

## Culture-Based Language Classes

Culture-Based Language Classes:

Bringing Cultural Competency to Pre-Service Teachers in Colombia

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## 1. Introduction

[This is an opportunity for all foreign language teacher educators to reflect upon] how their target language's culture is taught in class by examining the curriculum of their universities' courses. What are their pre-service teachers learning? What will they internalize for life? What will they forget after the final exams are over? The base of language is culture. The complexity of a language may be its grammar and lexicon, but, [without a cultural context], the words are just floating on paper or in the air without any boundaries. Culture is a sphere that surrounds sounds and letters, [providing meaning to words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions], and provides boundaries and guidelines to understand the meaning of any utterance or written work. Foreign language education professors have to be even more careful when considering culture in their curriculum and more deliberate in teaching it in their classrooms. Their students (pre-service teachers) will be primary and secondary foreign language teachers (FLT). Most will give the final word to primary and secondary students of what a foreign language is and the culture it exemplifies. By graduation, pre-service teachers must have the ability to not only read, write, speak, and listen, but also have proficient intercultural and pedagogical skills.

In Colombia, teaching licensure programs are eight to ten semesters (four to five years) and students must complete between 160 to 167 academic credit hours. All university programs must be accredited by the Department of Education (MEN) and provide high-quality programming in academic and professional skills, national and international mobility, and pedagogical theory and practice (Ministerio de Educación, n.d.). All Colombian university graduates must take a national exam called *Exámenes de Calidad de la Educación Superior* (ECAES) to ensure universities are delivering quality education and professional preparation (Ministerio de Educación, 2015). Foreign language (FL) licensure students are also often required by their universities to take international language proficiency exams in English and French, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Michigan English Test (MET), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the *Diplôme d'études en Langue Française* (DELF) to ensure the quality of their programs. Graduates are often required to

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**Comentado [U4]:** Shouldn't this phrase be set off by commas? I know some commas are being dropped these days (like the one I put when I coordinate 3 or more items), but I tend to follow the rules in academic writing.

**Comentado [U5]:** Same as before: I'd set it off by commas. No big deal anyways; I think most people here won't notice.

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achieve a B2 or C1 level on a scale of A1- C2 to graduate according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe. n.d.).

At the Universidad de San Buenaventura in Cartagena, Colombia (USBCTG), faculty members of the Modern Languages Licensure Program with Emphasis in English and French are researching the most effective and efficient methods for their students to not only pass language proficiency tests but also be well-prepared teachers. Currently, all graduates of the program must achieve a C1 level in English and a B2 level in French in ten semesters to graduate. It is a great challenge, but it is a necessary endeavor to guarantee the excellence of the program and provide exceptional foreign language teachers for Colombia. The greatest impediment to the program's success is the time constraint that students have to learn two foreign languages and pedagogy. Five years is a relatively short amount of time for high language and teaching proficiency.

While exploring solutions to language learning and pedagogical practice under time restrictions, the USBCTG Modern Languages faculty acknowledged the necessity of more standardization of the curriculum and more frequent standardized testing to improve language proficiency. It also recognized pre-service teachers' need to have more critical thinking skills, be prepared for a globalized world, and be able to reduce stereotypes and recognize one's prejudices in and out of the classroom. However, what parts of the curriculum should be developed and aligned more succinctly were still in question. The curriculum was already designed to align reading, writing, listening, speaking, and teaching skills according to proficiency level and semester, yet minimal criteria were characterizing them together as one unit of foreign language teaching (FLT). Once the FLT criteria were determined for the program, students would have a greater success rate in their academic and professional lives.

To discover an innovative solution to FLT proficiency including language, critical thinking, intercultural, and pedagogical skills, researching professors looked towards the base of any language: culture. After surveying current students, professors, and alumni of the USBCTG Modern Languages Licensure Program and reviewing Colombian and international research conducted on the topic, it has been determined that there has been a slight divorce separating language from its culture at the beginner and intermediate

levels of the program’s English courses. Culture and intercultural skills are not the focal point of the curriculum which only inhibits students from reaching their potential of being highly proficient in a foreign language and becoming outstanding teachers in Colombia. Therefore, proficiency in Bryam’s (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) should be the main objective of all levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) of foreign language courses for pre-service teachers.

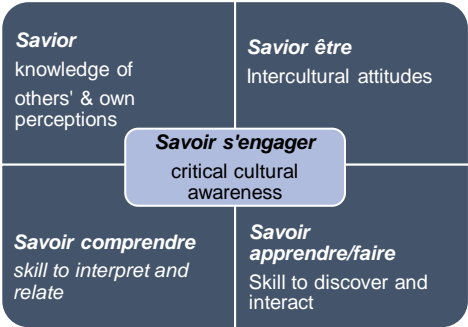
2. ICC in Colombia

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It was not until 2001 that the Council of Europe in its Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) emphasized intercultural skills as important to language learning and teaching (Fenner, 2017). The Council of Europe’s conclusions and recommendations in the CEFR are based on the theory that all communication, in mother and foreign tongues, is divided into six competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, sociocultural, and social (van Ek, 1986). Bryam (1997) refines the competencies to complement foreign language learning and develops the Intercultural Communicative Competency (ICC) which guides the development of foreign language teaching.

Figure 1

Bryam’s Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997)



The ICC is the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities and [the] ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (Byram et al, 2002, p.10). It is comprised of

five factors based on knowledge, attitudes, and skills that Byram (1987) named *savoirs*. First, there is the *savior* of knowledge or knowing how different social groups perceive a person's products and practices and how a person perceives another social group's product or practices. Second, intercultural attitudes (*savior être*) is the "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (Byram et al., 2002 p.12)." A person can understand another person's opinion about his or her own culture and where that opinion could have been derived from. Byram et al. (2002) continues with the skills needed to achieve ICC. Interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) is "the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (p.13). A person can interpret a text or event based on his or her understanding of the foreign and native cultures. The discovery and interaction skill (*savoir apprendre/faire*) is the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (p.13). A person can function in a new culture under real conditions. Finally, critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) is an "ability to evaluate, critically and based on explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p.13). A person is able to critically evaluate his/her culture and a foreign one with a sense of objectivity. The ICC is vital to a FL *licensure* program because it highlights the knowledge, attitudes, and skills a successful or competent future FL educator would need to possess and then pass onto his or her students.

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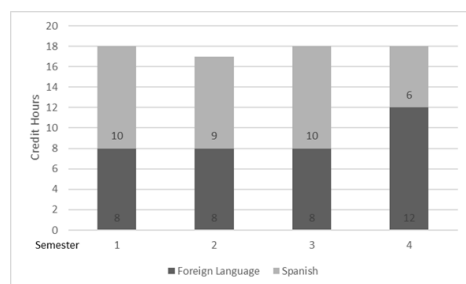
As mentioned, a harsh reality that all FL language *licensure* programs face is time. How does one prepare pre-service teachers to obtain B2/C1 levels in English and French, and be proficient in teaching the two languages and ICC in five years? To understand the reality of FL *licensure* programs in Colombia, an example of credit hours of courses taught in the target languages versus Spanish, the official language of the Colombian educational system is shown (Figure 2). Normally, the first four semesters of a ten-semester program (40%) are only partially dedicated to the beginner, pre-intermediate, and finally intermediate levels (A1- B1) of English and French. As seen in Figure 2, an example from the USBCTG Modern Languages *Licensure* Program, only 44% of semester one's credit hours are taught in French and English. In semester two, the amount of FL exposure

Comentado [U9]: Idem

increases to 47% and in semester three it decreases to 44%, and finally, in semester four, it increases by 20% to 67%. It should be noted that most classes taught in Spanish are directly related to language and pedagogy.

Figure 2

*Example: Number of Credit Hours Dedicated to FL and Native Language*



Note: The example of the number of credit hours dedicated to a FL and Spanish are from the Universidad de San Buenaventura Cartagena, Modern Languages with Emphasis in English and French Program's course schedule (2020).

The reality for FL professors of pre-service teachers is that they have a lot of curriculum to cover in a short amount of time and the practical solution is to teach surface level factors of a foreign language: grammar and vocabulary. Culture, a language's essence and birthplace, is often forgotten or seen as an extra activity and taught when there is time. Due to pressure to finish units in a textbook so students do not fall behind for the next semester, professors have their students mechanically read, write, speak, and listen to standardized words and phrases. The time for discussion and interpretation is exchanged for the next topic on the syllabus. The slow pre-recorded listening exercises designed to teach grammar and vocabulary in context become tools of evaluation instead of practice. Speaking exercises become robotic and repetitious and do not reflect real-life oral communication. In the given example, 40% of a student's time in the classroom does not promote true communication or ICC in a foreign language. Low proficiency in ICC is never the desired result, but it is a reality due to the time restrictions and content of the curriculum. Even with highly qualified and dedicated professors, the chance for success is minimal because course design does not contain a balance between all competencies.

To discover how to balance the curriculum, researchers evaluated the current state of teaching intercultural skills in Colombia. Ramos (2013) conducted a study of a course that explored the aspects related to culture and interculturality and assessment with fifth-semester pre-service FL teachers at a public university in Tunja, Colombia. She concludes that students' ICC increased when they constantly recognized the importance of cultural awareness and the need to incorporate it in their FL classrooms. Participation in the study caused the students to value their own cultural identity more and their intercultural awareness increased. Ramos (2013) recognizes that more work needs to be done to improve pre-service teachers' opinions of their own cultures because they often viewed them as inferior. Finally, it is imperative for ICC proficiency that "language educators should see themselves as mediators between cultures [who] need to be open-minded and neutral agents that construct cultural experiences with students" (p. 210).

Olaya and Gomez-Rodríguez (2013) conducted a similar ICC study with three university English as a Foreign Language licensure programs in Bogota, Colombia. They also studied fifth-semester pre-service teachers' intercultural perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes after they had finished their first four semesters of beginner and intermediate English courses. In their findings, they found that ICC was not specifically noted in the curriculum and the majority of the participants could not define ICC or their definition was incorrect even though students showed an interest in learning more about Anglophone culture. Overall, participants criticized their university courses for only providing superficial elements of culture presented in videos, listening exercises, and short readings. Students wanted more experiential learning activities where students would need to research and then discuss and reflect upon their findings. They wanted to read and listen to authentic materials such as literature, newspapers, music, and podcasts. They also wanted to do more activities with native speakers. All three university participant groups wanted "more significant methodologies which could involve them more critically and experientially, focused on more meaningful student-centered approaches... [while reducing] the great emphasis on grammar and include more cultural content (Olaya and Gomez-Rodríguez, 2013, p.60). The focus on ICC in the classroom will promote an international outlook and promote active participation in globalization.

Comentado [U10]: Same as above; I may be wrong, but *undergraduate program* is more common.

### 3. Research at USBCTG

After defining ICC and investigating the current state of teaching and learning culture in Colombia, USBCTG researchers decided to respond to Barletta (2009), who invites Colombian teacher educators to create new methods of incorporating culture and improving ICC proficiency in the classroom. To execute this effectively, first, a review of hours spent learning in a FL was conducted (Figure 1). Then, the current student body, professors, and alumni of the USBCTG Modern Languages Licensure Program were surveyed to evaluate if the program's professors and their coursework are impartially and effectively facilitating intercultural understanding between Colombian and Anglophone cultures. Researchers designed and administered three questionnaires based on the ICC (Bryam, 1997) and the previously discussed studies by Ramos (2013) and Olaya and Gomez-Rodriguez (2013) to be able to compare the studies from different regions of Colombia.

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**Comentado [U12]:** Same as before.

#### 3.1 Student Surveys

The effectiveness of USBCTG Modern Language's curriculum can be correlated to its students' intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and questionnaires were administered to them to examine their familiarity with Bryam's ICC theory (1997). During semester 1 of 2020 (2020.1), 95 of 240 students or 40% of the study body with an equal percentage from each semester (one to ten) were surveyed. The questionnaires included 23 multiple choice, scale, and open-ended questions to acquire both quantitative and qualitative results. To provide clarity, the questionnaire's questions were in both English and Spanish.

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Below are the highlights of the questionnaires administered to provide an estimation of ICC awareness and proficiency in English classes (See Figure 3-5):



Figure 3

*Question: Do you feel you have a deep understanding or superficial understanding of anglophone culture?*



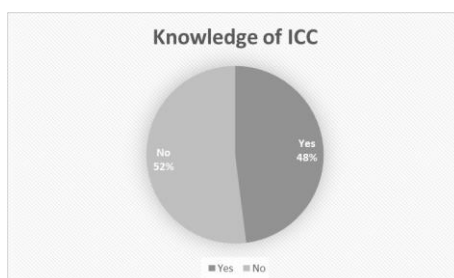
Figure 4

*Question: Do you feel like you could teach about Anglophone culture?*



Figure 5

*Question: Have you heard the term Intercultural Communicative Competency (ICC)?*

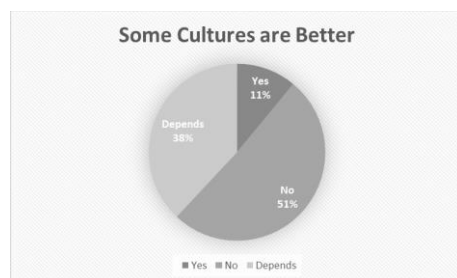


The 2020.1 student body shows a lack of ICC knowledge and proficiency. 87% of pre-service teachers feel they have a zero or superficial understanding of Anglophone culture (Figure 3). However, students did report they received cultural content in various formats from the first to fourth semester. 85% of students watched videos and movies, 18% read magazines and newspapers, 20% played games, and 26% read literature in the target language. Figure 4 shows 90% of students report they would not be able to teach confidently about Anglophone culture in their future EFL classroom. Over half of the student body (52%) had not heard the term ICC (Figure 5).

Students' attitudes about their own culture and others' cultures were also measured in alignment with the ICC theory and past studies mentioned (Ramos, 2013; Olaya and Gomez-Rodriguez, 2013). Figure 6 shows that almost half of the students believe that one culture can be better than another.

Figure 6

*Question: Do you think some cultures are better than others?*



The reasons given by respondents were that some cultures are more organized, developed, and just. Cultures that respect human rights were considered better. Participants were also asked to rate how proud they were to be Colombian and from the Atlantic Coast, or being *costeño/a*, on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. For Colombian pride, 50% of participants marked 4 or 5 as their answer. They also answered a follow-up question of why they feel proud to be Colombian. Students reported they are proud of their traditions, food, customs, history, diversity, and language. The Colombian

people are also resilient. Many expressed that one simply must be proud of their roots no matter where he or she is born. However, 50% of students recognize that they are many negative aspects to the culture which are mostly related to the political system: voter fraud, corrupt politicians, and injustice. When referring to how proud he or she feels as a *costeño/a*, 53% of participants ranked their pride as either 4 or 5. The reasons given with most frequency were because they were born on the Atlantic Coast, the food is delicious, the music is excellent, and people are generally happy, warm, and spontaneous. Only 2 out of 95 responses noted negative aspects of *costeño/a* culture.

Finally, students were asked if they preferred native speakers to Colombian professors. 57% responded “yes,” 42% responded “it doesn’t matter” and 1% responded “no.” The majority of the responses included an explanation that native English-speaking professors have a different and attractive pedagogical style, students can learn culture implicitly and explicitly, and pronunciation and listening skills improve organically. However, these statements are only true if the native English speaker is well-prepared as a professor, knowing how to teach all linguistic competencies: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

### 3.2 EFL Professors’ Surveys

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To understand instruction and curriculum better at the USBCTG, EFL professors of Integral English I, II, III, and IV were also surveyed. It should be noted that the number of the courses corresponds with the students’ semester and their level of English. English I and II are level A1 and English III and IV are level A2 according to the CEFR. In 2020.1, current professors and past professors were surveyed to correspond with their students that are in semesters 1 to 10. An 18-question questionnaire was administered to 6 professors.

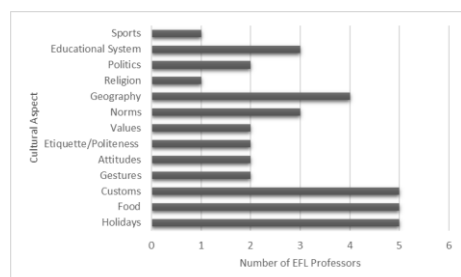
All professors responded positively that they are ICC proficient and teach intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their English I-IV classrooms. About Bryam’s *savoir* (1997) and possessing and teaching knowledge of societal and personal interactions, 67% of the professors responded positively. 83% of respondents encourage curiosity, openness, and readiness to learn about or experience a new culture. Interpreting and relating to cultural phenomena different than one’s own is less

encouraged in class with 50% of the professors responding positively. The lowest response for teachers' intercultural activities was for discovery and interaction (the ability to learn and communicate in real-time in a new culture) with only 1 professor (17%) responding positively even though 67% of professors say they discover and interact culturally. On the contrary, 67% of respondents promote critical cultural awareness in and out of the classroom.

To have a better understanding of how ICC translates into curriculum or classroom activities, professors were asked what topics they taught (Figure 7) and how they were covered in their lower-level English classes.

Figure 7

*Question: What types of cultural aspects did you talk about in English class?*



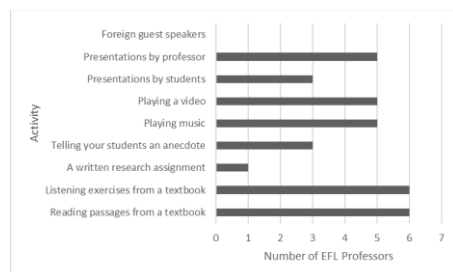
The most frequent cultural aspects shown are in their course textbooks. Holidays, foods, and customs are the topics most covered in classes. The aspects were often mentioned in the captions of pictures, readings, and listening practice exercises designed to include a textbook unit's vocabulary and grammar in context. More profound topics such as values, etiquette, social norms, religion, and politics were discussed at lower rates, depending on a professor's experiences and interests. The Anglophone educational system was mentioned to increase the pre-service teachers' knowledge of their future profession.

EFL professors presented Anglophone culture in various ways as seen in Figure 8, but all professors used the assigned textbook for the semester due to its convenience and effective way to teach all linguistic competencies. Music and videos that include the

grammar and unit's theme are also effective methods to augment all competencies and were used by 5 out of 6 professors or 83%. Professors also relied on their knowledge of Anglophone knowledge since 83% have been to an English-speaking country and told anecdotes and gave presentations on cultural aspects of the country. Only one professor assigned a written assignment to students on cultural themes and no professors invited foreign speakers to speak to their classes.

Figure 8

*Question: How did you present Anglophone culture in your Integral English (I-IV) classes?*



It is curious when comparing the Colombian professors' and their students' opinions about the benefit of having a native English speaker as a teacher. 67% of professors say having a native speaker benefits their Colombian students and 33% said it depends on the quality of the teacher, which is very similar to students' responses of 57% and 42% respectively. Both groups agree that, if the native English-speaking professor is well-prepared, all students will benefit from the cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical exchange. Colombian teachers recognize that the intercultural experience is highly beneficial for their students' progress and interest in the language. The foreign professor brings the Anglophone world directly into the Colombian classroom.

### 3.3 Alumni Surveys

To understand what graduates of the USBCTG Modern Languages Licensure Program truly need to be successful while living abroad in Anglophone or Francophone culture, 33% (12 of 37) of the alumni who have lived or are currently living abroad were

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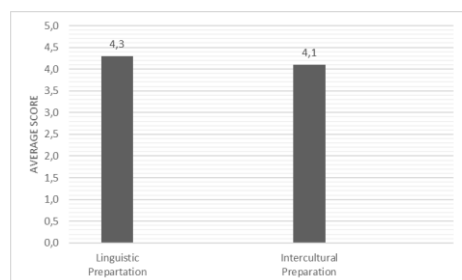
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surveyed. Six of the alumni live or have lived in the United States of America and six live or have lived in France. Prior students were asked to score how well the program prepared them linguistically and interculturally to live and work abroad. They could also comment on their chosen scores in open-ended questions.

The alumni of the program ranked their linguistic preparation to live, work, and study abroad with an average score of 4.3 on a scale from 1 to 5 (Figure 9). Most comments were very positive stating they felt they prepared to work and study abroad, and they could communicate in either English or French in all settings: work, school, community, and home life. Alumni noted that both Colombian and foreign teachers equally prepared them to be proficient in the target languages.

Figure 9

*Linguistic and Intercultural Preparation*



When asked if the Modern Languages program fostered the intercultural skills needed to live, work, and study abroad, the alumni responded on average of a 4.1 on a scale of 1- 5. The respondents noted that both Colombian and foreign teachers had provided the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be successful interculturally. During their studies at USBCTG, they learned country-specific facts and norms of behavior from professors and appreciated the classes that taught both language and culture at the same time. They now appreciate the personal experiences and anecdotes professors told in classroom discussions. They felt the Modern Languages program was key to their success abroad. Overall, alumni felt comfortable in a foreign country and did not feel overly homesick for Colombia. Naturally, they missed their families and food, but the

U.S. and France provided a great opportunity to work and study while improving their linguistic competencies. Also, most alumni (10 out of 12; 83%) felt respected as an immigrant and found that many U.S. and French residents were interested in learning more about Latino culture. However, all alumni did note racism and anti-immigrant attitudes, but, fortunately, they were able to navigate difficult or tense situations due to their intercultural skills. Along similar lines, 4 out of 12 (33%) of alumni reported being occasionally discriminated against directly while abroad. Their students or community members made fun of their accents or acted rudely towards them. However, the respondents noted that there are impolite and intolerant people in all cultures and did not feel it was a personal aggression towards their Latino culture or their immigrant status.

Comentado [U15]: You already know what I'm going to say, right? 😊

### 3.4 Data Analysis

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After analyzing the data and findings of the three questionnaires given to the USBCTG Modern Languages' current students, professors of English levels I-IV, and alumni, it can be concluded that ICC theory is present in the past and present curriculum. However, current students (2020.1) of the program of all ten semesters have very low proficiency in intercultural skills. The vast majority of students (87%) feel they have either zero or a superficial understanding of Anglophone culture (Figure 3). Only 10% of the students feel they could teach about culture (Figure 4) and 49% believe some cultures are better than others depending on the aspects being evaluated (Figure 5). The figures are worrisome because the ultimate goal of the program is to create professionals who can confidently teach all facets of a language. The divorce between language and culture is severe when considering the student population. On the contrary, the alumni who have lived or are living abroad feel they are successful due to their linguistic and intercultural preparation. This discrepancy between current and past students' cultural aptitudes may be explained by the fact that only the alumni who live or have lived abroad were surveyed. All alumni, in Colombia and abroad, would need to be interviewed to deduce a true correlation between the program's effectiveness in teaching intercultural skills and proficiency.

Comentado [U16]: sSuperficial or no understanding...?

The current EFL professors understand that ICC is important and feel that they have a high proficiency. However, when analyzing the topics and activities in the curriculum and classroom there is a deficiency in Bryam's *savoir apprendre/faire* (1997) or intercultural discovery and interaction in real-life situations. Therefore, there is a correlation with both students' and professors' positive inclination towards seeing the benefits of having well-prepared native English-speaking professors in the classroom. Both groups recognize the advantages of unscripted and natural conversations and contact to improve intercultural skills. However, the scarcity of foreign professors who satisfy professional requirements to work legally and will accept a Colombian salary makes hiring foreign professors extremely difficult. Thus, it is more prudent to design a curriculum that encourages ICC than to depend solely on the professors' interests and strengths. This will reduce the variability in coverage and practice of intercultural concepts and skills.

### 3.5 Further Studies at USBCTG

Further studies have also been identified from the analysis of the questionnaires' data. First, an experimental intercultural course for the beginner or intermediate English or French students can be designed to evaluate the effectiveness of basing a language class on culture instead of culture being treated as a separate concept according to Furstenberg (2010). A suggestion would be to teach the course according to the Content and Language Integrated Learning methodology and [design a curriculum to not only include content, but also communication, cognition, and culture skills] (Coyle, et al., 2010). Although this may seem like a lengthy process to restructure a basic language course, the benefits will more likely outweigh the time and effort of designing a new course. It will likely be a source of inspiration to pre-service teachers who will also be investigating innovative practices in their classrooms.

A second study could measure the impact of extracurricular cultural activities and student research groups (*semilleros*) to evaluate if they are contributing to ICC and language proficiency. Are the activities reducing or reinforcing Colombian and foreign stereotypes? Do they create intercultural dialogue and analysis? The data will also help determine what percentage of cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes are coming from

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Comentado [U17]: Btw, a question for you: do you know of textbooks designed to include these skills?



courses, research groups, or extracurricular activities. They will help the creation of worthwhile and enjoyable academic activities and may increase the school community's participation. Finally, a study of students' language proficiency should complement the examination of their ICC. Does a student's language level match his/her intercultural skills? Are students only able to produce oral and written products in Colombian classrooms or can they be successful in the target language's cultural context? To be able to conduct this study, there needs to be standardized testing language proficiency data. Grade point averages of students can be subjective due to the variability of professors' grading systems and may not be reliable sources to determine language proficiency.

#### 4. Pedagogical Implications

After analyzing the experience students, professors, and alumni of USBCTG Modern Languages Licensure Program, there needs to be a more focused effort on interculturality and ICC proficiency in the educational community. To reduce the gap between language and intercultural competencies and improve language proficiency throughout the ten semesters, the program should form a new mindset. A major shift in the faculty's perspectives and syllabi should occur starting at semester one. The program should question what is the function of a language in culture-based courses instead of the language being the focal point (Fursetenberg, 2010). Culture and intercultural skills should not be something for later semesters or more advanced students. They should be covered from day one of a licensure program, especially when the relatively short-time, of only ten semesters, is all pre-service teachers have to become proficient linguistically, communicatively, culturally, and pedagogically.

Understanding cultures and languages has been identified as one of the top five needs for higher education in the world due to globalization (MLA, 2007). In Colombia, pre-service teachers will be the leaders of national multilingual and multicultural development when they are in their classrooms. They will be the central figures responsible for Colombian students to be able to participate successfully in the process of globalization. To prepare pre-service teachers to be able to handle such a great responsibility, their professors need to make concrete and valuable changes to their

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coursework, activities, and teaching styles that will make a significant impact on their students' success. There needs to be a shift from the transmission of superficial knowledge (facts and figures) to a deep comprehension of one's own and foreign cultures.

Colombian FL professors of pre-service teachers may fear teaching a culture class with a FL component and feel unprepared because they are not trained as anthropologists or sociologists. However, professors do not need to be experts on interculturalism to promote ICC. Their role is not to provide facts on any culture. They need to be able to teach their students how to be autonomous critically thinking people who ask pertinent questions, research for the answers, and analyze the findings. A student's interpretation and analysis of cultural products will encourage the internalization of the language and go beyond short term memorization of language facts: grammar, spelling, and vocabulary (Bryam, et al., 2002).

| A harsh reality for most professors of beginner and intermediate levels of foreign languages is time. In Colombia, many professors are assigned many classroom hours and frequently work in more than one institution. Class preparation and grading are often not sufficiently reflected in work schedules. Thus, a textbook becomes the focal point of beginner and intermediate courses due to its convenience. All communicative competencies are covered and cultural tidbits are also included. However, with slight adjustments to coursework and classroom activities, both the intercultural and communicative competencies (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) can be promoted.

First, professors must give context and terminology to discuss culture. Their students need to understand culture's components and the vocabulary used to discuss them. Students may not know the terminology in their native language, but that provides an even richer learning experience for them. Cultural terminology is cross-curricular and complements courses pre-service teachers take such as Social Anthropology in Spanish and prepares them for FL advanced courses such as Literature, Civilization, and Culture. It is also important to establish classroom ground rules of respect, openness, and tolerance, so students can have rich discussions and begin the process of critical thinking in their

native and target languages. This open-dialogue will promote better analytical discussion in all of their classes, no matter the language.

Second, professors of pre-service teachers need to find materials and activities that go beyond the textbooks' mechanical grammar and vocabulary exercises and promote more critical thinking and intercultural skills. However, this can be considered difficult if there is a set curriculum with assigned books which is normally the case for Colombian FL licensure programs. However, many of the books' units are based on themes that can be examined cross-culturally. Students can use the given vocabulary and grammar topics as a means to have significant classroom discussions. Common topics, such as sports, holidays, transportation, households, work, and school can be analyzed in terms of gender, age, region, religion, race, etc. (Bryam, et al., 2002). All vocabulary can be framed in a cultural context. Class activities such as group projects, oral presentations, and writing and reading assignments can all be adjusted easily to promote ICC. All they need are intercultural objectives and topics. Grammar and vocabulary will be used in an authentic context and thus, there will be a higher chance of long-term proficiency in the language. The simple shift in the paradigm of the class will ultimately produce better FL teachers.

Finally, Colombian and native-speaking foreign language professors should connect students and themselves to the target cultures. Faculty should look for international projects, associations, and exchanges. Today, it is very easy and economical to communicate with anyone around the world. The key is to do the legwork of finding the right group or forum for students to share their cultural identities and perceptions. The authentic dialogue will improve linguistic competencies and ICC and reduce stereotypes and misconceptions of the participating cultures (Bryam, et al., 2002; Fursetenberg, 2010). It will also keep pre-service teachers engaged and hopefully, they will continue the intercultural exchange with their future students.

Internationalization should not only be considered as a requirement of Colombia's National Accreditation Association (CNA, 2013). An intercultural mindset and methodology should be the ultimate mission of any FL licensure program in Colombia. The shift from teaching a foreign language course to a culture course using a foreign

language will ultimately create better teachers. These same professionals will be able to educate their students to communicate and compete in a globalized economy which is all licensure programs' ultimate goal.

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**Comentado [U21]:** My apologies for not going over this section, but, as you know, I'm struggling with APA right now 😞

**Comentado [U22]:** Italics? I have the English and Spanish versions on pdfs should you need them.

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**Con formato:** Fuente: Cursiva, Fuente de escritura compleja: Cursiva

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**Código de campo cambiado**

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Olaya, A. & Gómez Rodríguez, L. (2013). Exploring EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Experience with Cultural Content and Intercultural Communicative Competence at Three Colombian Universities. *Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 15(2), 49-67. Retrieved June 10, 2020, from [http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1657-07902013000200004&lng=en&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1657-07902013000200004&lng=en&tlng=en)

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