarding behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a socialization process.

To understand better the concept of culture, it is noteworthy to take into consideration the cultural iceberg. It demonstrates that the observable part of cultural phenomena is just a small part, and the necessity to guide students to realize that culture is like an iceberg that has hidden things, not only for strangers but also for own culture participants. Generally, the aspects that are visible are values, attitudes, styles of communication, and beliefs. Thus, teachers nowadays have the responsibility to equip learners with intercultural skills and competencies that will enable them to go beyond the classroom (Arriaga & Coscia, 2015). (Figure 2)

Fig. 2: The cultural Iceberg (Arriaga & Coscia, 2015)



Source: self made

Intercultural competence

The authors Santana and Cely (2021) point out the definition of Intercultural competence as a set of abilities in which people use to adapt themselves to cultures and lifestyles to effectively communicate with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Similarly, Usa (2019) states intercultural competence is a relationship with the appropriate and relevant knowledge about cultures when people interact with each other.

In this respect, Rico (2018) argues that intercultural competence is based on communicative competence and expands it in its comprehension. The author states that intercultural competence has different types of knowledge that are related to them: 1) Knowledge dimension: Knowledge about social groups and their cultures and knowledge about how interactions happen at social and individual levels. 2) To know how to learn and comprehend: it implies the abilities to interact with others and knowing the capacity to learn about cultures and to assign different meanings to the cultural phenomena independently and the capacity to interpret and establish relationships among cultures. 3) To know how to do: It refers to the general ability to act in a competent intercultural way in intercultural contact situations; to take into consideration, the specific cultural identity of the other person and to act in a respectful and cooperative way. 4) To know how to be: refers to the capacity and wishes to set aside ethnocentric attitudes and perceptions; likewise, the ability to establish and hold up a relationship between the proper culture as well as the foreign one. 5) To know how to

bind together or to make part of it is characterized by a critical commitment to the foreign and proper culture. Here, it is possible to put into practice the ability to evaluate both cultures. (Rico, 2018).

Intercultural approach to Language teaching

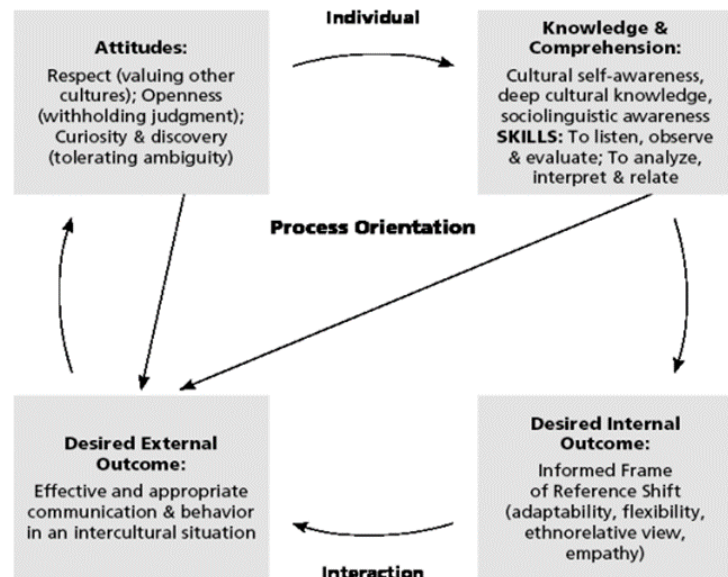
According to (Rico, 2018) Languages are part of the culture, and they must be studied and analyzed. The author states that the biggest problem of a language teacher is to think that the language is a synonym of a country or nation. The textbooks for teaching languages are those that carry on with this belief, and the teachers have the responsibility to contribute to the identity and cultural construction in their pupils. Teaching a Foreign Language must be an invitation from teachers to students to observe the world in a critical way to compare and create their own hypotheses and to share their experiences with others.

A study conducted by Agudelo (2007) confirms some important aspects related to language and culture, he states that they belong together, or they are related to each other. It means that “this relationship mirrors very diverse worlds”, the author claims that the role of teachers should go beyond language teaching. The way in which culture has been addressed in language classrooms has not been completely adequate because of the difficulty of establishing relationships between cultures. According to (Agudelo, 2007) culture has been taken for granted, dissected from the language itself or presented with a trivia information approach, leaving our students with no awareness of the socio-cultural realities that every language mirrors.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

According to Oana (2019) intercultural communication competence (ICC) refers to the active ownership by individuals of qualities which contribute to effective intercultural interaction and can be defined in terms of three primary attributes: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The author describes attitudes as a combination of respect, openness, and curiosity as key aspects for efficient intercultural communication, thus, it is especially important to create lasting relationships with people with other beliefs and values. Then the concept of knowledge is defined as the culture with beliefs, values, and norms that influence the communication behaviors of individuals, and the skills are determined in terms of observing, listening, analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, and relating are the key abilities used for processing the acquired knowledge. Critical self-reflection is also essential in the development of intercultural competence. The concept supported by the author can be better explained in in the (Figure 3):

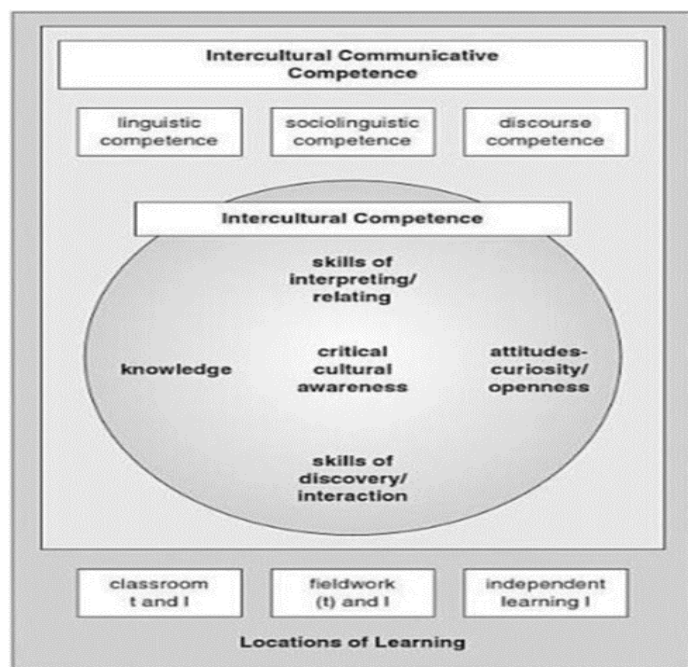
Fig. 3: Primary attributes in ICC (Oana, 2019)



Fountain: (Oana, 2019)

The author (Byram, 2009) defines intercultural competence as the knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing oneself. The author mentions that conceptualizations, theories, and models of intercultural competence attempt to explain for adjustment, assimilation, or adaptation. (Figure 4):

Fig. 4: Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence



Source: self made

Local culture in TEFL classroom

Teaching English as a Foreign Language has been a controversial topic when referring to the didactic materials used. Too many studies carried out not only in Colombia but also around the world show that the learning and teaching processes are focused on the culture related to the target language. Thus, American, British, Australian, Canadian culture, among others are taken into consideration at the time of designing authentic material in the classroom, thus the use of localized materials is needed since learners' experiences in their local context are more realistic. The authors argue about the favorable environment for learners through the practice of different skills. In the case of reading, combining the new information with the background is easier, and it will result in students' positive attitudes to reading.

Besides, listening skill is hardly ever satisfying for learners, but their cultural insights could facilitate the tasks since they are not acquainted with the way the native speakers speak. In relation to speaking skills, "people need to recognize the cultural background knowledge of the target language for them to communicate successfully". Similarly, in terms of writing skills, non-English speaking writers need to have sufficient knowledge about the English language and their native language. (Aminullah et al., 2019)

Researchers are frequently carrying out studies related to Teaching English as a foreign language, considering too many aspects that concern this field. In the present study, some topics such as culture, interculturality, and rural education have been referred to as a matter of interest for teachers and learners around the world. However, local culture in TEFL is an aspect that does not have the relevance in research that it deserves. In Colombia there are some studies related to include proper culture in the classroom but the immediate context of the student, his or her local culture has not been taken into consideration too much. A case study conducted by (Castillo & Pérez-Salcedo, 2022) in Cartagena Colombia in a National Police school examines the role of global and local culture after pandemic time. The authors

claim that “the findings suggest that including local topics and connecting them to universal ones engaged learners and made interactions meaningful”.

Reviewing previous studies

Although Teaching EFL in rural areas in Colombia is a highly relevant topic where too much research has been carried out, the concepts of Intercultural Communicative Competence and Local cultural exposure in the classroom have not been. It is hoped that this research can help English teachers take into consideration the subjects of Intercultural competence and Local culture as noteworthy matters in the processes of Teaching and Learning English.

The revision takes place basically in the web databases such as Academia, Google scholar, Scielo, Redalyc; among others. Firstly, 2 International studies were analyzed, a study related to Teaching English in Rural Indonesian Schools.

Secondly, 8 national studies took place in this revision, they are related to English Teaching in different Rural areas in Colombia, Communicative and intercommunicative competences, Intercultural approach, and Local culture in (Usa, 2019) English classrooms. Most of the documents reviewed are English and just one of them is Spanish. The literature review is divided into in research projects and articles, and they were selected because of the close relation of their topics of research with this project. This review is clearly detailed in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1: Studies conducted in Colombia

Title	Major findings	References
English Language Teaching in rural areas: A New Challenge for English Language Teachers in Colombia	To teach English in a rural context is not very desired for new teachers. In most of those areas they find cultural isolation and it is difficult to live and deal with all the difficulties found in the context.	Ramos, B., & Aguirre, M. (2016). English Language Teaching in Rural Areas: A New Challenge for English Language Teachers in Colombia. <i>Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica</i> (27), 209-222.
The importance of Intercultural Communicative competences in English classes on the context of current migration waves	The article is a literature review about the inclusion of Intercultural Communicative competencies in EFL regarding the context of current migration waves. The authors concluded that ICC must be promoted to develop awareness among the community in general and the role of schools and teachers is highly relevant to foster this aspect in English classes.	Santana, A. M., & Cely, B. (2021). The importance of Intercultural Communicative competencies in English classes in the context of current migration waves. <i>Revista Paradigmas</i> , 61-72.
Intercultural awareness activities in the Colombian Language policy: English, please! Series	The author analyzes Colombian Language policies teaching English through materials that support intercultural awareness in the classrooms. English please! Series is an important step toward fostering not only intercultural competence in Colombian students but also cultural knowledge.	Henao, E. (2017). <i>Intercultural Awareness Activities in the Colombian Language</i> . Medellín: Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.
Global and Local Knowledge for English Language Learning: A Study at a National Police School	This research took place in a national police school in Cartagena Colombia with a group of 22 students. The study showed that it was necessary to include global and local culture in the English classes because the current education was inappropriate, therefore, the authors developed a task-based methodology to improve vocabulary and speaking skills. The goal was to simulate a tour guide in Cartagena through 6 workshops. The results were better language development and verbal fluency in the students.	Castillo, R., & Pérez-Salcedo, M. V. (2022). Global and Local Knowledge for English Language Learning: A Study at a National Police School. <i>Revista Logos Ciencia & Tecnología</i> , 14(2), 70-89. https://doi.org/10.22335/rict.v14i2.1539
El inglés en la zona rural de Colombia: Aplicación del modelo Working with people, del método Content-based y de los ambientes de aprendizaje y la clase de Lengua Extranjera en Subia, Cundinamarca	Focused on Learning environments, this proposal called “Sustainable Drip Irrigation for plants” took place with 11th-grade students. It was possible to evidence the use of the language in communicative situations despite the low level of the language. The author highlights the relevance of considering not only the communicative context but also the individual context.	Buitrago Pérez, L. S. (2017). El inglés en la zona rural de Colombia: Aplicación del modelo Working with people del método Content based y de los ambientes de aprendizaje en la clase de lengua extranjera en Subia, Cundinamarca. Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.
Teaching EFL in a rural context through Place Based Education: Expressing our place experiences through short poems.	This project was action research developed in a rural school in Quiba, Bogotá. The proposal took place with primary school students from 4th grade and consisted of writing short poems using Placed Based Education. The results found were that at the time to connect the students with their rural context, the learning was meaningful and there was an emotional connection with the rural context.	Salazar, R., & Yeyson, E. (Bogotá). <i>Teaching English as a Foreign Language in a rural context through Place Based Education: Expressing our place experiences through short poems</i> . 2017: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional .

Towards the Development of Intercultural Competence Skills: A Pedagogical Experience with Pre-Service Teachers	During the process of the implementation of the different strategies, students started to compare the target culture with their culture with information that was not biased and, they started to recognize the values of their culture and be open to the aspects of other cultures. The more pre-service teachers read and knew about ICC they started implementing strategies for their English classes to give more relevance to cultural issues.	Ramos Holguín , B. (2013). Towards the development of Intercultural competence skills: A pedagogical experience with Pres-service teachers. How, A Colombian journal for teachers of English, 20.
Teacher's perceptions about TEFL at a rural primary school under Escuela Nueva Model: A case study	Through the study the author concludes the main perceptions of teacher's own practice. It was possible to conclude that the teacher reflects upon his role in the society and being teacher in a rural context can construct his own identity	Moreno , Y. D. (2019). Teacher's perceptions about TEFL at a rural primary school under Escuela Nueva Model: A case study. Bogotá : Universidad Santo Tomás

Source: self made

Table 2: International studies.

Title	Major findings	References
Teaching in Rural Indonesian Schools: Teachers' Challenges	The authors did a deep analysis through a narrative case study about challenges that teachers face to teach in Rural areas, especially English teachers in Indonesia. The study determined that urban schools have more advantages in terms of quality of life for teachers and easier access to resources for teaching and learning. Besides, teachers must teach classes which are different to their area.	Mia, F., Nurkamto, J., Rochsantiningsih, D., & Muhtia, A. (2018). Teaching in Rural Indonesian Schools: Teachers' Challenges . International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding, 11-20.
Intercultural Communication in English Language Teaching at Vietnam USA Society (VUS) language center	The writer presents the personal observation and teaching experience at a specific language school in Vietnam. The study concludes that it is highly relevant to include Intercultural communication in the future, also to integrate cultural knowledge and skills to enhance students' communicative competence and with different cultural backgrounds.	Phúc, P., & Khánh, M. (2016). Intercultural Communication in English Language Teaching at Vietnam USA Society (VUS) language center. Ho Chi Minh City: Vietnam National University .
Local culture-based Reading materials for EFL context	This study was carried out in Indonesia in a university context. It was carried out to empower students through local culture-based reading materials. The study concludes that culture has a reasonable significance in the development of different skills.	Aminullah, F. S. (2019). Local culture-based reading materials for EFL context. Proceedings International Conference on Teaching and Education (ICoTE), 1-5.

Relatively few studies have been found on the teaching of intercultural competencies in rural areas; however, on the positive side, it is an aspect that has begun to gain importance. Two international studies reveal that this concept has too many aspects in common with our country and the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language around the world. Additionally, to include local culture and therefore intercultural competencies in TEFL is something that has been less included in research than the other topics enlighten in this research.

Most of the researchers that focused their research on Teaching English in rural areas have positive results in their outcomes pointing out English Teaching in rural areas as a meaningful practice but as challenging as the same time as Bertha Ramos & Jair Aguirre in 2016 state teaching English in rural zones is a challenge for teachers, especially for those who start their teaching practicums, dealing with isolation, cultural adaptation, misconceptions that rural families have about education, motivation, infrastructure and violence (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016).

Research in Spanish was reviewed, considering its close relationship with this research. The author aims to work English in a rural zone in Cundinamarca in Colombia. The research applied the model Working with people from Content Based approach, carrying out qualitative research with 11th grade students. The methodological designed was focused on agricultural practices with a proposal called Sustainable Drip irrigation for plants. The author describes difficult situations in rural education, taking into consideration that students in those zones prefer to work in the countryside labors than to study, and reminds her childhood when her father told her that the school could be closed because of the low

number of students. Thus, this research concludes that the Teaching of English in rural areas can be improved if the students are motivated to work with aspects related to their context and reality (Buitrago, 2017)

Similarly, research about Teaching English in rural scenarios was reviewed. It was action research carried out on the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia with primary school students from 4th grade. This research has a close relationship with this one because of its pedagogical intervention through Place Based Education. According to (Salazar & Espejo, 2017) when referring to Place Based Education, the authors mention the importance of connections between schools, students, and communities from the places in which education takes place. The proposal was focused on short poems writing considering textual genres. The outcomes were supported by the students' response to this proposal which are described by the authors as a meaningful experience for the researchers and the population because of the motivation that they showed at the time of working with their rural surroundings, such as nature, they learned about different aspects like the history, the flora and fauna and the environmental issues affecting their place (Salazar & Espejo, 2017).

In relation to international studies, a research study in Indonesia takes place in this background. It was based on teachers' challenges in rural areas. The authors state that Teachers in urban schools have much access to teaching materials, while teachers in rural areas often lack teaching materials that can support them in delivering their lessons in the classroom. This condition leads to a monotonous teaching and learning process. Mía et al., (2018). The methodology used in this study was a narrative case study aimed at finding out the challenges faced by teachers in rural Indonesian schools. The outcomes were the result of open-ended questionnaires and interviews, analyzing the challenges faced by rural schoolteachers, such as infrastructure, source of learning, language barrier, parent mindset, inadequacy of teachers, student competence, and student mindset.

A second international study reviewed is related to Intercultural communication. The purpose of this paper was to investigate the reality of Teaching English in Vietnam, especially in Teaching and learning Intercultural communication. (Phúc & Khánh, 2016) point out the concept of intercultural communication as a process that beyond the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with others in general, intercultural communication also relates to understandings when communicate with others who identify with specific physical and symbolic environments because of their cultural backgrounds. The aim of the study was to examine the culture shock

experienced by Vietnamese migrants after six to twelve months in the USA. This paper concludes that.

Cultures count as a crucial aspect in communication, and language also plays an important role in communication as well. Therefore, integrating cultural knowledge and skills in language teaching is of the utmost importance to enhance students' intercultural communication competence. As a result, language learners can avoid misunderstandings and confusion when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

DISCUSSION

Current education demands the incorporation of both digital and intercultural competencies due to the globalization phenomena that imply the preparation of future world citizens. The use the technology has become a valuable tool for fostering intercultural education by providing access to information, global communication opportunities and virtual experiences that broaden understanding of cultural differences and promote empathy and respect for other cultures.

In the case of rural areas, teachers are often faced with a lack of resources to make their classrooms more dynamic. However, in the case of the implementation of intercultural competencies, there are strategies that can be implemented in the classroom such as the teaching of these competencies from the perspective of inclusion and the study of one's own culture, which motivates students to learn a foreign language from their local context.

Traditionally students are taught by incorporating cultural aspects of native speakers, and consequently intercultural perspective (Sabilah et al., 2018). The same author states that regarding the teaching of culture in the English foreign class "it is suggested that English be taught by outlining some specifically cultural contents, to name promoting food, natural views, habits, cultural commemorations, and other else students rarely encounter in their daily lives in order to upsurge their sensitivity" (p. 150).

Since cultural knowledge cannot be separated from the learning of a foreign language, it is important to include a cross-cultural understanding of the target language, but this cross-cultural perspective must begin with the recognition of one's own culture. It should be interesting that students could establish a relationship between English learning and their quotidian context which is the local culture in rural areas. It is important to bring local culture to their English classes as an opportunity to get closer to their own culture, traditions, and the milieu where they live; also, the teaching and learning process can become a pleasant experience, otherwise it is prone to boredom.

English in elementary school should always be brought into real implementation; students should learn by doing and active learning. (Sabilah et al., 2018).

Incorporating local culture into the classroom can make the learning experience more engaging and relevant. It helps students see the practical applications of the language, which can motivate them to learn more effectively. Developing intercultural competencies based on the local culture can be achieved through cultural activities, exposure to authentic materials, discussions about local customs and traditions, and exploring local literature and media. By doing so, educators can provide students with a more comprehensive and enriching language learning experience.

CONCLUSIONS

Greater importance has been given to rural contexts in research recently. The challenges of teachers working in these contexts have been also considered in multiple contexts, not only in Latin America. The idea of taking advantage of the cultural richness of these contexts to integrate them with the learning of a foreign language has been incorporated to agendas nowadays. This, of course, becomes another challenge for foreign language teachers, who have been accustomed to teaching culture from foreign contexts rather than from their own local contexts. The challenge of demystifying the teaching of a foreign language from the knowledge of the foreign culture itself, has become more important and leads us to reflect on the incorporation of one's own culture in the English classroom that helps future citizens to know, value, and respect their own culture as well as the foreign culture.

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