

PROJECT WORK AS A TOOL TO DEVELOP INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FROM AN ELF PERSPECTIVE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 20th century, the global hegemony of the English language and English-American culture has brought to the fore the need to learn English. In most of the cases, the different methodologies for teaching English as a second or foreign language aim at learners imitating native English-speaker users. However, in the last decades, the number of non-native speakers of English –approximately 2 billion people according to Crystal (Baker, 2015)– has exponentially increased, exceeding by far the native-speaker population. Hence, many international interactions are made by using English as a ‘contact language’ between speakers with different mother tongues, giving English the status of lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2005). This situation has stimulated debate questioning the natives’ custody of the language and claiming a share ownership of the language with non-native speakers so as to provide different learning models based on competence and proficiency rather than on native-like English production (Ur, 2010).

The aim of this paper is to design and evaluate materials to teach English from an ELF perspective in secondary education. These teaching materials are part of a project promoting the development of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, an aspect usually missing in the course syllabus that is essential to become a fully competent speaker of ELF. It begins with a theoretical framework consisting of a brief introduction to English as a lingua franca and an attempt to define intercultural competence. The next section describes the chosen methodological framework, i.e. project-based learning. The practical part of the paper corresponds with the design and evaluation of an intercultural project called *Discovering New Cultures*, implemented with a group of 4th year of ESO. Once the project is contextualised and described, it is evaluated according to the chosen assessment tools, and some improvements for future implementation are finally suggested. In the conclusions section, the main theoretical and practical aspects will be reviewed, presenting an opportunity to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the project as well as the future implications that it might have for teachers’ professional development.

2. ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

Over the last half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, one of the preferred terms to refer to the linguistic imperialism of English has been ‘English as a

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lingua franca' (ELF) because it is the chosen foreign language of communication used between speakers with different mother tongues and cultures (Seidlhofer, 2005: 339). It includes both native and non-native speakers as potential participants of an ELF interaction although the positions they occupy in the English-speaking communities differ in status and acceptance. Fiedler (2010) explains the theory of the *Three-circle model* (Kachru, 1985), which classifies English and non-English native-speaking countries. The *Inner circle* –320-380 millions of speakers– comprises the historically norm-providing centres of English as a native language such as USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The *Outer circle* –300-500 millions of speakers– involves countries where «English is not generally spoken as a mother tongue but plays an important role as second language in administration, the media and education, e.g. India, Singapore, Nigeria» (Fiedler, 2010: 205). Lastly, the *Expanding circle* –500-1,000 millions of speakers– refers to the use of «English as a foreign language in countries where it does not have an official status and is learnt because of its significance as an international means of communication e.g. China, Germany, Japan, and Poland» (Fiedler, 2010: 205).

Similarly, Seidlhofer points out that «roughly one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language» (2005: 339). As a consequence of its international use, what is known as 'standard English' is being shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers, which challenges the traditional trends of learning and using English. In this way, a change of perception and attitude towards the linguistic norm-established English is made, advocating for the non-native speakers' influence and ownership of the English language (Kohn, 2015). Consequently, it seems reasonable to stop referring to a model of native and non-native users in order to replace it with a model based on the users' level of proficiency. In the *fully competent ELF user model*, the ELF user is defined as the «person using English for lingua franca purposes, regardless of which actual English variety is employed» as well as of the speaker's origins (Ur, 2010: 85). What was traditionally regarded as *Inner circle*, *Outer circle* and *Expanding circle* now subsumes the fully competent speakers in the centre, next the fairly competent, and on the outside circle the limited users (Ur, 2009). More than ever, Seidlhofer indicates, speakers from all Kachruvian circles «need to adjust to the requirements of intercultural communication» (2011: 81) and to focus on the necessity of developing communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence (*Common European Framework of Reference*, 2001; Kohn, 2015).

3. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

In order to introduce the importance of intercultural competence and culture in language teaching, Alptekin (2002) describes Canale and Swain's (1983) model of communicative competence, which entails four sub-competences: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The most relevant type of competence for the present paper is the sociolinguistic competence, that is, the one that involves an understanding of the social rules and social context in which language is used –the participants' role, social status, shared

information, and function of their interaction. Social context here refers to «the culture-specific context embedding the norms, values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns of a culture» (Alptekin, 2002: 57).

Alptekin stresses the importance of the integration of language and culture in the classroom «because it gives learners experience of another language, [they] acquire new world views and a different way of coping with reality» (2002: 59). In addition to this, with the increase of globalisation and migration trends in the last decades, by introducing different cultures in the classroom learners would become «viable contributors and participants in a linguistically and culturally diverse society» (Møller and Nugent, 2014: 1).

Although there is no consensus on a precise definition for intercultural competence (IC), an acceptable definition could be the one Guilherme proposes, «the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognise as being different from our own» (2000: 297), and when involving the use of a foreign language, it becomes intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Vettorel, 2010). IC usually comprises five general dimensions –or *savoirs*– according to Byram’s (1997) *Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence: attitudes, knowledge of self and other, skills to interpret and relate, skills to discover and interact, and critical cultural awareness*. This model is found on the basis of the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* (2001) regarding the learner’s competences. For instance, the declarative knowledge or *savoir* is directly related to the knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness. However, the missing element of *critical cultural awareness* is key for Byram, for whom it forms the core of ICC since it is «the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries» (Byram, 1997: 53). The *CEFR* refers to intercultural and cultural aspects of the target language, but when using English as lingua franca, language users cannot be familiar with «the “perspectives, practices and products” of all the potential interlocutors’ different cultures and countries» (Baker, 2015: 6). Whereas traditional English language teaching represents culture as a static concept only related to the Anglophone world (Guilherme, 2000), ICC aims at promoting wider and differentiated cultural perspectives, using language to explore different cultures (Vettorel, 2010). Consequently, it is necessary to learn how to communicate properly in different contexts and raise awareness on cultural and linguistic differences by means of teaching skills and communicative strategies such as accommodation, code-switching, negotiation, cooperation and linguistic and cultural awareness –a conscious understanding of how culture can frame intercultural communication during real time communication– to consider learners competent speakers (Baker, 2011).

4. PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Communicative language teaching is the umbrella term used since the 1980s that covers the main teaching practices of second language acquisition. For this paper, the chosen methodological practice is project-based learning –or project work. In her diplomas thesis, Lípová provides the following definition of project work:

It is a theme and task-centred mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants. It allows for a wide scope of self-determined action for both the individual and the small group of learners within a general framework of a plan, which defines goals and procedures. Project learning realizes a dynamic balance between a process and a product orientation. Finally, it is experiential and holistic because it bridges dualism between body and mind, theory and practice (2008: 14).

The use of project-based learning allows alternative means of assessment, apprenticeship learning, cooperative learning, and integrated-skills instruction among many other teaching practices. For instance, its focus on content learning allows real-world subject matter and engaging topics for the students. It is learner-centred because the student investigates and the teacher offers support and guidance throughout the learning process. Project work incorporates group work and cooperativeness between its members so that they can share resources, ideas, and expertise along the way. This methodology's final objective culminates in an end product that gives the project a real purpose while learners integrate skills and strategies to process information from varied authentic sources, mirroring real-life tasks. Lastly, project work has both a process- and product-orientation, which provides students with opportunities to focus on fluency and accuracy at different stages, working on both content and language (Stoller, 1997).

Furthermore, project-based learning can work as an excellent complement to the regular methodology used in the classroom, which promotes differentiation, cross-curricular contents and empowers learners during the teaching-learning process. Although teachers might encounter certain problems when using project work –such as noise, timing, the use of the mother tongue–, it is undeniable that its benefits worth it to take the risk (Lípová, 2008). To begin with, it brings motivation to the class. It promotes not only situations where students learn how to deal with group work and cooperation, but also with their own autonomy and organisation. Students learn by doing in an active process about personal topics and interests they chose that gives the project a purpose and relevance. Since all the students participate in the creation of the project, they can adopt different roles –integrating multiple intelligences and different learning styles– to share their knowledge and abilities so at the end all of them can experience success during the stages of the project. Finally, and related to the curricular framework, project-based learning fosters the development of cross-curricular contents and the eight key competences –*Learn to Learn Competence, Communicative Competence, Personal Initiative and Autonomy Competence, Interpersonal and Civic Competence, Mathematical Competence, Knowledge of and Interaction with the Physical World Competence, Cultural and Artistic Competence*– that help students see the relationship between what they learn at school and real-life experiences.

Project work is not a unified practice and therefore many types of projects exist depending on the data collection techniques, sources of information, how information is reported, length and the learners' age (Lípová, 2008; Stoller, 1997). However, in order to create a successful project, projects should follow certain stages of development such as the model proposed by Legutke and Thomas (1991): opening, topic orientation, research and data collection, preparation of data presentation, presentation,

and evaluation. In this particular case, the designed project is described as a *research project* where students need to gather information through research –library and technological resources–, and a *production project* or *performance project* according to the students' end product –the product takes the form of videos, radio programs, oral presentations, theatrical performances, among others (Stoller, 1997). It is also described as a *medium-length project*, lasting approximately 8 hours, addressed to a teenager audience where learners explore personal attitudes and experiences so that they keep motivated and contribute with relevant information to the intercultural project.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Project Context

The project *Discovering New Cultures* was implemented in a school of Zaragoza (Spain) in 2015, with a class of 4th year of ESO. The group was formed by 27 students with an A2 level of English according to the *CEFRL*. Although there were a few outstanding students, over half of the students participated in the «diversificación» programme of the school, hence representing a heterogeneous class in terms of English language competence. It is also worth noting that 12 students came from different cultural backgrounds, such as South America, Central America and Eastern Europe but this fact did not difficult the flow of the class.

Regarding their working routine, students started the 50-minute-English lesson with a routine consisting of practicing grammar tenses or talking about a topic in English, and later they usually follow the English textbook. They also had a weekly hour with an Australian language assistant so they could practice their oral skills and talk in English in a more natural context. Moreover, each semester, students made a project where they had to work in groups of four-five members organised by their tutor, so students were already familiar with the methodology and the groups were better distributed than if I had to create them or the students chose their workmates.

Since this project was included in the course syllabus some attention to the *LOE Aragonese Curriculum Order*, May 9th 2007 was necessary in order to justify its objectives, contents and methodology. The particular context of the classroom provided an appropriate and motivating setting for the development of intercultural competence since four out of the six class groups were multicultural teams, with at least one member with a foreign nationality, contributing to critical cultural awareness (Baker, 2011, 2015). In addition to fostering different methodological principles, such as active learning, learning by doing, the integration of ICTs, development of multiple intelligences, group work, differentiation and motivation –Art. 12 Section II *LOE Aragonese Curriculum*–, project-based learning helped the development of key competences like *Communicative Competence*, *Cultural and Artistic Competence*, *Digital Competence*, *Learning to Learn Competence*, *Interpersonal and Civic Competence*, and *Personal Initiative and Autonomy Competence*.

Bearing in mind these learning objectives, the project was evaluated with two assessment tools: an observation sheet, which evaluated classwork and the notebook, and an oral performance rubric provided by my mentor. The notebook was an im-

portant element of the assessment because, as Byram (1997) explains, learners enter the intercultural learning process from different points based on backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives, and move at different speeds. This tool gave students the opportunity to «interpret meaning, consider judgments, and defend language/culture choices on an individual basis is the most effective way to record the process of becoming interculturally competent in the foreign language classroom» (Moeller and Nugent, 2014: 6).

5.2. Project Design

5.2.1. Organisation

Before the implementation, one of my principal aims was to introduce the concept of English as a lingua franca and make students aware of its role and functions all over the world. Ensuing from this, students would reflect, through activities and their own project, on the importance of being a competent speaker of English. However, due to the particular context of the learners –students with a high multicultural background and low level of English– I thought that it would be more relevant for them to work on the concept of intercultural competence and gradually introduce the main features of ELF at the beginning of each session. The project lasted eight successive sessions organised according to the stages proposed by Legutke and Thomas (1991), and each of the sessions started with some warm-up activities to set the mood for the class, then students worked on their projects and the final minutes were devoted to students' writing of their reflection diary.

5.2.2. Lesson plans

SESSION 1. OPENING: WHAT IS CULTURE?

Learning objectives:

- Activate previous knowledge about culture and situations students experienced with people from other countries.
- Identify what aspects form culture and how they can influence communication with other people.
- Discuss different ideas and knowledge about culture and cultural situations.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 10 minutes. The teacher plays the video «Weird or Just Different» with English subtitles to introduce an intercultural situation and reflect on the importance of culture tolerance.
- Step 1: 10 minutes. In groups, students discuss and describe what they think culture is. The teacher numbers the members of each group. In order, each member says an idea they relate to culture. If they cannot think of anything, they say 'pass', so everybody talks and is active. Each group must think of at least 15 words. Then, they share them with the class.

- Step 2: 10 minutes. Students create their own definition of culture. They should try to include all the words they thought about in the previous activity and the ones in a word cloud the teacher shows with the projector. Later, they listen to the groups' definitions and compare them.
- Step 3: 15 minutes. The teacher presents the project «Discovering New Cultures» and distributes a handout with all the relevant information –objectives, calendar, working methodology and assessment. The teacher checks that students understand what they are going to do in the next sessions.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students write in their notebook what they have learnt in terms of contents, key words, and their impression about the project.

SESSION 2. TOPIC INTRODUCTION: INTERCULTURAL WORLD

Learning objectives:

- Give arguments to support ideas related to countries.
- Organise teamwork in an autonomous way –group identity, roles, and topic.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 5 minutes. The teacher says four sentences related to his/her experiences in other countries, three are true and one is false. In groups, students discuss which sentence is false and then share it with the class.
- Step 1: 10 minutes. The teacher distributes one map per group so students mark which countries they have visited. Students share their experiences with the group they will do the project.
- Step 2: 5 minutes. There is group discussion to choose a country on which to do the project. Students may do some pro-cons list to decide it. They tell the teacher the chosen country to write it down.
- Step 3: 25 minutes. The groups start planning and organising the project: decide team roles, relevant aspects they can focus on, if they are going to compare both cultures or become more expert on the target culture, use information from the session to have ideas for the project. Later, each group will share with the rest of the class what they have think of and each group will have to give their opinion or an idea to improve their classmates' projects.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students check if they have all the information from the activities in their notebooks. They need to include key words they have learnt and key ideas such as the team name, team roles –leader, secretary, material manager, spokesperson, creativity manager.

SESSION 3. INTERCULTURAL AUSTRALIA

Learning objectives:

- Reflect on students' intercultural background.
- Identify the general information about intercultural Australia.
- Make connections between the presentation and their the project.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 10 minutes. Students complete their biography of intercultural competence:
 - (1) *My family background.*
 - (2) *Travel to other countries (short-term visits) for holiday.*
 - (3) *Time spent living abroad (two-week-or-more stay).*
 - (4) *Time spent in a multicultural community in home country.*
 - (5) *Social contacts, friends from abroad.*
 - (6) *Language learning experience: language, method of learning, how long, level.*
 - (7) *Other factors that have helped me experience cultures other than my own.*
- Step 1: 35 minutes. The teacher works with the Australian language assistant to show an example of multiculturalism in an English-speaking country. Before her presentation, she comments briefly the student's answers to their biography trying to find similarities with her presentation to make them feel involved with the lesson's topic. The presentation about intercultural Australia deals with immigration, languages, education and English, Melbourne's linguistic map, and how to be careful and respectful with other cultures' values.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students write a reflection on today's lesson, some key words and concepts, information they have learnt and if they are going to need specific materials and resources for their research in the next session (e.g. laptop, leaflets).

SESSION 4. DATA COLLECTION

Learning objectives:

- Identify specific details related to stereotypes.
- Use ICTs to search and gather cultural information.
- Read and select relevant information for their project.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 10 minutes. The teacher starts the session with a video about stereotypes since students may include some of them in their projects. Play the video «Raj Koothrappali's American Accent and Howard Wolowitz's Indian Accent». Comment on the different accents used, content of the conversation; give examples of the American and Indian stereotypes mentioned in the video.
- Step 1: 35 minutes. Before students start their research, the teacher reminds the project's main objectives and gives students some ideas from places where they can find information. The teacher monitors while student use books, computers and mobile phones.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students reflect on what they have done during the session and write some key words and information they have learnt.

SESSION 5. DATA COLLECTION

Learning objectives:

- Use ICTs to look up for cultural information.
- Read and select relevant information for their project.
- Select and organise the most relevant information for the project coherently.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 5 minutes. Individually, students remember one thing they learnt in the previous session. Then they share it with their group. There must be four or five different ideas per group and the teacher will ask for some of the ideas to be shared with the class.
- Step 1: 25 minutes. Finish the data collection. Students will have time to look for more information for their project. The teacher monitors.
- Step 2: 15 minutes. Students start making a draft about the final product so they know what materials they will need and what information they will include in it. Each student needs to write down the information. The teacher collects one draft per group to provide some feedback about the ideas and format students choose.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students reflect on the information they have found, new vocabulary or what they are going to do in the next session.

SESSION 6. PREPARATION OF DATA PRESENTATION

Learning objectives:

- Select and compare the most important information for their project.
- Use productive skills (speaking and writing) to create the final product.
- Transfer linguistic information to different supports (visual, kinetic, or audio).
- Perform their presentation to practice and receive feedback.

Activities:

- Step 1: 45 minutes. In groups, students start working on their final product –PowerPoint presentation, poster, video and role-play– selecting, organising and planning the product. The teacher gives back their drafts and talks to each group to help them in the process. Students will have time to practice their scripts.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students reflect on what they have done. They can think on how they are going to practice the presentation.

SESSION 7. PRESENTATION

Learning objectives:

- Produce an intelligible and coherent oral text related to culture.
- Use previous knowledge and listening micro-skills to guess what is the content of the presentations they will listen to.

- Understand and identify the general information of their classmates' presentations.
- Reflect on and self-assess their own oral performance with the help of a rubric.

Activities:

- Step 1: 45 minutes. The six groups make presentations of 4-5 minutes. Every time a group is preparing their presentation, the rest of the class will write down the team name, the discussed country and make some predictions about the presentation's contents.
- Reflection: 5 minutes. Students reflect on their presentation. The teacher will collect some notebooks to mark.

SESSION 8. EVALUATION

Learning objectives:

- Recognise communicative strategies to communicate effectively.
- Use listening strategies to infer the origin of specific intercultural misunderstandings.
- Assess their learning and work during the project.

Activities:

- Warm-up: 10 minutes. Taboo game: One member of each group comes to the teacher and listens to the word he/she says. Then, the student goes back and the rest of the group has to guess which word their friend is explaining/describing because he/she cannot say the secret word. The teacher does an example at the beginning to check whether students have understood the game or not. Repeat five-six times. Once they guess all the words, ask them which strategies they used to explain the word to their classmates, and then explain some communicative strategies –paraphrasing, substitution, coining new words, language switch, asking for clarification, non-verbal strategies, avoidance.
- Step 1: 5 minutes. The teacher plays the video «HSBC Culture differences Personal space» (Italian 2:59' and Chinese 5:04') where there is no communication and therefore misunderstandings appear. Students need to infer the reasons why those intercultural misunderstandings happen.
- Step 2: 20 minutes. Once students watched the video and discussed the reasons for the misunderstandings, in groups they will imagine themselves in a similar situation with an intercultural problem in their chosen country. They will prepare a dialogue that later will be shared with the class.
- Step 3: 15 minutes. Students complete a questionnaire in Spanish to evaluate the project. Once they finish, the teacher collects the questionnaires –as well as the rest of the notebooks to mark– and in the final minutes of the class, students comment some of their answers.

(Q1) *¿Qué has aprendido con este proyecto?*

(Q2) *¿Qué es lo que más te ha gustado del proyecto?*

- (Q3) *¿Y lo qué menos? ¿Que mejorarías?*
- (Q4) *¿Prefieres trabajar con proyectos? ¿Por qué?*
- (Q5) *Después de comparar varios países, ¿crees que es importante conocer la existencia de diferencias culturales (para comunicarte con otros de forma efectiva)?*
- (Q6) *Si ahora estuvieses con un grupo de personas de culturas diferentes a las tuyas, ¿serías más o menos tolerante con sus diferencias?*
- (Q7) *Si ahora quisieras buscar información sobre otros países, ¿sabrías hacerlo?*
- (Q8) *Ahora que sabes que hay muchas variedades de inglés, con diversos acentos ¿sientes menos presión a la hora de hablar en inglés?*
- (Q9) *¿Crees que has utilizado mucho inglés en el desarrollo del proyecto? ¿Por qué? ¿Cambiarías algo?*

6. RESULTS

Although the students worked in groups, all of them received an individual mark according to the assessment tools evaluating the class work, the notebook, and the oral presentation. The class mark was obtained by monitoring the students' work, interaction with the teacher and other classmates, and productivity. For the notebook, both content and form were assessed –activities included, the reflection diary, and a correct presentation format. For the oral presentation, the speech was the only item evaluated with a rubric– based on pronunciation, intonation and voice, knowledge of the topic, originality of the work and interaction with the audience. In general, marks were positive –an average mean of 7/10–, with only two students failing the project because one did not justify his absence during the oral presentation and the second one missed most of the sessions, so his marks regarding the process stages were insufficient.

The final questionnaire responses were classified into two main categories, the first one referring to methodological aspects and the second one inquiring about intercultural competence. The first part coincided with the majority of the benefits of project work enumerated by Lípová (2008). According to their responses, the students enjoyed learning and discovering information (Q2: 36.67%, Q4: 4.35%), they became researchers of relevant content because they were free to choose and decide what they wanted to investigate. Besides, while students used searching techniques and ICTs (Q1: 3.13%, Q2: 6.67%, Q2: 10%), they were exposed to incidental learning of grammar and vocabulary (Q1: 15.63%) related to their topic. Students also agreed that having certain autonomy to decide the content, organisation and planning of the project was beneficial because it led to mutual help within the group (Q1: 3.13%, Q2: 20%, Q4: 4.35%) and to a more effective learning (Q4: 73.91%). Finally, it is always important to take into account students' attitude toward the class, so the introduction of short breaks, i.e. project work that allows students to put the textbook aside, is always welcomed (Q4: 8.70%). Similarly, students faced the sessions' contents with more motivation and described the project as «more funny, entertaining, interesting» (Q2: 6.67%, Q2: 10%) that allowed them to «practise English» (Q1: 3.13%) in a more authentic way and helped them develop speaking skills, both as an interaction and as a performance since each group made an oral presentation (Q1: 6.25%).

The second part of the questionnaire sought to make students reflect on the importance of knowing intercultural differences and cultural awareness. The answers were analysed according to Byram's 5 *savoirs* (CEFR, 2009; Vettorel, 2010) to check whether students acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to other cultures and countries or not. In first place, skills (*savoir comprendre, apprendre, faire*) are defined as «the ability to recognise and adapt to cultural contexts that are new» (Vettorel, 2010: 3). In the case of the project, students worked in more depth the *skills of discovery and interaction* since they learnt information about other countries' cultures (Q1: 46.88%), compared, and found similarities between target cultures and home cultures (Q1: 12.50%, 3.13%). Regarding interaction, students were exposed, through some tasks, to intercultural communicative situations and they needed to use certain communicative strategies to achieve successful communicative exchanges. The second *savoir*, attitudes, (*savoir être*) consists of «learning how to be open and respectful towards perspectives, which differ from ours» (Vettorel, 2010: 3). It seems that due to the particular context of the group, students were already tolerant to different cultural backgrounds as seen in some answers of Q6: «be more tolerant» (66.67%), «absolutely more tolerant» (4.76%), «same tolerant as before» (9.52%); complemented with arguments about respect, accepting others' differences and learning about others. Besides, exposing students to intercultural situations and giving them the opportunity to decide what to investigate developed their curiosity and open-mindedness towards otherness. The third element, knowledge (*savoir*), promotes «discovery attitudes and critical skills» (Vettorel, 2010: 3). Knowledge of the self –e.g. activity of the *intercultural biography*– is thus essential in order to relativise perceptions and value attitudes and beliefs of the other. It is connected to the knowledge of self and other, of how interaction occurs, and of the relationship between the individual and society. Therefore, the introduction of cultural differences with activities, tasks and projects is needed and students agreed on its importance to deal with and bring it to the class (Q5: 95.24%). Although critical awareness, the final *savoir*, was a more complicated issue to include, some sessions were spent introducing the concept of culture and how it can influence people's behaviours and attitudes to make students aware of its effects (Baker, 2015). Besides, as a first step to evaluate critically theirs and others' cultures, students needed to compare and look for similarities between countries to foster this ability.

Finally, students were expected to communicate in English most of the time, but this did not turn to be the case. Although there were three or four students who accomplished this aim, most of the students interacted in Spanish with their group members and then, when they needed to write and make the presentation they switched to English (Q8: 38.10%, 9.52%). Despite of this, in the final questionnaire, a minority admitted they should have made an effort and spoke more in English (Q8: 19.05%).

7. IMPROVEMENTS

Overall, the students showed favourable attitudes towards the project. Yet, in my view, several areas for improvement are deemed necessary in the future. Before the project's implementation, the teacher must bear in mind possible linguistic de-

mands, evidence of students' growth, and clear research questions and objectives. Firstly, the teacher should prepare the students for linguistic demands (Lípová, 2008; Stoller, 1997). As a novice teacher, I only paid attention to the project's content; mostly ignoring the focus on form, so in the future I should include further linguistic input since the beginning of the project, during the collection of data, or provide more guidance for the oral presentation. Secondly, it could be useful to promote motivation among students by using tools that allow them see evidence of their growth regarding intercultural competence –e.g. the first day students write their initial ideas about the topic and later compare them with what they have learnt at the end of the project (Moeller and Nugent, 2014). At the same time, the teacher should insist on the importance of keeping the notebook updated, to track students' work and make them aware of their progress through reflection and self-evaluation (Moeller and Nugent, 2014). Thirdly, the teacher needs to have clearer research questions because they influence the project objectives, development and assessment. This is because, in my case, questions might seem too general for a deeper analysis of the project's contribution to the development of intercultural competence.

Moving to the stage where the project is in progress, one element that needs to be improved is guidance and classroom management. I should work on my monitoring skills, since it is very important to control group work by means of, for example, a better track of the notebook, how they interact, the adequate use of roles, who works and who is lazy, etc. Moreover, students should receive more feedback from the teacher and their classmates regarding their project –what information they look for, the organisation of that information, the script for the presentation– to improve students' learning and intelligibility during communicative exchanges. Thirdly, it is necessary to insist more on the fact that the evaluated item of the final product is the oral presentation, not the supporting materials. Students should have worried more about what they were going to say and how –asking for feedback and practice– than on using the ICTs to make presentations or videos. A last point to take into consideration, following my mentor's advice, is that while some students present their projects, the rest of the class needs to do certain tasks to keep their attention and maintain them focused.

Once the project is finished, there are two further aspects worth discussing. For future implementations, it would be interesting to check the acquisition of linguistic contents and intercultural competence. The results of the project, due to its sporadic and short nature compared to the course syllabus, may not show the students' critical cultural awareness that was expected since questions were only intended to provide a general overview of the students' attitudes. For future practices, it is advisable to make more specific questions regarding intercultural attitudes as well as testing communicative skills –e.g. asking for students' attitudes and reactions in particular intercultural situations, what they learn about the target culture, or a critical comparison between cultures. In this way, the teacher has more evidence of the students' learning. The last aspect to mention refers to the introduction of ELF in the classroom. To achieve this goal, students could be exposed to non-native speaking input or they could make another project to discover the uses of English in Spain e.g. *Finding English in Spain Project* –where, when, how, and why English is used.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has dealt with the design and evaluation of a project aimed to develop students' intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. The project focuses on intercultural competence because it is an essential element of English as a lingua franca that is often forgotten as well as excluded from the course plan syllabus. ELF is described as the chosen contact language for communication between people who do not share the same mother tongue and cultural background so intercultural differences will appear in any communicative exchange (Seidlhofer, 2005). Besides, communicative competence is not only formed by linguistic and grammatical components but also by sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences (Alptekin, 2002), which are stressed in this project, since students learn about target cultures and communicative strategies. In addition to this, the fact that most of the exchanges in English do not involve English native speakers (Crystal, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2005) stresses the importance of becoming a successful intercultural speaker –rather than learning everything about a specific target culture–, who can initiate, negotiate and mediate effectively conversations with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Moeller and Nugent, 2014). Project-based learning, following the indications of the LOE *Aragonese Curriculum*, appears to be a suitable methodology to achieve good results for the development of intercultural competence in secondary education. The students' responses were positive and highlighted some of the benefits of using project work, and they also agreed on the importance of being intercultural competent and aware of other cultures' differences to interact effectively.

I would like to suggest some improvements for a future implementation of the project regarding its design and planning, as well as classroom management. Since the beginning it is necessary to have clear teaching and learning objectives, otherwise the class development might look like a messy process where everything is acceptable. Assessment tools should be introduced in the first session of the project, and recalled in next sessions, for students to bear in mind the assessment criteria that, at the same time, serve as guidelines for the correct development of the project. When explaining the assessment tools, it is also important to mention that by using them, students can learn without having an adult controlling all their actions, i.e. it promotes autonomous learning (Moeller and Nugent, 2014). Finally, as happens with any inexperienced teacher, I still need to work on my classroom management skills to improve the effectiveness and productivity of the students' work. With project-based learning, students have more freedom but certain rules regarding the working environment must be set and respected. Thus, although in project-based learning students have responsibility for their own learning, the teacher is still needed to monitor students and help them during the learning process.

For future teaching practices related to the development of intercultural competence, teachers should aim for different grades of cultural awareness leading to critical thinking in order to educate successful intercultural citizens of a globalised world (Baker, 2015; Moeller and Nugent, 2014). From an ELF point of view, bringing an intercultural perspective to the classroom might seem a complicated goal, especially because of the impossibility of learning everything about every culture in the world,

but there are certain abilities, attitudes and behaviours that are common when facing different cultures. In the case of the project *Discovering New Cultures*, it served as an introduction to reflect on the concept of culture, how it influences communication, and the comparison between cultures. Teachers can continue working intercultural competence and developing skills and attitudes with further tasks, activities, and projects that would lead to a deeper identification, analysis and evaluation of cultural elements that influence behaviours, attitudes, and misinterpretations (Moeller and Nugent, 2014) when building relationships with other people and to the acquisition of the necessary communicative strategies to mediate and to overcome intercultural situations.

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