

**Students' Life Stories in EFL Learning: Cultural Identity Construction in a Bogotá  
Public School**

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## Dedicatoria

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## ABSTRACT

This graduation project carried out through narrative research provides an outlook of students' perspectives towards the English language learning processes of eleventh graders at La Merced School, located in Bogotá, by the creation of life stories capturing their thoughts, struggles, customs, and beliefs on the target language. The above was achieved by gathering students' conceptions, memories, and their academic process in productions such as artifacts, voice recordings and therefore life stories. The data was sorted into three main categories of analysis: acculturation, power relationships, and resistance. Concluding, students manifested struggles in their relations among students with high English proficiency leading to less desire to learn, even when they consider the language as fundamental to grow social and economically. In addition, students did not express a strong presence of acculturation on their daily basis.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity, English learning, acculturation, power relationships, resistance.

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial issue when it comes to the construction of a society given the fact that, through language, individuals can express their ideas, their understanding of life and how they feel represented. According to the Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN] (2020), the first construction of identity and self-recognition of children starts in the household, sharing with this common social knowledge and then, this learning is reinforced in schools. Therefore, education plays a key role in, as said before, reinforcing the acquisition of a language. However, in modern days learning a foreign language seems to play a significant role in the construction of society. Thus, education has the responsibility of developing the first language, but also in teaching a foreign language. For the above reasons, this research considers that it is important to highlight the potential implications of learning English as a foreign language in schools. Specifically, it is going to clarify any impact of English as a foreign language [EFL] classes on the construction of students' cultural identities.

The above comes as a relevant issue given the landscape of the English Language Teaching [ELT from now on] field in Colombia and the implications behind the implementation of English as a foreign language by both sociocultural perspectives on English including national policies conducted by the government. Therefore, it is important to discuss some issues that are not usually taken into consideration, for example, the implications and the consequences of learning a foreign language given that it not only comes with the ability to speak it but also with other cultural and political implication behind it.

This research starts given the particular interest of the researcher throughout the entire life of himself. This can be traced back to school, due to when he was there, didactic material used was only about foreign cultures, specifically those from the UK and the USA, providing examples of their background and social views. However, Colombian culture was never involved, generating questions about the reason for this happening. After the experience gained thanks to the university and being a preservice teacher, knowing in depth about the ELT field in Colombia, it was possible to find out the disguised intentions of the policies related to the teaching of English language in Colombia, revealing political discourses and intentions. For that reason, to the researcher it is also important to know about the possible disguised cultural intentions while learning English and if there is a correlation with the construction of identity of students in the country.

## **CHAPTER I: CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE PROBLEM**

Currently, the world is experiencing unprecedented connections thanks to globalization. In this sense, English has taken the lead as the tongue used to communicate among countries and their people. Therefore, many countries around the globe have promoted policies to teach English in their countries even when it is not their native language. Thus, Colombia, a Spanish-speaking country, has decided to follow international guidelines to include this foreign language as the center of the language teaching area in the country. Therefore, the Ministry of Education (MEN) has undertaken some programs starting in 2004 to introduce English into Colombia's Educational System; one of them is called the Bilingualism National Plan, whose main goal is that high school students upon graduation reach CEFR B1 level and at least a B2-C1 level for teachers. This program has

been assisted by an alliance between the government and the British Council, a worldwide organization related to education.

In 2013, the Colombian Congress enacted a law called “*Ley de Bilingüismo*”; as Cruz Arcila et al (2022) stated, “this has implied modifying the general education law from 1994, where foreign language training was more pluralistic” (p. 468). This means that the government decided to put aside the variety of languages that could be taught in schools to prioritize the teaching of English as mandatory in all national schools. The law also negatively impacted on the multiculturalism present in our country given the lack of recognition of the many languages spoken in Colombia. This can be seen in the ongoing program called Colombia Very Well’s (2015-2025) definition of bilingualism in which it is only considered the English language therefore not considering the wide variety of native languages into their program.

Based on the foregoing approach to English ruled by the government and implemented in the Colombian schools, questions may arise regarding the impact of this foreign language not only in the outlook of other languages in the country but also in the learners: students from schools. In this sense, this research arises from the necessity to inquire whether this approach may or not affect students’ cultural identity since a foreign language is brought to the classrooms and learners’ daily life.

### **Institutional**

This research was conducted in the public school La Merced IED located in Bogotá. This is a female school with religious backgrounds since in the past Capuchin Order ruled it. However, nowadays it is a district school ruled by the Bogota government. Anyway, the school still has some remains of the past, such as a church in the main entrance to school.

Regarding its physical facilities, the school has two main buildings. The first is an old building considered a city heritage site, given its history as a site for girls' shelter; students from sixth to eleventh grade use it. However, there are facilities such as computer classrooms that the whole school enjoy, no matter what the grade is. The second one is a new modern building, bigger and taller than the older one. It follows the design of the new wave of schools built in Bogotá. This building is for students from kindergarten to fifth grade.

Additionally, the school's PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional) stated that they promote students to reflect about their own identity, engage in social transformation, and critical thinking. They especially focus on the three key aspects of education that promote each aspect of the students: their social commitment, their acquisition of knowledge, and their self-realization. Finally, according to the English language teaching in the school, it is important to state that the school is trying to emphasize the relevance of this language. For this reason, the school implemented a single schedule to all the students, to implement more hours of English language teaching in the curriculum.

Regarding the eleventh grade in which the research was conducted, it consists of thirty-two students, with ages ranging from 15 to 17. According to class observations done, the development of the lessons was successful given the upstanding discipline of the students and their remarkable performance in the academic field.

### **Problem statement**

In concordance, given the observation conducted in the class, it is relevant to discuss some relevant aspects that could be seen there. At first, it was revealed that students were studying topics related to public health, health processes, and vocabulary associated with going to the doctor. Since classes discussions were based on students' experiences,

they were grounded into Colombian reality. Nevertheless, students expressed concern about the material provided because it sometimes was focused on foreign culture, for example, the health system in the UK. This is a common behavior in English classes, as textbooks and material worked in class are usually decontextualized and do not take into consideration cultural components of the local society (Núñez, 2022).

Nevertheless, the research was not focused on materials and textbooks but on the many possible aspects that impact on cultural identity construction, given that students manifested that they felt lost given the disconnection between their experiences and the content of the course; this idea is explored by Norton's (1995) concept of investment, "for demonstrating the socially and historically constructed relationship between language learner identity and learning commitment" (p. 2). Consequently, students may feel less commitment towards classes given their lack of contextualization. A second key aspect is the researcher's particular interest, whose own experience during their school life showed the same issues, so this motivated to identify the reasons why English teaching practices have not considered students' experiences.

Consequently, it was relevant to investigate the observed classroom issues as they were constantly present in English classes and must be explored to drive pedagogical change. So, it was important to discuss and reveal the practices that may be present in English teaching materials and implement a decolonial turn to shift the perspective of teaching English through foreign lenses toward a local and contextualized understanding in Colombia (Núñez, 2022).

This research considers that EFL classes impact students' cultural identities for three main reasons. First, a constant presence of a foreign perspective in the methodology used in English classes, with the use of foreign examples, materials, and referents in

eleventh-grade classes. Second, the invisibility of power relations in English teaching, specifically related to students' English proficiency level and their relationship among them. Third, students' resistance towards the English language itself.

To further explain these reasons, it is important to state that acculturation is only possible when a learner “acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates.” (Schumann, 1986, p. 379), suggesting that the more immersed the learner is in the culture of the target language, the more he/she will understand it. In relation to power, Norton (2015) indicates that learning English “will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power” (p. 37). This is also confirmed by the British Council (2015) which stated that in Colombia most learners see and understand English as a tool of power to earn more money and gain better social prestige. (p. 31).

Therefore, it is important to dialogue, analyze, and discuss the English Language Teaching (ELT) field, given that, learning and teaching another language is not only about acquiring or becoming proficient, but also about learning and understanding the culture from which the language originates. This research thus emphasizes the need to view English as having cultural, social, and linguistic components that may - or may not- emerge as an issue related to students' construction of cultural identity and how they shape their identity in EFL classes.

### **Research questions and objectives.**

This research would like to explore the concept of cultural identity construction of students in a public school when EFL classes come out in their life. Therefore, it will be exploring the following.

### **Research question.**

What is the influence of the English learning process on the construction of cultural identity of eleventh graders at La Merced school?

### **Objectives**

To describe the influence of English process on the construction of cultural identity of eleventh graders at La Merced school.

### **Secondary objectives**

- To describe how acculturation, power relations, and resistance are evidenced in students' life stories.
- To interpret students' life stories related to their cultural identity construction in English classes.
- To analyze students' narratives with cultural identity construction theory.

### **Rationale**

The main objective of the research is to critically analyze the influence of EFL teaching in Colombia and determine whether there is a change in the students' cultural identity by being taught about the culture of the target language given the remaining component of colonialism in English language teaching (Pennycook, 1998). Particularly, this issue is relevant given that, according to Hall (1990), cultural identity changes through the years and is sensitive to any influence, involving by the years. To achieve this, the research considers students' experiences as its core, considering their process of learning English not only within the school, but also exploring their contact with English in their daily life.

Therefore, the research tries to expose possible foreign influences of the target language on students' self-construction of cultural identity and generate awareness in institutions about how students perceive, understand, and live with English. In the same

way, as the school La Merced IED is allied with the British Council, the research may function as a tool to foster the process of teaching English by taking into consideration students' beliefs, perspectives, and thinking.

Nevertheless, schools' decisions are aligned with government policies, such as the National Bilingualism Plan, which defines, states and commands how English must be taught. Thus, the research may function as a fresh look in the paradigm of considering foreign policies as the only valuable source by considering Colombian students' context and how they position themselves in the learning of a foreign language.

## CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is divided into the State of Art and theoretical framework and provides the basis in which the research is based, including previous researchers that are closely related to the topic of the possible impact of teaching English as a Foreign Language on the construction of cultural identity. However, the literature review set differences between the previous research to this research. In addition, this chapter includes the theory that supports each concept developed.

This current research has a critical perspective about the influence of English in the construction of cultural identity in students. Thereby, countries around the world have tried to explain the potential consequences in their countries that must be considered in this chapter. In addition, in Colombia it is also possible to track research that has spoken about this issue, becoming even more relevant to examine their results.

### **Antecedents**

Nematzadeh and Haddad (2020) conducted research in Iran, trying to investigate if there is any possibility in which students from a school in Kerman, an Iranian city, could be impacted by EFL teaching. To conduct the research, the authors utilized intercultural movie clips to know if their contents influence students' identity as EFL learners. The methodology considers students from 13 to 19 years old in an English class. By measuring students' proficiency, they applied for the Longman Placement Test; in addition, they used a mixed method with questionnaires and semi structured interviews. According to their results, EFL learners modify their perspectives about their closed culture to an intercultural perspective about both their own culture and foreign one. This is meaningful given that their results indicate that there was, in fact, a shift in their cultural identity. However, the

focus of the research tried to explain how identity can change by having an intercultural contact with close communities, which is to say population who are not mostly exposed to foreign cultures and its languages. Nonetheless, it does not take into consideration open communities that are usually in touch with other cultures but not in real contact with the target language. For instance, consumption of non-native cultural products but keeping their native tongue. That is the case of Colombian learners given that it is not so usual to experience with a real environment concerning English.

In the same line of foreign studies, Tian and Padua (2020) conducted qualitative research in Thailand. The sample was selected randomly in a subject of first year undergraduate students of English language teaching. Regarding data collection, they used mainly observation, but also, they included audio recording and semi-structured interviews. Within their proposal, they stated three key concepts that affect identity construction of EFL learners in the interaction in classrooms: Positioning, Power, and resistance. First, Positioning is seen as how learners demonstrate their interpersonal relationships in classroom interaction. Second, Power is understood as the influence that English has in identity transformation in EFL learners. Third, resistance involves the opposition that learners show to the target language, in this case, English. In their conclusion, they stated that students displayed resistance towards teachers and classmates and that some students did not feel free to participate in class due to their low English proficiency, a factor through which power relations affected their perception of their teachers and classmates involving not only the concept of resistance but also positioning themselves within the classroom, leading to power interactions among students and teachers with students. Nevertheless, this research explains too little about cultural identity construction in students' daily life given the fact that they focused only on classroom interactions. However, this research provides

valuable information about how students understand their roles in a classroom, how they perceive themselves and how they practice power relationships by having more proficiency in the target language. Nonetheless, this research does not explore cultural identity in depth, but it does in identity construction in general.

On the other hand, some researchers are interested in the identity construction of EFL teachers. For example, in 2021, Siwi and Laos wanted to explore the identity construction of undergraduate students that had started their practices as teachers. They used a qualitative research method by using semi-structured interviews in two students in the eighth semester of the program Teacher-education in Papua University, Indonesia. According to their results, teachers' identities are dynamic and constantly changing, influenced by self-recognition, the educational environment, and their teaching practices. However, Siwi and Laos' research is more closely related to professional identity than cultural identity, generating a gap within this research. Nevertheless, it provides relevant aspects to consider by exploring teachers' perspectives, and how they identify themselves in the EFL field.

Researchers have also paid attention to identity construction in the EFL Colombian context. For instance, Pose (2011) conducted research in a departmental school called Institution Educativa Departamental Fagua in Chía, specifically with seven students of ninth grade. The researcher employed qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative methods to carry out her inquiry; in addition, she executed semi-structured interviews and filled out field diaries. She examined internal and external factors that impact the identity construction of students related to their EFL classes. She proposed psychological processes involving English and a concept called *investment* designed by Norton (1995), in which learners put effort in their learning process. According to her conclusions, students' identity

and perceptions over English are tightly related to market demands, for example, learning English to get a better job or earn more money. This research seems to focus, or at least their results, on how learners feel about learning English for market purposes; it also clears out that, no matter the field the research is focusing on, English learning inevitably impacts the learners' identity.

Benavides (2017) conducted her research in a public school in Bogotá, in which she explored the idea of identity construction through gender-based short stories in the EFL framework. She intended to expose students' discourses when reading gender-based short stories and if it reflects social construction about this topic. The participants were thirty-eight students from 12 to 16 years. Some of her conclusions were that students are in fact gendered beings that try to respect each other's identity. Second, a sort of competition in which students with more proficiency of English overshadow their classmates. However, her third proposal was that students try to work as a team. The relationship between the reviewed research and this research is, undoubtedly, the construction of identity in EFL classes although she focused only on identity construction related to gender perspectives.

Research in this field has also been conducted at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. For instance, Collazos and Gómez (2016) explored the identity construction of learners from a social outlook and its effects on Norton's concept of investment. In order to collect information, they used field notes and asked students from seventh grade in a public school in Bogotá about their socio-economic context. Considering their findings, students presented unwillingness towards English because of power relationships, social, economic, and family context. This led students to develop identities to fight these problems instead of investing in their learning process in classrooms. As an opportunity, this study provides valuable perspectives on how students construct their identity in an EFL classroom in

which there are social issues. Therefore, it is strongly related to this study because cultural identity focuses on how students' identity themselves and how they recognize others in the educational field.

### **Theoretical framework**

A relevant aspect of this research involves establishing the theoretical basis upon which the data will be analyzed. As this study focuses on cultural identity and the impact of English classes on its construction, it is essential to present and support the core concepts guiding the analysis. The following section, therefore, provides clear definitions of cultural identity, acculturation, power relationship in EFL context, and resistance within classrooms.

### **Cultural identity**

Hall (1990) explored the concept of cultural identity, so he theorizes about two definitions of what cultural identity is. In his first approach, he considers that cultural identity is seen as a unity, a "true oneself" (p.224) that participates in many other *ones*, those who share common characteristics such as history or a similar origin. Therefore, this definition creates a group of members that are seen as equals with the same features regarding their culture, defining in turn culture as immovable and unchanged through time. However, Hall proposed a second approach to the definition of cultural identity, that states people are not the same despite being part of the same culture since people identify themselves as subjects with differences that have been affected by historical events. This means that subjects are not only a person who identifies in a certain way but how they will identify themselves in future, given that identity construction is in constant movement, in addition to a common origin or common experiences, and which presents itself as a fully constituted and independent identity (p.225).

Chen and Lin (2016) propose a definition from interpretive cultural approach in which cultural identity is seen as a social and cultural construction that is not static, but it is constructed, reconstructed, negotiated, and reshaped by interacting with other members of a community, even if they are from a similar identity or feel closely identified. Therefore, this approach explores how the identity is constructed and how it changes by social interactions, specifying that it is not the same through time, but it evolves. Chen and Lin (2016) expose “emphasize the emergent, dynamic, interactive, and contextual nature of cultural identity within a particular cultural group and with others.” (p. 2). Therefore, the need to define what cultural identity is crucial given that the research is specifically centered on the construction of cultural identity. In the same way, it comes to being relevant in the EFL field since language, in particular learning another language, is present in classes and it is a place where the community interacts.

On the other hand, Collier and Thomas (1988) theorize about an alternative approach called critical approach that tries to emphasize power relations and colonial backgrounds. Thus, its focus is to conceptualize cultural identity as a process that emerges from historic backgrounds, as well as social interactions with other individuals. A clearer concept about cultural identity is “socially constructed, structurally enabled, or constrained, discursively constituted locations of being, speaking, and acting that are enduring as well as constantly changing, multiple yet non summative, and political as well as paradoxical.” (Collier, as cited in Chen and Lin 2016). If the research is trying to clear out if there is any possible relation between EFL and its impact over culture, it results crucial to explore identity in a critical perspective due to the implications of English in the education and culture. Similarly, it is relevant to the ELT field because of the importance of revealing or

discovering some practices in the intercultural exchange while learning English.

Understanding cultural identity as a construction process emerges from many factors.

### **Acculturation in EFL**

Acculturation is any change that appears after a contact between two different communities that are not identified as equals (Sam, 2006). However, this definition is too broad and does not narrow key ideas. Therefore, a more specific and detailed explanation of acculturation is “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield et al. 1936, as cited in Sam, 2006). This definition is highly relevant to this research because it frames the possible implications faced by students at La Merced school in Bogotá face when learning a foreign language such as English, which is a contact with an external culture. The previous mentioned is closely related to the ELT field, because when bringing a foreign language to a territory, in this case Bogotá, it is relevant to consider its possible implications.

Likewise, acculturation has also been explored by Latin American researchers, for example, Bermúdez (2001) has given a proposal about what acculturation is according to its perspective of the world:

“un proceso social de encuentro de dos culturas en términos desiguales, donde una de ellas deviene dominante y la otra dominada [...] Esto quiere decir que la cultura que “interviene” no logra necesariamente una dominación total sobre la otra, como tampoco la cultura “intervenida” pierde totalmente sus patrones culturales” [a social process of meeting of two cultures on different terms, where one of them becomes dominant and the other one

dominated [...] This means that the "intervening" culture does not necessarily reach a total domination over the other, in the same way that the "intervened" culture does not lose its cultural patterns completely]. (p.57)

The above is a vital outlook to take into consideration Latin American researchers that have explored what acculturation is, bearing in mind Troudi's postulates (2010) considering that theory is also the perspective of the research about the understanding of the world, therefore, recognizing and adopting definitions of related cultures is crucial. In the same way, it contributes to the ELT field due to the relationship among Latin American cultures and how they see English as a foreign language.

### **Power relationship in language learning**

Bourdieu (1991) studied complex terms such as symbolic power, which is closely related to power dynamics regarding language use. According to him, a power relationship starts with an "unequal distribution of linguistic capital [...] or the chances of assimilating the objectified linguistic resources" (p. 57). Regarding this definition, in the classrooms it starts when a subject possesses and accumulates symbolic power, which is subsequently developed class by class, so the student with greater accumulated linguistic capital interacts with, and positions themselves against, their classmates. Certainly, it is not possible to ensure that power relationships present in class are necessarily negative or affect the peaceful coexistence in class, but it is indeed relevant to inquiry how students perceive and identify themselves in relation to their peers.

### **Resistance in classrooms**

Miller (2015) theorizes about a definition of what resistance is. According to this author, resistance is a process in which students feel a threat to their identities; therefore, they are opposed to learning or to invest in their learning process by self-sabotaging. Miller also asserts that there is an intrinsic relationship between learning and students' identity. Regarding this research, this concept becomes relevant because students may exhibit resistance toward learning English due to social, cultural, or historic backgrounds (Miller, 2015). Therefore, it is key to consider and discuss students' perspectives regarding their motivation and willingness to learn a foreign language such as English,

According to Lindsay (1977), resistance is related to events that can affect students' process of learning another language. In depth, he proposes two key aspects, conscious or unconscious, which may influence the process: students' prior experience with the target language and students' feelings and attitudes towards the target language culture and its potential impact on them. Additionally, students may face negative teachers' attitudes that might reduce their interest and foster hostility in the target language. Therefore, this definition of resistance in classrooms towards the target language, particularly English, becomes relevant given that students indeed may face resistance attitudes towards learning a foreign language, actively affecting their learning commitment.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This section presents and states the current methodology in the research. Therefore, this chapter explores the qualitative type of research, alongside the creation of life stories with a descriptive approach. In addition, the instruments used in the data collection process.

#### **Type of research**

This research is focused on the construction of identity, a characteristic of human beings that is in constant change and it is influenced by several factors such as daily interactions with other beings, socioeconomic backgrounds, historical context, and cultural perspectives (Taylor, 2015). For this reason, the type of research selected is qualitative research. As Patel (2019) stated, qualitative research focuses on human behavior. In addition, it could lead to revealing attitudes, opinions, feelings, among others. As a result, this chosen type of research must work properly given that it is relevant to see identity construction as a qualitative process in which human factors correlate to create, construct and co-construct an individual's identity.

In the same line, Bogdan and Biklen (1997) propose that qualitative research can be seen as an umbrella that may encompass multiple strategies to research that may or not share some common characteristics. They also suggest some characteristics that qualitative research in education may have. First, it is naturalistic, this means that the research usually is set in an environment that is not created artificially, and participants act free without being forced to accomplish some goals. Second, it covers two key features, the need for negotiation, meaning and being more aware about the process than the final product. This implies that the research is more relevant to the students'/participants' perspective rather than the findings. For the preceding reasons, this research considers qualitative research as

its type of research given the fact that the classroom in which the research is developed is a natural place and the importance of considering students' perspectives about the topic of identity construction.

### **Design**

The present research takes narrative research as its core. Squire et al. (2014) stated that, in proper words, it is not a theory but specific stories of life of the participants. In this same line, they propose that narratives contribute to constructing and shaping what we are, intersected by several factors like social and historical backgrounds. (p.17). As said previously, identity construction is a complex, in constant change process remarked by multiple conditions like culture, human interaction and historic backgrounds. As a result, this research considers narratives as the most appropriate design to get to know about participants' construction of their identity throughout their experience in the EFL classes.

Additionally, Cornejo et al. (2018) states that narrative research is truthful by considering assumptions, and subjectivity of the participants instead of accurate facts. In this same idea, is it relevant to state that the life stories present in the narrative research contribute to “differentiate us from others, so they play a role in identity construction.” (Martínez, 2023, p. 39). Therefore, using narratives in this research leads to a better understanding of the participants' beliefs, experiences, and processes that have led them to construct, reconstruct, and socialize their identities. In addition, it lets to analyze if there has been any possible impact of English classes on their cultural identity construction or how they shape their identity construction in class.

### **Participants**

This research is developed in the school La Merced IED, a female school located in Bogotá. To be more precise, as the introductory chapter stated, the research is set in a class

of eleventh grade. In this class of English subject, there are thirty students between 15-17 years. However, it was necessary to carry out a simple random sampling in order to develop the research. As Bhardwaj (2019) points out, it is possible to select a simple random sampling when the population is homogeneous. In this case, as the school students are only women, the class group became very uniform.

In addition, Marcia (1980) considers that, as identity is a never-ending process, it is not possible to state that identity construction starts in adolescence nor ends in this period. However, Erikson (1968) as cited in Branje et al., (2021) one of the most characteristic topics in adolescence is self-realization by constructing identity. In those lenses, as the participants are in their adolescence, it is a great opportunity to explore their perspectives about how they construct their identities and their feelings about self-realization in English classes, and if there is any correlation between EFL and their inner process of construction of identity, in this case, their cultural identity related to English classes.

### **Data collection instruments**

In narrative research, the focus is to explore participants' life stories. In this case, their life stories related to identity construction in EFL classes. As a result, it turned out to be necessary to select two data collection instruments.

### **Life stories**

In narrative research, what is most relevant are the life stories of the participants. According to McAdams and McLean (2013), life stories depict memories from the participants, with their wants through time, making life stories accountable in time. Furthermore, participants can trace their memories, and how they identify themselves, how they see others, and their projections for the future. In this sense, it comes as relevant to this research given the nature of the project, a narrative one. Therefore, inquiring about

participants' life stories and their life let this research go in depth on the possible impacts of English in their cultural identity construction or their experience of their English classes through the whole life school timeline.

### **Artifacts**

The nature of this research resides in how students identify themselves and how they construct, shape and adapt their cultural identity thanks to the English classes. Therefore, at the moment the students were asked to share their single outlooks and perspectives towards the topic, creativity came aboard. Thus, students provided all kind of papers, drawings, and letters in order to capture their mind. As a result, it is crucial to highlight the importance of artifacts and documents in this research. Consequently, artifacts according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

“are usually three-dimensional physical “things” or objects in the environment that represent some form of communication that is meaningful to participants and/or the setting. Examples might be art pieces, organizational or school symbols, trophies, awards, or personal gifts, to name a few.” (p.162).

### **Audio recording**

As mentioned before, the research considers life stories as its central core. Therefore, it was indeed needed to find the most suitable way to gather all of the information provided by students. In this sense, audio recording supplies the possibility to keep students' responses in audio in order to come back to when necessary, adjusting to Park and Zeanah (2005) model of listen and repeat, in which the researcher is able to listen to the data collected countless times. Additionally, this research contemplates a horizontal researching method in which students are not seen as subjects to analyze and subtract the

information required but it ponders the participants as peers leading to a co-construction of knowledge, experiences and, therefore, life stories (Martínez, 2024)

### **Ethical assumptions**

This section refers to the importance of some considerations in order to include clarification in the research, which are crucial to the good development of the ethical consideration of the research.

In this sense, it is important to denote the relevance of signed consent in the research given the fact of, in first place, the recollection of sensible information, and second, that the participants are underage. For this reason, given the ethical consideration of the research, it is crucial the implementation of the consent by both the La Merced IED school and the permission of the participants' parents.

In addition, all of the data recollected in the research is used merely for academic purposes, avoiding sensible information, judgments, prejudices and misuses of the information provided by students.

## CHAPTER IV: PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION

This chapter describes the pedagogical component of the research as this process is crucial to the good development of the inquiry, because it is needed to design and implement activities that are useful and impactful in the population, in this case, the students. Usually, researchers operate with a specific model or approach to teaching. Nevertheless, this research considers different traits from the variety of teaching approaches, for instance, using technological devices to watch videos, to record voices, or to play games, which count as gamification, among others.

### **First lesson**

The main objective of the first class was to introduce students to the topic of culture and English language teaching. In order to avoid possible influence by the researcher, students were given control over expressing their thoughts and beliefs. As a result, it was requested to students to reminisce and recognize their very first approach to English in non-scholar context, and then to create a short audio recording the where and how of that initial contact (see annex #2). The commands to create the audio were simple, including the following sentence *'My very first approach to English was,'* with complete freedom regarding the length and content of their answer. After the audios were created, they had to deliver them to the chat group managed by the teacher in charge. Unfortunately, due to brief time, where not possible for the students to socialize their ideas with their classmates to identify what cultural component (e.g., cinema, music, books, etc.) belongs their first approach to English language.

### **Second lesson**

After the introduction was done, the next class focused on the first research topic: acculturation. In the same way as the introduction class, the definition of the concept was not explained to avoid possible interference, changing, or suggesting unwished answers. Hence, students were asked to think about English words or expressions they express in their daily lives outside the classroom, they then use a Padlet to register those terms. They were given complete freedom to write down any expressions, no matter if they are socially considered as non-appropriate, slang, among others. Nonetheless, the class ended before finishing the whole activities planned for acculturation, therefore, the socialization was postponed to the next classes. After that, the words were shared to find commonalities, in which almost all the students displayed familiar words.

In the next class, students completed a quiz that was made using Mentimeter, an online tool used for creating online questionnaires. It consisted only of images showing cultural referents from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Colombia, including singers, bands, places, movies, and festivities; this activity does not have wrong or correct answers since the objective was for students to select the images that they know or felt closest to.

Finally, students' answers to the quiz were socialized, and then, they were asked to create an audio in which they specify the reasons why they use those specific words in their daily lives, when they first heard them, and why they prefer these terms instead of Spanish words. Given students' proficiency in English language, it was requested to record the audio using the language they prefer, or they felt most comfortable.

### **Third lesson**

To start, students were asked to group together in four groups to hear and record their voices. Once the groups were formed, students were told a brief introduction to the

concept of power relationships, which students stated they did not know. Shortly after, they were asked to list the reasons why they were learning English beyond its obligatory nature in school and to discuss their relatives or friends' perspectives about English. Following the instructions, a cell phone was given to students to record their ideas.

Finally, when all the groups expressed their ideas, a task was assigned: they must create a way of expression in which they stated how they have felt during their English learning process, regarding their thoughts about their classmates and teacher. To avoid possible conflicts, this task was assigned to be delivered via email, to avoid leaks in the classroom or hand-delivered in class, after being done in their houses. Regarding the format, they had freedom to create whatever they wanted to.

#### **Fourth lesson**

Given the success of the previous activity when students grouped together, the class was divided into four small groups. After that, the concept of resistance was introduced and discussed with each group. Then, students were asked about their feelings towards English and whether they dislike aspects of English or not. In addition, some of the questions were related to their perceptions and whether they prefer any language over another. Following the same structure as the last class, a cell phone was given to students to record their voices when expressing their thoughts.

As a last activity, it was proposed a task home to create an alternative to solve the issues that students presented when learning English, considering what they would change regarding teaching methodology and curriculum content. Again, the format was free, therefore the students could present any material they wanted.

## CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a description of the detailed analysis of information collected from the data collection instruments through the pedagogical intervention conducted in the classroom. In this section, the findings are discussed, the relationship between the students' responses analyzed in the light of the life stories with the three main analysis categories developed in the activities carried out in the classroom, starting with the first and second session about acculturation in their learning English process. The third one inquired about the power relationships present in the class regarding speaking, and finally, the fourth session about the resistance towards learning the English language. Besides, this chapter also explores the theoretical support that guided the construction of the analysis.

In this way, it is important to point out that, first, as the focus of the analysis is based on life stories, Esin (2014) highlights that narratives are co-constructed and are considered to be changeable. Furthermore, the author proposes two main actors when collecting information, that is, the one who provides information and the one who listens to it, engage in an interaction in which meanings are negotiated, and socio-cultural and political ideas are exchanged. Therefore, based on this idea, the life stories were co-written in a horizontal perspective among the researchers and the participants. Moreover, Hatch (2002) and Esin (2014) consider that, in interpretative approaches when analyzing data is fundamental to give a meaningful sense regarding the aspects that are inquired, explaining it properly and starting questions to create a path to analyze. As a result, in order to write life stories, all the information provided by the participants was grouped together to read it sequentially student per student, to create a better understanding of the responses. At last, this chapter is divided into the three main analysis categories, starting with acculturation,

which is split into three subcategories, followed by power relationship divided into two subcategories, and finally the resistance findings.

### **Narrative analysis**

This narrative research takes into consideration life stories as its core. Therefore, it is key to properly analyze those life stories. Thus, Smith (2016) proposes a concept called narrative analysis in which life stories are studied, interpreted, and exposed by analyzing them in depth. Additionally, he proposes that this concept can be seen as an umbrella that can cover a variety of strategies to analyze stories. For example, it was proposed that there are two types of exposure to the results of the stories. In the first place, the story analyst makes comments and tells the story as it is. The second, the storyteller, that re-narrates the story making a tale, a story rather than traditional research. To affect this research, it would be using the story analyst.

### **Categorical matrix**

In order to categorize all the data recollected, a matrix was created which contains in one place the information regarding the research, including its research question and the objectives to follow. In addition, the pedagogical intervention was divided into three main categories, two of them split into three and two subcategories as well.

**Table 1 categorical matrix**

Research question	Objectives	Category	Sub-category	Indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To describe how acculturation,</li> </ul>	Acculturation	Music	Students recognize their first

<p>What is the influence of the English learning process on the construction of cultural identity of eleventh graders at La Merced school?</p>	<p>power relations, and resistance are evidenced in students' life stories.</p>		<p>Cinema</p> <p>Holidays</p>	<p>approach through cultural products such as movies and music.</p> <p>Students identify closeness to foreign holidays because of movies.</p>
	<p>• To interpret students' life stories related to their cultural identity construction</p>	<p>Power relations</p>	<p>Relationships in class.</p> <p>Work-oriented use</p>	<p>Students recognize that speaking English comes along with</p>

	in English classes.		of English language.	power and superiority.  Students consider English as a tool to get jobs.
		Resistance		Students present a strong resistance towards English even when they considered it important

### **Acculturation**

After finishing the pedagogical intervention carried out in the classroom, the concept of acculturation highlighted some relevant concerns. Prior to defining acculturation, it is pertinent to point out that it differs from traditional colonization practices

itself but descend from it as new forms of colonization. With the above stated, a brief explanation on acculturation is that it refers to the process in which a foreign culture, usually recognized as strong and popular, goes through local cultures gradually transforming it intentionally through mechanisms such as entertainment and customs. Thus, three main subcategories will be discussed in this category: film industry movies, music regarding entertainment, and holidays with respect to customs.

### **Film industry movies.**

Concerning the first pedagogical intervention in class, students filled out a sort of survey about cultural referents in music, movies, and holidays. In this survey, twenty-three students selected the references they had for those topics. Focusing only on movies and the film industry, 84% of students recognized the Hollywood logo, in contrast, only 17% identified the scene of an iconic Colombian movie.

This high percentage of their results regarding their preferences in movies are not merely coincidence. Hollywood plays a significant and significant role in terms of creating a global culture that Colombia is being part of. According to Nye (2008) Hollywood acts out as “an effective propaganda tool, suggesting additions and deletions to many films and denying licenses to others” (p. 5), leading to a conscious use of films to show the United States’ culture to the world, picking carefully what to show. Moreover, as cited before in this work, English language has become a central part of education globally, making governments implement language teaching programs and Hollywood has also played a significant role in English spreading around the world. This idea is backed up by De Zoyza (2002), which states that the film industry has helped the US to spread their language around the world (p.188). Finally, it is relevant to highlight that other films’ productions are

not recognizable enough for their locals, as Hollywood works as a referent for the film industry.

The previous ideas are depicted in students' responses. According to their life stories, many of them had first listened to English thanks to movies from Hollywood. For example, Mara's story reflects: “«My aunt started classes at Smart, and she watched many movies in English» [...] This created a particular and familiar interest in English because she enjoyed spending her time with her aunt learning English together” (life story #3). Moving on from their first approach, Hollywood's movies are still the main source of entertainment regarding films in their youth. For instance, Jolly considers that “Hollywood productions remain as the main and first source of entertainment, as she does not know historical Colombian movies.” (life story #6). This is continued by Garita, who states that “in movies her taste is indeed English coded, as she only watches movies from Hollywood, not identifying Colombian or Latin American ones.” (life story #7). Finally, the film industry from Hollywood has shown a depiction of the United States culture that has been received by some of the students. For example, in Darias' life story, she got to know about the US traditions and customs because of their movies. She stated that “[she is] actively participating in holidays such as Valentine's Day or Halloween, as she has seen those celebrations in the movies she watched.” (life story #2)

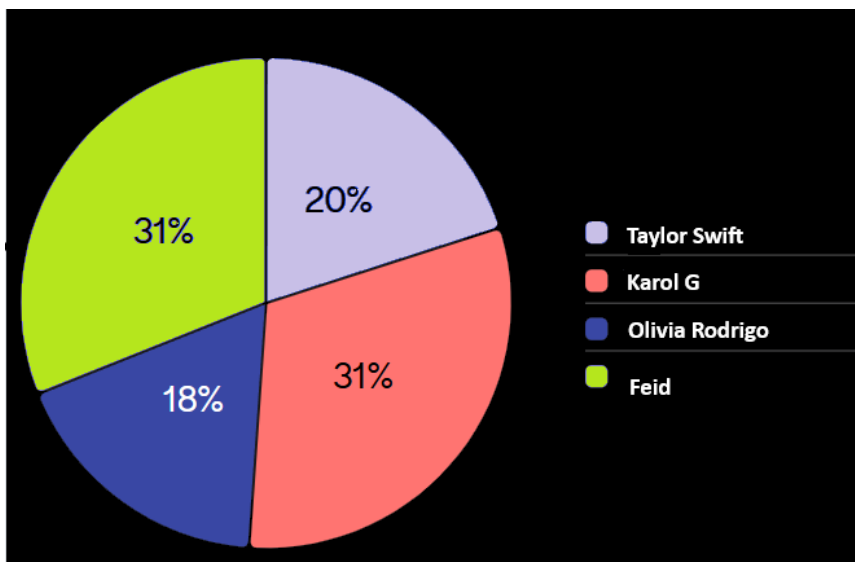
As a result, according to students' answers, the English language has taken a central part in the construction of their cultural identity, as the products in that language have become one of the first means to reach English. Second, it is also the main source of entertainment regarding movies. This has led to creating or re-create cultural references that are not present in Colombia but that there are indeed in the US thanks to the contribution of the movies that come from the foreign country. For that reason, acculturation is present in

entertainment consumption from the Hollywood film industry that has led the US to sow a cultural identity in students from Colombia.

### Music

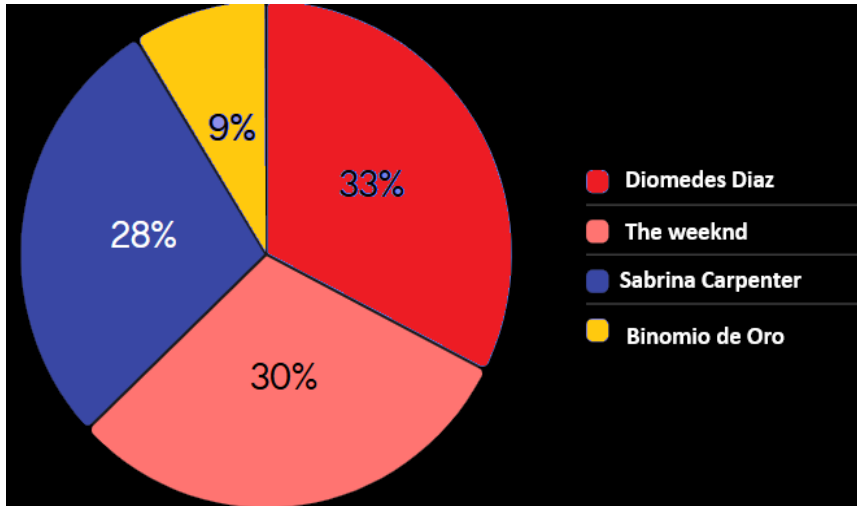
As mentioned, the survey included a musical component. Students were asked to select eight soloist singers in two rounds, being split between four and four. These singers come from Colombia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. According to their results, soloist singers from our country are extremely popular given they got 62% of the results in the first round but fell off to 39% of the answers in the second round. Regarding English language singers, they got 38% in the first round and increased to 61% in the second round. (See image 1, 2). In total, it means 101% for Colombian singers and 99% for both the UK, the US.

**Image 1 Students' first round answers to musical references**



(Source: own source)

**Image 2 Students' first round answers musical references**



(Source: own source)

The segmented percentage in the results does not lead to a conclusion about their preference if they are seen as mere numbers as these answers are a product of the preferences shown in students' life stories. That is, most of the students share their first experiences with English when being children, being music the very first approach to the language. "My grandfather, whenever he came home, he would sing Michael Jackson songs for me" (life story #1) or "My mother listened to songs in English making her interested in the language thanks to music." (life story #4).

Nonetheless, this changed over time as they grew up. Many of them left behind their English language first approach to foreign music and started to be more involved with Colombian music. This is shown in stories that stated that when they were children, they listened to English music, but "Now that she is seventeen, she has changed. She started to listen to more Colombian singers" (life story #5). Even, some of the students does not often listen to English music as "her musical taste consists mainly of Colombian singers like Karol G or Morat" (life story #11). However, this change in their perspectives, English

language singers still being part of their lives “as most of the entertainment she enjoys is related exclusively in English, such as listening to English-speakers singers” (life story #1). In addition, other students felt that they enjoyed music in English. For example, Rain clearly stated that “she really liked to listen to English singers such as Olivia Rodrigo or Sabrina Carpenter” (life story #8)

Regarding where the acculturation is seen in students’ answers, it becomes more difficult to define whether there is presence of acculturation or not. As English has come with global presence, culture has also been part of that, integrating music in the globalization. Therefore, it can be discussed if there are correlated changes regarding music thanks to acculturation, for example, the use of foreign rhythms or the attachment to a global genre. Concerning this research, students’ answers partially demonstrate the presence of acculturation regarding listening to foreign music that is not in their native tongue. Nevertheless, it is not possible to conclude two aspects. First, that listening to English music is present in all the students since most of them did not often listen to those singers. Second, it is not clear whether listening to English music changed their traditions and customs as a consequence. However, it is relevant to highlight the crucial importance of Anglo music as the first means of contact of many of the students, becoming their earlier approach to the language outside a classroom.

### **Holidays**

Finally, regarding the survey, students were asked to recognize holidays that are part of Colombia and the United States. It was presented in three different rounds. According to their results, when asked about what they know the most about the Independence Day of both countries, it resulted in 80% for July 20<sup>th</sup> and 20% for July 4<sup>th</sup>. Moreover, there is a holiday that is shared between both countries; however, it is celebrated

in a unique way and time, in Colombia *Día del amor y la Amistad* and *Valentine's Day* in the US. The results show that 72% of the students are more involved with *Día del amor y la Amistad*, in contrast to 28% of *Valentine's Day*. Finally, they selected the holiday they know more about or if they celebrate it, leading to a 50% to Halloween, and 45% to Candles' Day.

After collecting their results, it is possible to draw three main conclusions regarding acculturation. First, students recognize the Colombian Independence Day more than the US one. However, July 4<sup>th</sup> has gained relevance across the world, one of the possible reasons why this happens, according to Mara's life story is "thanks to movies, she got used to their holidays such as 4<sup>th</sup> July and Halloween." (Life story #1) As this day is depicted in numerous movies, therefore, it is relevant to point out that, even when July 4<sup>th</sup> is not widely popular among students, the day is known thanks to the US film industry. Second, the most popular and celebrated holiday among the students is Halloween, which, indeed is not a holiday originated in the US, it has become popular thanks to the contribution of the country to the way it is celebrated, i.e., costumes, house decorations, etc. This also shows a component of acculturation not only in the students but also worldwide since this celebration is Catholic but highly influenced by North American traditions.

Finally, as a general conclusion in regard of holidays and acculturation present in the students, it is possible to ensure that, despite the popularity of the North American celebrations and their influence and impact over the students, they have not been able to completely permeate in Colombian celebrations, as the traditional holidays from our country are widely known and celebrated among students. This lets us say that; however, the US acculturation attempts in making their culture global, students are not really involved in their traditions, for example, towards their holidays such as St Patrick's Day or

Thanksgiving as they prefer more traditional and culturally related to our country as in Candles' Day. However, they are indeed in contact with Halloween and Valentine's Day thanks to the depiction of these celebrations in movies.

### **Power relationships**

As discussed previously, learning English is not only being able to speak a new language, but it also comes along with other implications. One of them is regarding the disproportionate relations between those who speak the language and those who do not. In addition, it creates a utilitarian perspective towards the usage of the English language. Therefore, we can define power relationships as the power struggle between those whose proficiency in the target language outperforms the others and the beliefs towards why it is necessary to learn English. As a result, two main subcategories will be underlined in this category: one regarding relationships in class, and the second about the work-orientated use of the English language.

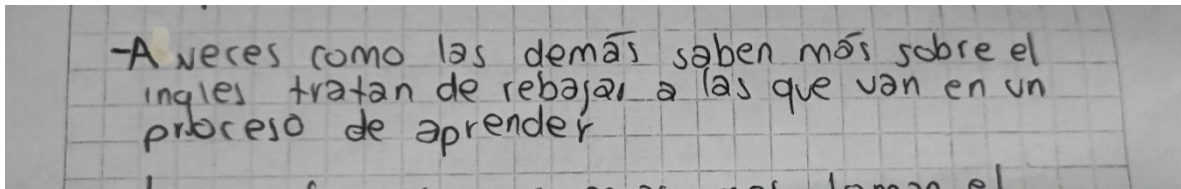
### **Relationships in class**

To inquire about the students' feelings towards how relationships were developed in the classroom regarding the use and knowledge of the language, they were asked one by one to give an answer about their perspective on how they relate to each other, being free to draw, speak, or write. To avoid unwanted issues, students did not know their peers' answers. Moreover, one of the instructions was to not name anyone directly no matter if their relationships, according to the students, were positive or negative to keep an ethical perspective in the research, as it would be more appropriate.

According to the students' answers, it is possible to affirm that indeed there are power relationships given the language proficiency of some students in the classroom. This conclusion can be addressed from two different perspectives. First, students are assured that

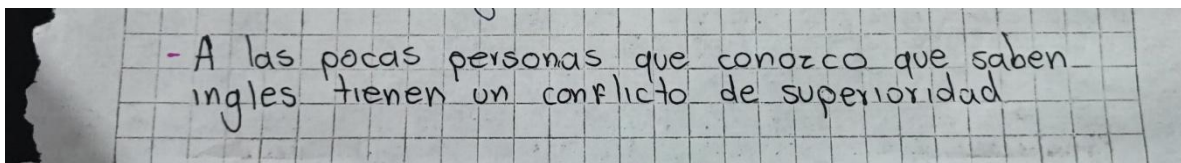
there are some students who make the other students feel bad for their English language competence. According to their answers (see images 3, 4) students with high proficiency in the language purposely feel they are superior to their classmates. This behavior derives into a struggle in their learning process.

### Image 3 Student perspective on power relationships in class



Source: own source

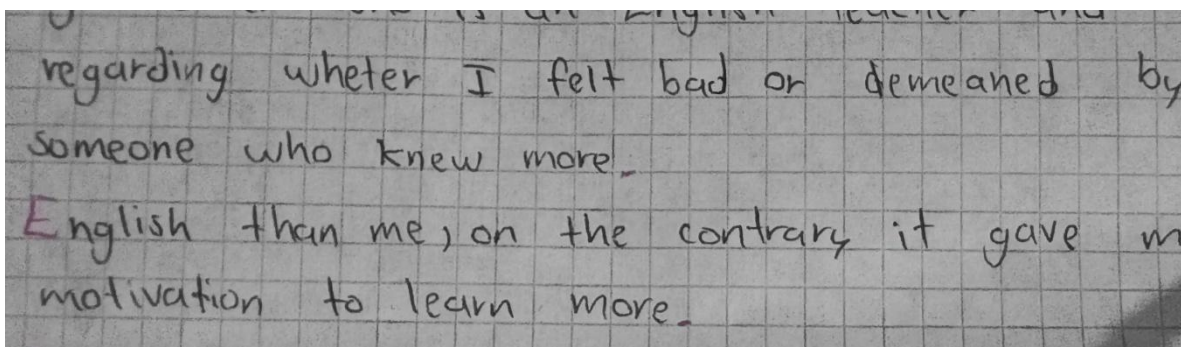
### Image 4 Student answer about relationships in class regarding English proficiency



Source: own source

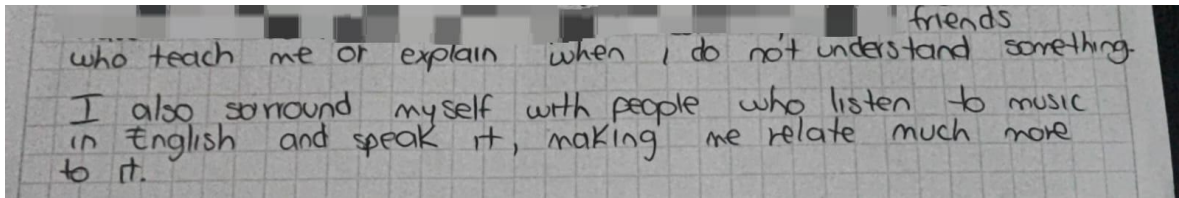
Nonetheless, some students can manage this situation in a unique way, as can be seen in image 5 and 6, in which the students use the concept of another classmate being more competent in the language to improve and be better.

### Image 5 Student's thoughts about their feelings in English classes



Source: own source

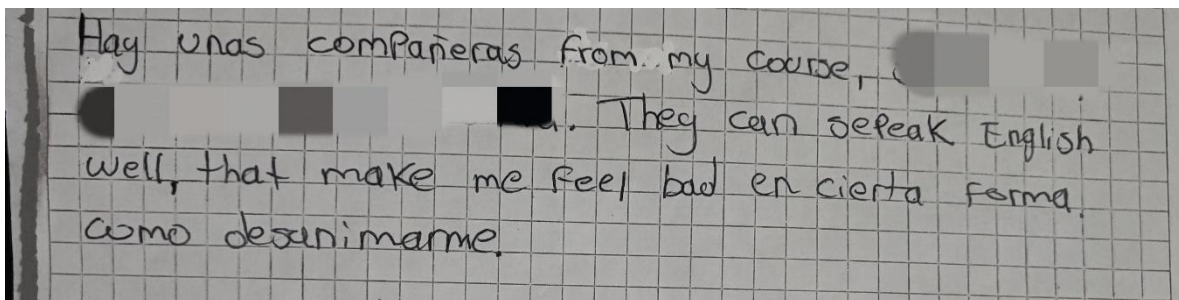
### Image 6 Student on how she copes with struggles.



Source: own source

About the second perspective that power relationships can be addressed is about the student's self-perspective towards their classmates. This differs from the previous approach that states some classmates purposely try to make other students feel bad. This approach highlights students' feelings individually over others' behaviors. Therefore, some participants stated that they feel discouraged in participating in class given that their classmates are good in the language, leading to self-comparison and not externally motivated. (see images 7, 8)

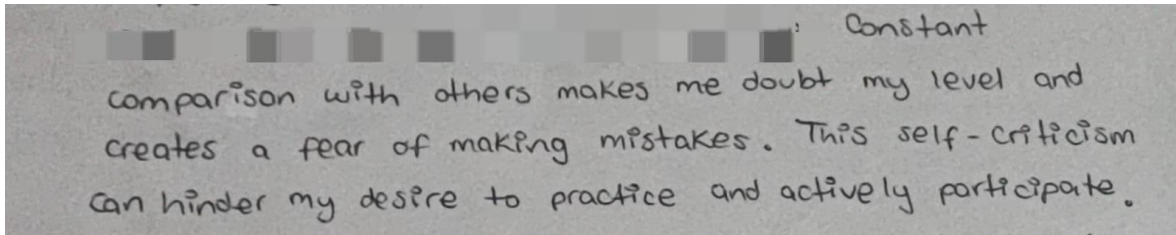
### Image 7 Student self-perspective towards classmates



Note: To keep ethical assumptions, students' names are not shown, despite it being instruction.

Source: own source

### Image 8 Student self-comparison.



Source: own source

Finally, in connection with the cultural identity construction of the students, power relationships mark a prominent position since, according to the results, speaking English in the classroom environment is not only about the students' learning process but also possible to note that, as language is a crucial part of the culture, students with high proficiency in the language motivates feelings in their classmates, regardless of whether being purposely provoked or not. Therefore, according to the results of this research, students who are learning English and are good at it, develop a cultural identity which translates into a linguistic superiority over those who do not speak English fluently. In this same way, students whose proficiency in the language do not top their classmates, develop elusive emotions to both other students and English language. However, it is crucial to argue the reasons behind the superiority feelings that come with speaking the language, therefore, this topic is addressed in the next subcategory, as English is seen as a tool to scale in the society by getting better jobs.

### Work-oriented use of English language.

Learning a foreign language may have multiple purposes for interested learners. Attraction to the new language, for tourism, for academic reasons, among others. However, according to the research outcomes, the first and main objective when comes out while learning English is a utilitarian use of the language, a work-orientated perspective that helps

speakers to socially ascend by acquiring the possibility to reach a significant amount of new jobs that are better paid and let workers to travel abroad, leaving the country in order to start again in another country. Mostly, students are not interested in countries other than non-English speaking countries, meaning that work-orientated English is the dominant language when inquiring about their motivations to learn a foreign language, disregarding other linguistic possibilities.

Concerning students' responses, the number of answers about work-orientated English approaches is overwhelming. Each student participating in the research considers that this foreign language is essential to learn given the opportunities it brings. When inquiring their perspective on learning English, all the participants were work-orientated, that is "It allows me to have a wide field of employment." (life story #1). Additionally, this orientation towards working from students makes them believe that they will not only apply for a better job but also you will be better paid. "If you learn it, you will get more opportunities and will get more money." (life story #5).

In the same way, students' families support this perspective. According to their responses, the family often considers that learning the English language is fundamental, almost mandatory. As Rice said when asking about her family thoughts over English, she would like to learn Italian, but "she is obliged [by her family] to learn English as it is spoken around the world." (life story #10). Moreover, other students' answers are aligned to this family belief, for example "they want me to leave the country." Hence, her family, including herself, perceives English as a tool to get better work opportunities in English-speaking countries." (life story #7).

Drawing a connection between the work-orientated perspective with the construction of students' cultural identity, it is possible to affirm that indeed English has

permeated the cultural assumptions regarding learning a new language. English has overtaken other languages as the possibilities of learning a different one is not realistic, given they do not bring the same opportunities as English does, shaping both students' and students' families' cultural identity towards motivation of learning this language. In addition, as discussed in the previous subcategory, speaking English may contribute to the superiority feeling among speakers given according to students' perspectives, since being proficient in the language helps them to scale in the society and living abroad.

This is a culturally relevant issue that must be highly emphasized due to the relevance of the idea that one language is above the others. This is critical, since it overlooks a whole landscape of the variety of languages spoken not only around the world but in our country itself. Therefore, it is crucial to demonstrate the importance of all languages and promote learning them not only for utilitarian use but also for learning interests, academic purposes, cultural reasons, and protection of native languages.

### **Resistance in class towards English**

The last variable to be analyzed in the research is about whether there is resistance from the students towards the English language. In this order of ideas, the research inquired, in the first place, if students demonstrate reluctance to learn English, and second to deepen how it was manifested in them. Therefore, as the results of the research, it is relevant to affirm that students indeed show resistance when they are learning this language. However, in the subcategories previously analyzed it was affirmed that students constantly consume English entertainment and possess strong beliefs regarding learning the language for work purposes. Therefore, it is crucial to reveal the reason behind the reluctance towards English and the motivation of the students in this process despite the

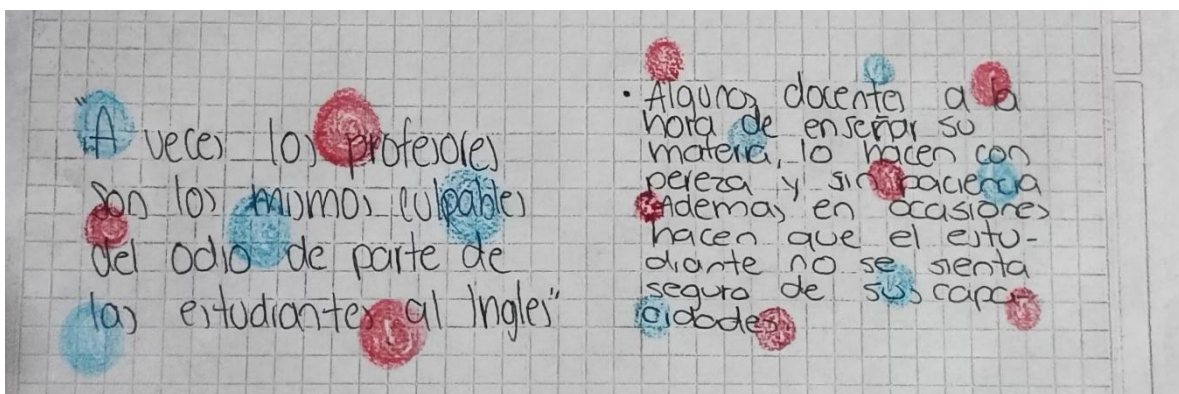
above statement. Thus, we will explore the role of the school, and its subsequent outcome reflected in the students.

### The role of the school

First, it is relevant to affirm that, as seen in the previous category, students indeed consider English an important language to learn to get better jobs and better opportunities itself. Nonetheless, when inquiring about their feelings towards English setting aside the relevance of the language, students expressed a sort of resistance to learning given the way it is taught at school either by the methodology used in class or frustration of not being able to understand.

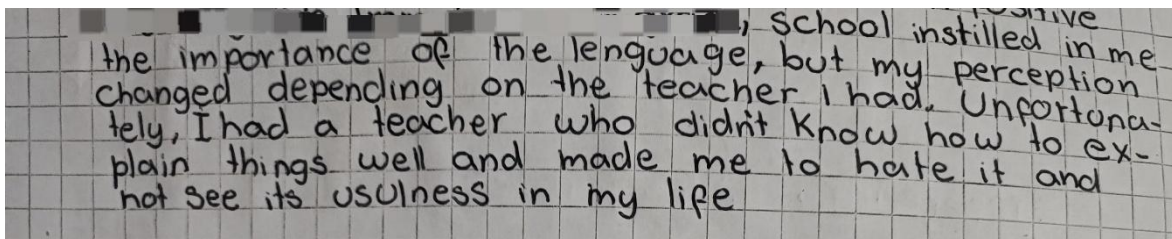
Thus, regarding students' responses, their frustration provoked by learning English has started since teachers they had in their school time were not doing classes according to the students' learning needs. This impacted severely on their perspectives, since not only did it cause them to generate resistance, but it also triggered hatred towards English. (see image 9, 10).

### Image 9. Student's reasons why she hates English.



Source: Activity #4

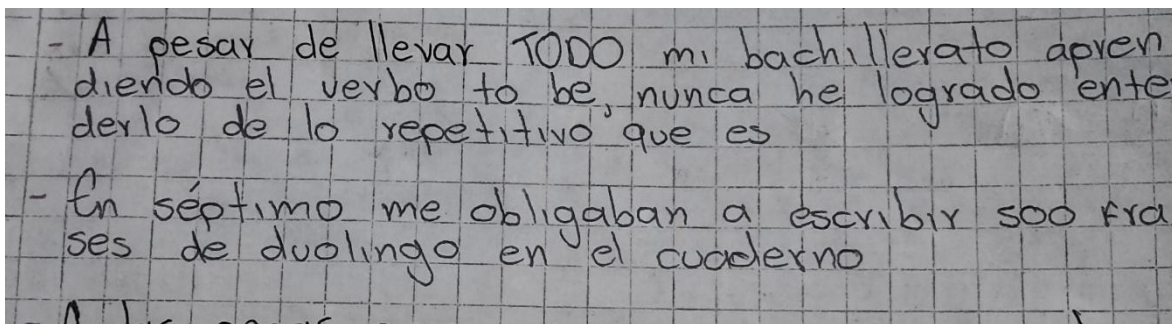
**Image 10. Student's perspective on her hatred of English.**



Source: Activity #4

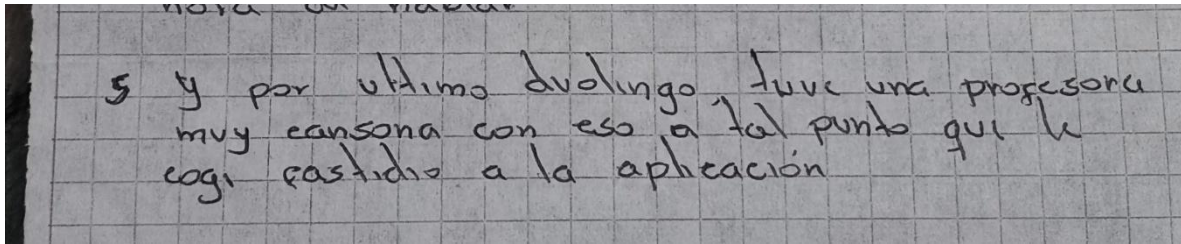
In the same way, but less intensely, some number of students' answers depicted their frustration and resistance to English attributing to the classes. However, they manifested that they do not hate the language but feel frustrated when learning because of the poor teaching methods of teachers. For example, a student expressed that she has not been able to understand some topics given the methodology based on the use of Duolingo's app (see image 11, 12) which "made her feel frustrated given it was tedious, and boring, plus she did not really understand anything." (life story #8)

**Image 11. Answer on her experience learning English**



Source: Activity #4

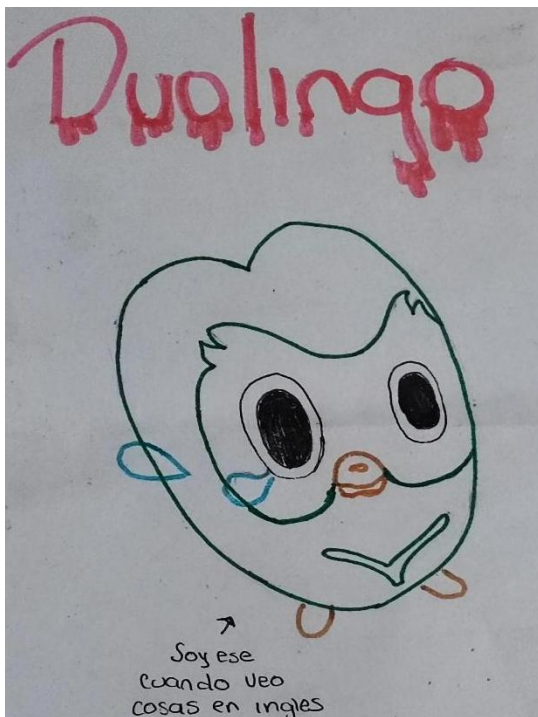
**Image 12. Student's experience on English classes**



Source: Activity #4

At last, students manifested their frustration when learning English. For example, Dan expressed she feels frustrated because “I do not feel as smart as I am in Spanish.” (life story #9). Moreover, through a drawing (see image 13) the feeling of frustration has been visible.

**Image 13. Students' draw**



Source: Activity #4

Even when students manifest the importance of English in their lives and the role it plays in society, the process of learning this language has also permeated in their identity, since it is considered difficult given the conditions provided by schools. This mentioned struggle has not only made students make their learning process complicated, but it has impacted them so profoundly that students even hate English as well. As a result, many students in their life stories replied to this idea, they prefer to learn another language to English. For example, Rain expressed that “she would rather be learning Italian over English.” (life story #8).

However, one student manifested a differentiated perspective given her purpose in rejecting English, as other students expressed that they do not like English language given teaching liabilities, Mara provided in her answer a political perspective about the rejection stating a critical position on learning English. This can be seen in

“‘I do not like that English is the common language because other languages are overlooked.’ In addition, she does not like the perspectives of the speakers whether native or not. ‘People do not respect or take time to learn other languages, for example, they do not learn French if they want to travel there.’” (life story #2)

As a result, it is possible to conclude that students’ resistance to English is produced by schools advocating the way the language is taught in class. Therefore, students have not only shown resistance to learning it, but they also have started to feel hatred towards English. However, even when the case is an exception, it is relevant to point out that one student who concerns the use of English as a global language and the contempt for other languages as the cause of resisting learning English. For these reasons, students have molded their cultural identity in an apparent contradiction in which they consider this

language as useful to scale in getting better jobs and opportunities but also developing a resistance to learning it thanks to their experiences at school.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

This research focuses on a problematic at first seen in the class observation regarding the material used in the classroom, on many occasions disconnected from the students' reality that was transforming over time, ending in how the English language learning can impact on the students' cultural identity, a research question that thereafter guided this project. To answer it, the focus was to give the importance to the students' voice and their experience, valuing their words and outlooks about the thematics carried out in the classes regarding the three categories, acculturation, power relationships, and resistance to English. Thus, thanks to the use of the narrative approach focused on life stories, it was possible to inquire about crucial aspects of their lives about their learning English process and discerning their cultural identity in this field.

Therefore, the most remarkable finding is that, in fact, students in the La Merced School have shaped their cultural identity in a way in which learning English has impacted in this ever-changing process. This can be analyzed according to the writing of the life stories provided by the students, stories that involved their first approach to the language outside the school, their perspectives on learning English and their relationships with their classmates and a resistance driven by the teaching approach present in the school at that time.

Accordingly, the students in their first approaches to the English language outside school were due to entertainment manifestations, mostly from the United States. That is, Hollywood movies and music in that language, generating in them a closeness to elements of the culture of this country, being more relevant to the traditions and how they celebrate their own and shared festivities. In addition, the impact of Hollywood films monopolizes the students' knowledge of movies, since they do not consume or even know about feature

films that are not from the Hollywood industry. In the same way, the students listened to music in English as their first exposure to the language, but as they grew older, they stopped listening to music in English and began to listen to songs in Spanish. This change is thus relevant, given that cultural identity is not a static process in which a person maintains their identity permanently but that change over time according to the experiences that could live in their life.

Furthermore, a significant finding about the cultural identity of the students is about their perspectives on learning English. Aligned with Norton's investment concept (1995), the power relations generated as a result of the language proficiency in the classroom, in which the students with a higher level of speaking and understanding the language, consciously or unconsciously, according to their own accounts, affected the students emotionally, causing them not to participate in class or not to be considered. Second, the foregoing is also related to the idea of learning English in society, in which people who can speak it are better positioned on a social scale, in which they acquire better jobs, better opportunities to live in other countries and thus earn more money. This means that students consider English as a mere instrument and not as a linguistic option of interest to learn shaping their cultural identity in a way that other languages lose a certain social value, since it does not provide the same opportunities, which means that not only other languages of other countries are overlooked, but also the variety of indigenous languages in our own country.

Finally, despite the previous results of the relevance of knowing English on a social level, the students present a resistance to learning this language due to their experiences at school, mostly given the teaching approach used by the school, applied by the teachers because it generated a rejection that turned, in some students, into a hatred for the language.

This is relevant, not only at the educational level, but also in terms of understanding cultural identity and the way in which it is constructed, since it is a complex process, as it would be possible to point out a contradiction between the importance given by the students to speaking English, but also a marked resistance to learning it. But this approach overlooks the complexity of identity.

### **Conclusions**

Before the conclusion is presented, it is relevant to point out the research question that served as the starting point for my inquiring project, in which the influence of the English classes over students was not merely academic but it had more implications behind. Therefore, it was relevant to highlight whether there was evidence of any non-academic impact on the students while learning English. As a result, after gathering the information, it is possible to point out the following, considering the narrative research focus and the creation of life stories capturing students' conceptions, beliefs, agreements, and disagreements towards language.

Thus, as the main objective of this research is to describe any possible influence over students given learning English in their cultural identity construction, it can be asserted that indeed learning the language has impacted on the students not only in the academic field as expected, but it also has permeated in the way how they shape, understand and place themselves in their society and the world; therefore, influencing their cultural identity. The above can be explained in terms of how the students are exposed to the predominance of the English language and the derived culture from English-speaking countries, mostly the US and the UK, however the last being less relevant to this conclusion. Therefore, this research explored three key concepts, acculturation, power relations, and resistance.

Hence, this research considered acculturation as the first relevant concept, therefore we explored the cultural practices of the students in regards entertainment, customs, and holidays. In this sense, it is crucial to point out that, according to students' life stories, affirming that acculturation is present and it is shaping their cultural identity could be wrong. The above can be explained in how these three categories are present in their stories. First, students manifested the relevant role of Hollywood in their lives, and how films have presented to them the US culture in terms of holidays, customs or even music. This has led to a growing closeness to their culture and the way it is celebrated since they have known more about them. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that Hollywood is a powerful cultural tool. However, it is not possible to assert that this process has changed the cultural identity, given that most of the students manifest that they actively participate in Colombian customs, holidays and even the enjoyment of local music, relating the foreign ones only to films but not in real life practices.

In second place, power relations played a relevant and crucial role in the research. According to students' life stories, English places themselves in higher social positions, including within the classroom, achieving more sociocultural status, more work opportunities and improved salaries compared to those who cannot speak this foreign language. This idea is shared by all the participants since all of them shared this common thought, including their families and their social environment. In addition, students also consider that English must remain as the mandatory language in schools. That said, English classes have reinforced this concept by continuously repeating the importance of learning this language and how students can ascend in society. Therefore, in the effects of this research, learning English for practical purposes is the most powerful tool to change, shape,

and influence students' cultural identity in accordance with Norton (1995) concept of investment.

In third place, resistance as the last concept holds a vital role. Until now, we have covered cultural processes, social conceptions regarding learning the language and its implications along with the practical purposes, and the role of the English classes. However, in the development of the research, the resistance notion surfaced when inquiring about power relations and played a significant role from that moment onward. Therefore, it is relevant to highlight students' difficulties, differences, thoughts, and even hate toward the language. Hence, students mostly disagree with the implications that came with the learning English process, developing a parallel identity together with power relations dynamics. This means that, without diminishing the meaning that students socioculturally attributed to learning English, they also struggle with some conceptions about learning the language mostly within the classroom in which those who are not equally proficient at the tongue, leading to learning difficulties and developing harsh relations with their peers and the language itself. Therefore, the learning English language process not only influences the power relationships and how students culturally position themselves but also how they reject, struggle, and resist the same relationships.

Regarding the limitation of the research, it is relevant to underline the role of schools, teachers, and families, considering that a cultural identity is not only constructed in schools, but also implies the participation of the whole society, starting at the family core. Even when this research mentioned parents' role in the students' beliefs, interviewing families was not possible due to the limits of this research. Therefore, it is needed to delve into the academic community's perspective towards, highlighting teachers' outlooks, alongside schools and governments' plans. In addition, acculturation is not only about

entertainment, holidays, and customs but a large complex system of human beings which cannot be addressed in single research but in thousands in which language plays a more than a significant role. Therefore, I recommend future researchers to consider acculturation as a big one topic that needs to be addressed alone.

In summary, this research proposes that indeed there exists an influence of the English language learning in the construction identity of the students, in which the participants are constantly defining themselves, their customs, their beliefs and thoughts thanks to the contribution of this target language. To be precise, it is relevant to point out the role of power relations and the following resistance that derives from the English learning process, in which the impact over the construction of the cultural identity is vital given the sociocultural implications behind it. In the same line, it is important to spotlight that the acculturation process is not clear to be present in students.

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## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1**

#### **Authorization of personal data.**

	<b>FORMATO</b>		
	<b>AUTORIZACIÓN TRATAMIENTO DE DATOS PERSONALES Y DE MENORES DE EDAD</b> <small>Resolución 767 de 18 de junio 2018</small>		
<b>FOR009GSI</b>	Fecha de Aprobación: 18-06-2018	Versión: 01	Página 2 de 2

### AUTORIZACIÓN TRATAMIENTO DE DATOS PERSONALES DE MENORES DE EDAD

Ciudad y fecha: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yo, \_\_\_\_\_, identificado con C.C.  C.E.  No. \_\_\_\_\_ expedida en \_\_\_\_\_, representante legal del menor \_\_\_\_\_, identificado con T.I.  NUIP  No. \_\_\_\_\_

declaro que he sido informado por **LA UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL** (en adelante la **UPN**), identificada con NIT. 899.999.124-4, con domicilio en la ciudad de Bogotá y sede principal en la calle 72 No. 11 – 86 de Bogotá, que, de conformidad con los procedimientos establecidos en la Ley 1581 de 2012, Decreto Reglamentario 1377 de 2013 y el *Manual de política interna y procedimientos para el tratamiento y protección de datos personales de la Universidad*, disponible en la página web [www.pedagogica.edu.co](http://www.pedagogica.edu.co), actuará como Responsable del tratamiento de mis datos personales<sup>1</sup>, necesarios para el cumplimiento de la misión de la **UPN**, obtenidos a través de canales y dependencias institucionales y que podrá recolectar, almacenar, usar, actualizar, transmitir, transferir y poner en circulación o suprimirlos, mediante el uso de las medidas necesarias para otorgar seguridad a los registros, evitando su adulteración, pérdida, consulta, uso o acceso no autorizado o fraudulento incluso por terceros.

Que tratándose de datos sensibles<sup>2</sup> y de menores de edad no está obligado a autorizar su tratamiento, salvo las excepciones consagradas en la ley o que medie su consentimiento expreso. Que es de carácter facultativo responder a las preguntas que traten de datos sensibles o menores de edad.

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#### FIRMA

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

Identificación: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 2

### Lesson planning

First class			
Topic	Objectives	Summary	Resources

Introduction to English language learning	To approach to students' first contact to English	Students were asked to tell their stories when they started to learn English outside the school	Cellphone WhatsApp group
<b>Second class</b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Acculturation	To identify English cultural aspects that have permeated students' culture.	Students were asked to tell their stories when they started to learn English outside the school	Padlet: <a href="https://shorturl.at/ExNh7">https://shorturl.at/ExNh7</a> Mentimeter <a href="https://shorturl.at/tQ0Qn">https://shorturl.at/tQ0Qn</a>
<b>Third class</b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Power relationships	To identify power relationships in the students To discuss the reasons why they are learning English	Students created four groups to dialogue about their experiences learning English regarding the reasons, their classmates, their	Cellphone recording Email. Paper

		family, and their relatives. Their voices were recorded	
<b>Fourth class</b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Resistance	To identify whether students dislike English To discuss opposition towards English language To offer solutions to what students did not like about English language teaching	Students were requested to gather in four groups. After, they were asked about their feelings and thoughts about what they dislike regarding English	Cellphone recording Email. Paper

### **Annex 3**

#### **Students' life stories**

##### **Lyra**

Born sixteen years ago, Lyra, the name she chose to be called in this story, started her journey in the academic world. She began to learn how to speak and read in her native

language, Spanish. However, English always comes along with schools. That is her first touch with a foreign language. Although it was imposed as English is mandatory in schools' curricula, she also experimented a closer and more emotional approach to English through her family. "My grandfather, whenever he came home, he would sing Michael Jackson songs for me" Lyra said. Intentionally or not, this approach impacted on her future musical taste given that, when she grew up at sixteen, she enjoyed listening to English speaking singers such as Taylor Swift, One Direction, or The Weeknd. In addition, she usually watches movies from Hollywood, being unable to recognize Colombian national movies.

Providing that English is mandatory, her journey was like a rollercoaster. She has felt that, in their learning process, English has become a significant part of her life since her family believe that "is a must to travel abroad and get a better job," a statement that she strongly agrees with. "It allows me to have a wide field of employment," Lyra assured. From her perspective, English is a powerful tool to get a better job and opens the door to travel overseas. Regarding her learning process in her school, she states that methodology is not "appropriate because it doesn't teach as English-speaking countries" and that other strategies must be included, such to include native speakers from Great Britain.

Nonetheless, when recalling her previous experiences with English, she has a teacher who was not so good at teaching English, leaving her a traumatic memory that distances herself from learning. Fortunately, this bad moment in her life did not impact her life today's life, given that she wants to improve her English to travel abroad and getting better jobs.

## **Darias**

As many other students in Colombia, English is a central part while studying. However, Darias first approach to English was not at school, it was eleven years ago, out of her sixteen years, when she was” trying to play with a toy I was unable to read the instruction of the toy.” She did not understand why she could not read if she already learned how to do so. Therefore, her parents explained to her that “those strange words she could not read were in another language, English.” Soon after, her parents undertook a mission: teaching English to her daughter.

When she grew up and she developed her personality, she created a closer link towards English, as most of the entertainment she enjoys is related exclusively in English, such as listening to English-speakers singers such as Taylor Swift or One Direction. Moreover, actively participating in holidays such as Valentine’s Day or Halloween, as well as Hollywood’s movies as she has seen those celebrations in their movies she watched.

Currently, her experience at school and her perspectives about English while learning it, are mixed. She enjoys learning it and believes that it can “open more opportunities for studying abroad.” This statement is reinforced by her father, who strongly considers that English is necessary for having a better life. However, she struggles in class because she does not understand many words. For that reason, she would like that in her classes Spanish must be spoken more frequently than English in order to explain better concepts “even when it sounds weird” told Darias.

### **Mara**

Back when she was a child of six years, her aunt started to learn English in an academy, therefore, she watched many movies in English as well as music. That is the reason Mara first approached English thanks to her aunt and her desire to learn another language. “My aunt started classes at Smart, and she watched many movies in English”

Mara assured. This created a particular and familiar interest in English because she enjoyed spending her time with her aunt learning English together. As a result, as she grew up, she began to be more interested in entertainment, not only Hollywood movies, but products made in the US or the UK, for example British bands such as One Direction or Taylor Swift from North America. Plus, thanks to movies, she got used to their holidays such as 4<sup>th</sup> July and Halloween.

Regarding her English learning process, she considers that English is “fundamental to travel abroad and meeting many people around the world, speaking with them.” Thus, this has become the main reason she is studying it and why she would like to learn in depth about English. Nonetheless, her experience with classes has been marked by the concern of the use of English in real life because she feels that “English is not taught as it should be in the reality, a gringo’s life is different than the way we study it at classes” Mara believed. In any case, she has considered that her process has been fun given the use of online tools or games such as Duolingo or Roblox.

In spite of the above, Mara manifests a concern about the use of the English globally, she expressed that “I do not like that English is the common language” because other languages are overlooked. In addition, she does not like the perspectives of the speakers whether native or not. “People do not respect or take time to learn other languages, for example, they do not learn French if they want to travel there.”

### **Santana**

Santana, age sixteen, experienced her first contact with English when she first arrived at school, as it was usual. However, when she was eight years old. “My mother listened to songs in English,” making her interested in the language thanks to music. Shortly after, she decided to download the Duolingo app in order to learn more about

English and understand what her favorite songs were about. As she grew older, she listened to more Spanish music such as Feid or Karol G than before, an overturn of her childhood.

Besides the above, her interest in English increased because of her plans to study software programming. She considers that “they give more opportunities when you know English, they pay you more.” Her thoughts are aligned with her family’s beliefs as they consider that she must learn and “as soon as I leave school, I will begin a course.” In her classes, she has overcome an unpleasant experience in primary school because “in the way English classes have been taught lately I have learned more than when I was child.”

In spite of her interest in it, English has sometimes been shown as difficult given that she struggles, as “I can write it well but when I have to pronounce it is too hard” Santana stated. Despite her statement, she does not take it as a barrier to stop learning the language but as a fuel to boost her motivation to keep learning and improve her language skills in English, adding that “I [do not] feel bad or demeaned by someone who knows more English than me.”

### **Feliz**

Seventeen years ago, Feliz was born, being the youngest of her siblings. “My brothers listen to 21 Pilots,” Feliz gladly said. Her first contact with English through her brothers created a closer and emotional approach because she happily listened to English music. Now that she is seventeen, she has changed. She started to listen to more Colombian singers such as Feid or Karol G, as she reported. This change put aside her first approach to 21 Pilots and Anglo music. However, sometimes she sat with her brothers to listen to English Music. She tries to surround herself with people who listen to music in English to stay connected.

When exposing her ideas and thoughts about English as a language and her learning process, she considers that, despite not understanding it, “if you learn it, you will get more opportunities and will get more money.” This statement is the main concern why she would like to keep exploring and learning English. Also, her parents consider that it is so important to learn and her daughter, Feliz, must learn to achieve more valuable opportunities. Despite of the above beliefs, she that “speaking it is something very important, [but] it is up to each person to try to learn it or not.”

Concerning her experience with the language, she holds two perspectives. First, she does not feel bad towards English, but in a sort of way she feels awkward given that “I do not like to not understand.” As a result, she likes to be involved with classmates and friends who help her to have a good relationship with the classes and topics she does not know. Second, her experiences in class are mostly positive, her teachers explained topics well, and making classes more enjoyable.

## **Jolly**

It looks like it is a rule, Jolly’s first approach to English was, as has been usual, with music and movies. In her sixteen years, she has listened to Rock, Metal, and Pop music, plus watched many Hollywood movies. Regarding music, her thoughts has changed; now she listens to Colombian singers, including Diomedes Diaz, a cultural icon in Colombia. However, no matter how much time has passed, Hollywood productions remain as the main and first source of entertainment, as she unknowns claimed and historical Colombian movies.

Continuing her learning process at school, she has felt that she cannot stand English. Usually, classes are taught merely in English, and she considers herself as a student who

enjoys participating at lessons in another subjects, but she is unable to participate in English classes, “I do not understand its pronunciation and I cannot help in the activities” as her proficiency does not let her be involved in class. Moreover, she uses art to express herself, using Duolingo’s mascot, she expresses that she cries every time she sees something in English. Actually, she prefers Spanish and French over English given the frustration felt in the development of the English courses.

On the other hand, she would like to start again her learning process as she considers that English is important to learn in today’s world. Her family experiences told her that studying is necessary because of her sister, who actually speaks English and is living abroad. Her family thoughts are aligned with her beliefs as she also considers that if she learns it, she will get more opportunities than before, and it opens the chance to travel overseas and live a new life abroad.

### **Garita**

No apparent story has another background; it seems that listening to music is the very first approach to English outside the school. This is not the exception to Garita, who is seventeen, as she listened to “strong music” back when she was child. However, listening to Anglo music when younger seems to be an exception, as she now only listens to Spanish singers like Feid and vallenato singers. Moreover, in movies her taste is indeed English coded, as she only watches movies from Hollywood, ignoring Colombian or Latin American movies.

Depicting her English language learning process, she feels insecure about whether she likes learning it or not. For example, she expresses that “I like it but at the same time I do not, because I do not understand,” as an addition, she considers that classes are not as

good as she would expect making her feeling bored or stressed. Apart from that, “there are classmates who are good at English demotivates me to keep learning” she stated.

Expressing her concern about English, she has faced difficulties when learning because of her distant relationship with the language, addressing she did not pay attention to classes at school. Worried about the prior, her parents signed her in an English academy; it was infructuous, she left the academy for not attending. As she is aware of this situation, and share her parents worries on her future, she would like to study it as she replicates a familiar idea: “they want me to leave the country.” Hence, her family, including herself, perceives English as a tool to get better work opportunities in English-speaking countries.

## **Rain**

Someone once said that one must break the mold. This is what Rain did. Her first approach was not listening to music, her first time contacting English was when her cousin “began to learn English at home.,” said Rain. As a result, she wanted to learn as well, then downloaded the Duolingo application to learn at home and her mother enrolled her in English courses. However, this did not went as expected, as she left the academy and developed a rejection of English. As time passed, she did not want to know anything else about this language, however, she really liked to listen to English singers such as Olivia Rodrigo or Sabrina Carpenter, plus watching Hollywood movies.

What about her rejection of English? When she was in seventh grade, a teacher obliged her to write down five hundred words from the Duolingo app in her book. This made her feel frustrated given it was tedious, and boring, plus she did not really understand anything. Additionally, in regard to her relationship with other English learners, she has felt that people who know how to speak that language have a superiority conflict.

As the years went by, she reconciles herself with English, although there still are some differences. For example, she feels that, thanks to repetition, she could not have learnt some key aspect of English “I do not like verb to be, I cannot understand it yet.,” she assured. Despite this, she finds English interesting as she can watch movies at its original language and can understand songs she like without the need of a translation. In addition, she expresses that although English is attractive to her, she would rather be learning Italian over English.

### **Dan**

Returning to the basics. Dan of sixteen, reached English for the first time when she entered school. But she contacted English outside of school in 2019, at age of eleven, she listened to Seven Rings, by Ariadna Grande, thanks to a recommendation of one friend of her. is key to her, as she really enjoyed that song, raising a feeling inside her about music. A few years later when she grew up, her musical taste was really mixed as she listened to both English and Spanish music. She can go from One Direction to Karol G without any problem.

As a high school student, she has been learning English for almost twelve years. She has concluded that “I do not like the way it is taught, [...] there are many rules.” Her statement is the product of a strong belief: “Teachers themselves are to blame for students hating English.” This reflects her experience while studying English at school since, according to her memories, teachers can make students feel unsure about their abilities given that they do not know how to teach properly. This can be a rough reason to not love English as seen later.

In regard to learning English, her position is noticeably clear: “I roughly like it.” She is fully aware of English importance and the relevance that it has in a globalized world,

however, she feels frustrated because “I do not feel as smart as I am in Spanish.” Thanks to her frustration, she would choose to learn another language rather than English, for example, French. Despite her parents’ beliefs, she considers that French also opens many doors and can give her work opportunities as “not many people look for opportunities in French.” Nonetheless, she is fully aware that, in order to have wider chances in both work and living abroad, it is necessary to learn English over any other language.

### **Rice**

A girl of five years old reached English thanks to her father, a die-hard fan of Lonely, by Akron. They sang that song together, even though they did not know anything about English. Rice, now sixteen, no longer sings that song, but Feid’s and Karol G’s songs do. Her taste has changed, she recently only listens to Colombian singers, adding Diomedes Diaz to her music repertory. However, she recalls Lonely with nostalgia thanks to her relationship with her dad.

Her learning process in her school has been good overall. She has learned a lot from her teachers’ methodologies regarding reading, writing, and listening through songs. Nonetheless, she feels like classes can be more dynamic and she proposes to include more games into classes to facilitate learning while playing games in class in regard to students’ language skills. However, not all can be good “only once I have had a bad experience because of the teacher.” She exclaimed. Grammatical tense has been a pain for her as she does not understand, and it has been particularly difficult for her. Fortunately, this complication has not affected her. letting her enjoy her learning process at school by not generating traumas with her teacher or school.

Her family, a fundamental part of her life, think that English is dramatically relevant to learn given the opportunities this language can offer to its speakers. She goes on the

same line of this idea, as “English open many doors, and it sounds cool to fight in English.” Nonetheless, she would rather learn Italian over English, but she is fully aware that if wants to travel abroad and to live in a country that does not speak either Italian or Spanish, she is obliged to learn English as it is spoken around the world.

### **Fountain**

Kindergarten is frequently ignored when talking about school, however, to Fountain it was key as her parents helped her to communicate in English for the first time before entering school. Her parents taught her numbers from 1 to 5 and they sang them before she fell asleep. A wholesome memory she recalls. It is not possible to be assured that as her first approach was not through music, her musical taste consists mainly of Colombian singers like Karol G or Morat. However, like many of her classmates, Hollywood is steady, their movies are widely more known than Colombian ones.

Concerning her path in English language learning at school has been positive. She considers that “my teachers gave me valuable tips that boosted my skills.” However, as she has struggled with English, she started to feel frustrated because she does not understand classes.