Trabajo Fin de Máster

The Cultural Component in the English Language Classroom: Londinium

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Abstract

This research project deals with the integration of the cultural component and its intercultural application in the EFL classroom by paying attention to cultural competence as a fundamental component of communicative competence. In particular, this project proposes the use of Project work as the most suitable tool for the introduction of cultural elements into the English classroom due to the flexibility of this approach and the countless benefits that it offers. This work is also completed with a didactic unit whose aims are making students the centre of the learning process as well as helping them develop social, communicative and cooperative skills. By means of this didactic unit, students will be motivated to learn the foreign language by learning about English speaking countries in relation to their history, ways of life, customs, traditions and interaction patterns, which will provide them with the necessary knowledge to be able to interact with people coming from other contexts and will promote their tolerance and empathy towards other attitudes and views of the world which are different from theirs.

Key words: cultural component, intercultural, cultural competence, communicative competence, project work, tolerance and empathy.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación trata la incorporación del componente cultural y su aplicación intercultural en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera al considerar la competencia cultural como un componente fundamental de la competencia comunicativa. Concretamente, este proyecto propone el uso del trabajo por proyectos como la herramienta más apropiada de introducir elementos culturales en la clase de inglés debido a la flexibilidad de este enfoque y los incontables beneficios que ofrece. Este trabajo también se completa con una unidad didáctica cuya finalidad es la de hacer de los estudiantes el centro del proceso de aprendizaje así como ayudarles a desarrollar habilidades sociales, comunicativas y de cooperación. Mediante esta unidad didáctica, los estudiantes se sentirán motivados a aprender la lengua extranjera aprendiendo sobre países de habla inglesa en relación a su historia, modos de vida, costumbres, tradiciones y sus modos de interacción, los cuales les aportarán los conocimientos necesarios para ser capaces de interactuar con personas procedentes de otros contextos y promoverá su tolerancia y empatía hacia otras actitudes y puntos de vida sobre el mundo diferentes a los suyos.

Palabras clave: componente cultural, intercultural, competencia cultural, competencia comunicativa, trabajo por proyectos, tolerancia y empatía.
1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is usually linked to the ability to speak, write and interact by means of that very language in order to be communicatively competent and fluent and achieve successful interaction with others, whether they may be native speakers of that language or people from other countries. However, many educators regard the language learning process as a mere set of linguistic signs, as if language was an isolated element detached from reality.

There are potentially multiple cultures behind one individual language. In fact, language is one of the most important representations of the culture of any community. In spite of this, the way in which language learning is usually treated in the English classroom completely isolates it from the existing culture behind that language and does not make students aware of its existence either.

The study of culture in the language classroom is necessary for several reasons. First of all, it makes students aware of the existence of the culture linked to that language and of the fact that the language that they are studying is connected to other people, their history and their way of life, making it a more human and complete experience. Secondly, studying a different culture is an excellent way of making students more open-minded, showing them that there are different cultures alien to theirs which are equally valid. As a result, teachers should try to foster the tolerance of students towards others and their culture as well as providing them with a different view of the world. Last but not least, devoting part of the language curriculum to culture-specific contents is very beneficial, for it increases the students’ motivation towards the language which they are studying and, therefore, contributes to a better learning.

Another aspect with which I will deal with in this research work will be the concept of Project-based teaching and learning, as well as its origins, characteristics and benefits for the learning process. Project-based instruction is one of the most complete and beneficial approaches to be used in the classroom as it combines different features, such as experiential learning, negotiated meaning and experience, research and inquiry and problem solving. In addition to this, Project-work can be developed in very different ways, including different kinds of content and promoting the cooperation among students.

As regards the aim of this essay, the use of Project-work as a means to teach the cultural component in the English classroom will be the best way to integrate these two concepts. On top of that, projects are an ideal vehicle for the introduction of the cultural component in the language classroom, as it provides the perfect context and methodology for students to learn and interact with
cultural contents through a methodology which enables them to learn by
themselves by means of their own work, in opposition to a more traditional and
factual learning which they would not be able to remember afterwards.

2. Culture in Foreign Language Learning

2.1. Culture as a component of Communicative Competence

In order to communicate effectively in any language, speakers need to have
certain knowledge not only of linguistic aspects, but also of sociolinguistic and
sociocultural elements related to the language being learned. By means of this
multidimensional understanding of language, speakers will be able to use language
appropriately, in the right context and for the necessary purposes, that is, they will
be communicatively competent. For this reason, one of the main sections of my
research is to be devoted to the definition of communicative competence and
what it entails, as well as the views of different linguistics on this issue.

The term communicative competence is related to the ability to communicate.
It has its origins in Chomsky and his very influential book *Aspects of the Theory of
Syntax* (1965), which dealt with linguistic competence and made a distinction
between competence (the speaker knowledge of the language) and performance
(the actual use of language in real situations).

However, this theory only considered language from a grammatical point of
view, as it merely paid attention to theoretical linguistic competence and omitted
almost everything related to socio-cultural knowledge and significance as
important components of language. Dell Hymes (1972), however, proposed the
term communicative competence for the first time in 1972 in reaction to the
concept of linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky. This term conceived a
broader and more realistic notion of competence, which he described not only as
grammatical competence, but also as the ability to use language in different
communicative situations, introducing a sociolinguistic perspective to Chomsky’s
idea.

According to Hymes, “communicative competence refers to the level of
language learning that enables language users to convey their messages to others
and to understand others” messages within specific contexts (Saleh, 2013: 102).
Taking this into account, any speaker who is to be considered communicatively
competent must know when, where and how to use language and not only how to
produce correct grammatical language strings. From an educational point of view,
this implies the learner’s ability to relate what is learned in class to the world
around him and outside the classroom; his environment.
Hymes conceived communicative competence as being constituted by five competences, namely grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence. By grammatical competence he referred to the “knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology” (Canale, 1983: 7) Discourse competence was used to refer to the “mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres” (Canale, 1983: 9-10). As for sociolinguistic competence, it can be defined as a component that “is made up of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse. [...] The primary focus of these rules is on the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given sociocultural context depending on contextual factors such as topic, role of participants, setting, and norms of interaction.

A secondary concern of such rules is the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context.” (Canale, 1983: 7) Closely related to the latter, sociocultural competence is defined in relation to the fact that “every language is situated in a sociocultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner; sociocultural competence presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that context” (Van EK, 1986: 35). Last but not least, strategic competence is a component “made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (Canale, 1983: 7). Thus, by the inclusion of sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence as elements of communicative competence, it can be clearly seen that, in contrast to Chomsky, Hymes considered the socio-cultural aspect of language as essential for the study of any language.

During the 1970s and 1980s, many applied linguists dealt with the theory of language acquisition and made different contributions. However, I will only pay attention to those who made the most important contributions to the field. One of these was Widdowson (1983), who, influenced by his studies on discourse analysis and pragmatics, made a distinction between “competence” and “capacity”. He defined “competence” as the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions and used the term “capacity” to refer to the ability to use knowledge in order to create meaning in language (Méndez García, 2000). From his point of view, ability was not part of competence, but the way to creativity and “meaning potential”. He regarded communicative competence as the ability to use the
language rules which we know to make necessary adjustments according to the contextual demands. For him, communicative competence was, essentially, a matter of adaptation to “contextual cues” (Sarwade, 2013: 62).

Halliday (1979) was another linguist who heavily relied on the socio-cultural sphere of language and devised his theories taking into consideration the socio-cultural aspects of language. He looked at language from a functional point of view and considered that learning a language meant learning the “meaning potential” (Sarwade, 2013: 55) of language. From his point of view, what learners acquire is not language, but its functions. Hence, he referred to language development as opposed to language acquisition.

According to Halliday, language is a product of social process and is learned in two ways: through the picture that we obtain from reality and ourselves and the meaning that we give to it, that is, the semantic system. According to this linguist, both experience and its interpretation lead to the “shared meaning potential” of the members of any given society. Hence, social reality or culture helps the building of meaning, which is known as “social semiotic” (Sarwade, 2013: 56). In Halliday’s view, we create language meaning in relation to our socio-cultural surrounding; it is a socio-cultural phenomenon. Language has the potential to express behavioural meaning and is the tool through which we can act and perform. For him, grammar and structures in language just serve as a means of conveying the desired meaning and are dependent on a specific culture and situation in which that meaning can operate. Grammar is subject to semantics.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), who would later redefine and develop some theoretical principles, developed Hymes’ ideas and created their own theoretical model. They defined communicative competence “as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication” (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007: 96). For them, knowledge referred to (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of the language, that is, grammatical competence, and other aspects of language use; sociolinguistic competence. They considered three types of knowledge: knowledge of underlying grammatical principles (grammatical competence), knowledge of how to use language in a social context in order to fulfil communicative functions (sociolinguistic competence) and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect to discourse principles (strategic competence). For skills, they understood the way in which an individual uses knowledge in actual communication. In his later work, Canale (1983) went even further and divided skills into underlying capacity and its manifestation in real communication, which is performance.
They gave equal importance to both grammatical and sociocultural competence as equal constituents of communicative competence and elaborated the term “integrative framework of Communicative Competence” (Sarwade, 2013: 62). They were the first to present an integrative and elaborate model of communicative competence which was almost universally accepted by many linguists coming after them. In short, they worked on the importance of sociolinguistic competence as part of language competence. However, they understood them as to be studied independently from each other.

Savignon (1983), in contrast to the previous scholars, put much emphasis on the aspect of ability in her concept of communicative competence. She described communicative competence as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting—that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors” (Savignon, 1972:8, as cited in Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007: 96). She regarded communicative competence as dynamic and interpersonal rather than intrapersonal and influenced by context. Regarding her distinction between competence and performance, she defined competence as the underlying ability, and performance as an open manifestation of competence. Competence could be observed, developed, maintained and evaluated only through performance. Hence, she equated communicative competence with language proficiency.

Bachman (1990), who would use the term Communicative Language Ability in order to combine language proficiency and communicative competence, defined this term as the appropriate use of knowledge (competence) and the capacity to use it appropriately according to the context as well as how it is used for the purpose of achieving a particular communicative goal in a specific situation. Among the different competences that he included in his theory, he paid attention to ‘sociolinguistic competence’ and defined it as the “sensitivity to, or control of, the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context” (Saleh, 2013: 104). In other words, it enables us to use language appropriately to achieve certain functions in certain contexts. In addition to this, a distinctive feature of this framework was the inclusion of the neurological and psychological factors in language use through the introduction of psychological mechanisms, which refers to “neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon” (Bachman, 1990: 84, as cited in Saleh, 2013: 104).

All these linguists, despite having different perspectives and views, considered society and culture important foundations for language learning, its study and the development and achievement of communicative competence. For this reason, I
will devote some attention to some other linguists and scholars who have included sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge as part of their conception of communicative competence.

One of these scholars is John Munby (1978). This linguist was mainly concerned with the preparation of teaching materials for foreign language students and, with his work, tried to give a rationale for the curriculum by taking communicative competence as reference. Hence, the framework he created is constituted by three main constituents, namely Socio-cultural orientation, Sociosemantic Basis of Linguistic Knowledge and Discourse Level of Operation (Sarwade, 2013). Socio-cultural orientation is especially important for the purpose of this research work as, in Munby’s view, communicative competence is oriented and influenced by socio-cultural orientation.

As a result of this, language is regarded as a socio-cultural phenomenon which must be born in mind in order to achieve successful communicative purposes and communication as a whole. This orientation includes competence and the community in which speech takes place, contextual appropriacy, which refers to the social context that the learner should be familiar with so as to communicate effectively and communicative means. The second main orientation is sociosemantic basis of linguistic knowledge, and it refers to the meaning of language as based on social structure. The last constituent is that of discourse level of operation. However, for the sake of this work, socio-cultural orientation is the most relevant one.

As for Canale and Swain (1980), communication was based on socio-cultural and interpersonal interaction in order to take place in a specific socio-cultural context, which involved performance constraints. In addition, they considered that language and its social meaning was dependent on sociocultural (and discourse) contexts, so social meaning should be always kept in mind during communication. Regarding their framework of communicative competence, they included grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. As for sociolinguistic competence, they distinguished between “socio-cultural rules of use”, “paying attention to the socio-cultural context”, and “rules of discourse”.

(Canale & Swain, 1980: 6, as cited in Saleh, 2013: 103)

In his revision of this previous work, Canale (1983) introduced some changes to this framework. As it concerns sociolinguistic competence, which is the aspect in which we are more interested, he changed it so as to merely refer to socio-cultural rules, which referred to the appropriateness of meaning (whether functions, attitudes and ideas are appropriate to context) and form (how appropriate the
realizations of function, attitudes and ideas are in specific context) (Sawarde, 2013: 67).

Another scholar to be mentioned is Van Ek (1986), who developed the Model of Communicative Ability while working in the Council of Europe in the same topic. Van Ek (1986: 33-65, as cited in Sawarde, 2013: 68), quoted by Byram (1997: 9, as cited in Sawarde, 2013: 68) did not only include communication skills as part of the training process, but also paid attention to personal and social development as essential for the individual learner. Among the six competences that he included within communicative competence, we are most interested in his consideration of sociolinguistic, socio-cultural and social competence. As for sociolinguistic competence, he emphasized the importance of setting or relationships conditions as important for language use. Thus, he gave importance to the relationship between linguistic forms and their contextual and situational meaning. Regarding socio-cultural competence, he asserted that the foreign language learner is expected to have some familiarity with the sociocultural context of that language. Last but not least, social competence is related to the ability to interact with others and to handle social situations as related to factors such as attitudes or empathy. (Byram, 1997, pp. 9-11, as cited by Sawarde, 2013: 69)

As for Bachman (1990), he also considered sociolinguistic competence as ‘the sensitivity to, or control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context; it enables us to perform language functions in ways that are appropriate to that context’ (Bachman, 1990: 94, as cited in Sawarde, 2013: 72). Thus, some elements such as dialect or variety of language; differences in register of discourse in terms of field, mode and style; sensitivity to naturalness; and cultural references and figures of speech, are relevant as it comes to this view, as they are directly related to culture and cultural knowledge.

One last author to be considered in this section is Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), who also works on communicative competence as oriented towards content for syllabus design (1995, p. 6, as cited in Sawarde, 2013: 74). In her work, sociolinguistic competence is renamed as sociocultural competence and is considered as the knowledge of the context which influences “what is said and how it is said” (Sawarde, 2013: 75), understanding context as participants and situational variables, “the knowledge of social conventions and awareness of values, beliefs and living conditions of the target language community” (Sawarde, 2013: 75). In addition, it includes stylistic appropriateness, politeness conventions and stylistic variation of register and formality. Last but not least, it also considers non-verbal communication, such as the use of silence or body language.
This model entails a change of consideration of this competence, as it is regarded as pragmatic knowledge and the appropriate use of language in reference to the social and cultural context as well as varieties of the language (2007: 46, as cited in Sawarde, 2013: 76). According to Celce-Murcia (2007), the social/cultural aspect is much more important than the grammatical one. However, she remarks that teachers tend to be more focused on linguistic rules rather than on socio-cultural ones. From her point of view, the most important socio-cultural variables are: social contextual factors, which include variables such as age, gender or social distance; stylistic appropriateness, as related to register or politeness; and cultural factors, which refer to background knowledge of the target language society, dialect and regional differences and cross-cultural awareness. In her view, which fully supports the purpose of this project, this knowledge can be partially acquired from the knowledge of the life, traditions, history and literature of the target community.

As it can be inferred from the above definitions and considerations, both sociolinguistic competence and sociocultural competence refer to the importance of sociocultural rules, context and familiarity with that context as one of the requirements of communicative competence. In fact, language happens outside the classroom, and although it is taught in isolation in the classroom, the final objective of this instruction is the successful interaction of students in that foreign language. As a result, the learning of a second language must not only provide them with the necessary linguistic resources, but also with some knowledge of the culture and context in which it takes place so that they can be successful in their interactions and relations. Knowing a language does not mean you are able to communicate, and mere linguistic knowledge completely detached from context and culture does not provide the necessary skill and capacity to successfully interact in that language. Hence, there are many aspects that need to be taught which surround that language, past or present, which have shaped the culture and way of living of its native speakers.

### 2.2. The Conceptions on Culture and the History of Culture Teaching

The role of cultural learning has created much controversy and debate throughout the last decades. However, its importance has been damaged in the benefit of other parts of the language curriculum for not being considered important enough. At the beginning of the 20th century, many scholars such as Sysoyev & Donelson (2002, as cited in Genc and Bada, 2005: 73) advocated the importance of culture teaching and its incorporation into the L2 curriculum. At that point, Cultural Studies, also known as Background Studies in the English tradition, Civilisation in France and Landeskunde in Germany, started to be introduced in the
form of traditional cultural knowledge. However, this step towards culture-specific contents was stopped by the appearance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the end of the 70s, which gave way to a wide range of approaches which distanced themselves from the mere teaching of form and structure and resulted on an unintended negligence of culture.

As pointed by Genc and Bada (2005: 74), the existent relationship between language and culture has been long considered thanks to the work of philosophers such as Saussure (1980) or Wittgenstein (1999). Nevertheless, it was not until the 80s that culture started to be actually considered for the purpose of language teaching. From that moment on, the spread of the English language as an international language led to the inclusion of contextual background knowledge during the first steps of culture integration, which developed into a much extended cultural teaching by the middle of the 80s. In spite of this, there were some problems related to what aspects of culture should be included and taught, which increased and reached their pike during the 90s. As a result, language teachers and other practitioners belonging to the same field have newly started to be aware of the intrinsically close relationship that exists between language and culture. The new situation has contributed to the idea that the study of any language must be taken along with the study of its culture in order to be complete.

As stated by Genc and Bada (2005: 73), whose opinion I fully support, the study and learning of any language loses its sense and direction if students are not made aware of the existence of the country or people which exist behind that language. From the modern approach’s point of view, communicative competence and language manipulation go beyond the mastering of linguistic forms, which Bada (2000, p. 101, as cited in Genc and Bada, 2005: 73) supports by stating that “the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.”

As believed by McDevitt (2004, as cited in Genc and Bada, 2005: 73-74) parting from the fact that language is a form of cultural representation and that both are forms of representing human nature, the study of any language entails the study of the culture and nature of the people who speak it. Culture and human nature go hand in hand as well as language and culture must be considered as two parts of the same whole. As pointed by Lo Bianco (1999: 116), “culture is embedded in language as an intangible, all-pervasive and highly variable force”.

The concept of culture is something which has been transformed since it started to be taken into consideration according to the different views,
perspectives and period in which it was studied and the author who wrote about it. The varied conceptions of culture could be divided into two main periods: those taking place before and during the First World War and those coming after the Second World War. During the first period, the main goal of language learning was the access to literary works written in that language, so, in addition to the target language, the target culture and its people were studied as well. It was a kind of encyclopedic knowledge which included information on different matters, such as history, geography, music or drama.

Brooks (as cited in Stern, 1992: 207-210) considered this kind of culture as “traditional” or “formal”; the traditional way of teaching culture throughout history. Others like Valdes (1986: 28) referred to it with the term “culture with capital C”, as it was regarded as a means to become a Cultured person through the knowledge provided by literature. As stated by Stern, whose conceptions are very interesting for the purpose of this essay, “the study of the history, geography, and institutions of the country was regarded as a useful background and complement to language and literary studies. Such cultural background and complement to language and literary studies. Such cultural teaching also included the great accomplishments of the target community in the arts, music, and drama, as well as in scientific discovery, sports, and whatever other achievements the people take pride in.” (Stern, 1992: 207).

Others like Valette (1986: 179, as cited in Méndez, 2000: 56) call it “history of civilization” and define it as the “geography, history, and achievements in the sciences, the social sciences, and the arts.” This kind of cultural knowledge was even divided into two main categories by Hammerly (1982: 513-515, as cited in Méndez, 2010: 56), in which he included factual culture, which referred to information related to geography and history, and culture related to achievements, which included art and literature.

In contrast to those who advocate this kind of cultural conception, Evans (2000), who is more oriented towards the social perspective of culture, considers that it is unnecessary for students of English to be forced to learn about the more classical and factual information of English speaking countries unless there is a specific reason for doing so. In his opinion, factual culture may become boring for most students; although he also suggests that it could be approached in a more motivating way by means of research on the part of students by means of project work. However, it is my opinion that, despite not being the most important aspect of culture for social purposes, it is something with which students need to be somewhat familiar for the sake of their general knowledge of the world.
Although this kind of cultural knowledge is quite encyclopedic, as it has been already stated, I think that it is interesting to pay some attention to it in class. Introduced in an interesting and dynamic way, students will not only feel motivated and interested in the language class, but will also obtain some general background knowledge of the target country or countries where the target language is spoken, which will serve as a first step towards other kinds of cultural knowledge. However, it is more advisable to include it at the beginning of the course, as an introduction to the country and its people, with the intention of deepening into other cultural aspects some time later in the course.

The second period of culture as it regards its teaching and conception took place after the Second World War. This was a period dominated by language teachers from the USA, such as Valette (1977), Hammerly (1982) and Robinson (1978), who were the first to provide this new cultural conception. The origins of this new approach were promoted by the improvement of disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, which influenced the teaching of foreign languages. Although, as Méndez (2010: 57-58) observes, Anthropology did not have much to do with Didactics at the time, its study of the culture of different peoples provided a new view of culture which focused on the observable behaviours of individuals in a community and how they were acquired within the community and society in which people lived, rather than on factual information and data.

All in all, this new anthropological view of culture greatly influenced the pedagogy of foreign languages by making teachers pay attention to something which had been greatly dismissed till that very moment: the importance of everyday life, which would be very useful in language teaching as a means of attaining a better understanding of the patterns of the native community so as to function better in that context. One of the first and most influential views concerning this approach was the one provided by Lado (1986: 52, as cited in Méndez, 2010: 58), who described it as the way in which people did things and lived following certain behavioural patterns established by the community which are particularly meaningful to them. By paying attention to this approach, it can be easily noticed how culture and its conception changed from a factual conception to a much more global concept which included the social and behavioral system, inherited and socially apprehended by the whole community.

All these different visions have had a huge impact and influence on the current views of culture. As mentioned by Méndez (2010), another important definition to be considered would be that of Scollon&Scollon (1995), as they define culture as every kind of every day practice belonging to a community. It is then regarded as the internal organization of a particular society as a distinguishing element in
comparison to other social groups, which is taken for granted by its participants, but is of prior importance. This view is also shared by others such as Montgomery and Reid-Thomas (1994) or Robinson (1985) and Byram (1989), who gave it the name of “behavioural definition of culture” (Méndez, 2000: 59). In contrast, Evans (2000) considers that the ways of life of the target culture are not necessary if students live in a western country, something with which I disagree. Brought into the language class in an appropriate way, everyday culture can be beneficial for students to feel motivated towards the language and the way of life of English speakers.

Valette fully supported this new view of culture and suggested that it should complement the traditional kind of culture; both should be studied, as he stated that “culture in the broad sense has two major components. One is anthropological or sociological culture: the attitudes, customs, and daily activities of a people, their ways of thinking, their values, their frames of reference. Since language is a direct manifestation of this phase of culture, a society cannot be totally understood or appreciated without knowledge of its language. The other component of culture is the history of civilization.” (Valette, 1986: 179, as cited in Méndez, 2000: 65)

Among all the views already mentioned, the one stated by Valette is the one that most clearly reflects the goals of this work as well as my view of culture as a combination of “Culture” and “culture”, which will lead students into a deeper understanding of the target culture. By studying the works and history of the target language and the everyday habits and ways of life of the people living in that community, students will be able to open their minds towards different cultures and realise that every culture and community is unique and equally valid.

One last perspective with which I will deal is more recent and is connected to psychology, pragmatics and sociolinguistics by considering the study of culture as the embedding of that culture into the student’s own framework as a means to find a middle ground between his own language and culture and those of the target language. Those supporting this perspective wanted to show that language is not only a means of exchanging information but that it is also greatly influenced by values, cognition and affective elements. On top of this, authors such as Melde (1987) underline the importance of critical awareness of social life in teaching, something which is also supported by authors such as Byram (1994) or Baumgratz-Gangl (1990) and Swaffar (1992), who believed that culture could overcome prejudice and foster empathy and a change of perspective.

Although more innovative, this perspective has also received some criticism since the capacity to create their one’s own assumptions, comparisons and
mindsets between one’s own culture and the target culture is seen as limited and too difficult for students. However, my opinion is that, with the appropriate help and leading of teachers, students will be able to develop their own personal attitudes towards the target culture, including that knowledge as part of their cultural and mind framework in order to enrich their vision of the world as far as their psychological capacity and maturity allows them to do so.

As it can be observed from the different perspectives which I have considered above, the cultural element has become more and more relevant in the last decades thanks to all the different perspectives taken by different scholars and researchers. It is not only a part of the curriculum which enables students to become familiar with the life and history of the target community, but also an integral part of communicative competence and intercultural awareness. As stated by Tucker & Lambert (1972), the teaching of culture aims at developing awareness towards the views of those whose language is being studied. Thus, teaching culture provides cultural awareness and tries to raise our students’ consciousness about the assumptions that they make about the world.

2.3. The Educational Institutions on Culture

As it has been clearly shown, the teaching of culture has been proved vital during the last decades by several educators and researchers. The cultural approach of language has been supported by the most recent developments in the teaching of language, which have enabled the integration of language and culture: (Buttjes y Byram, 1991; Byram, 1997; Byram and Risager, 1999; Byram y Fleming, 2001; Kramsch, 1993; Zarate, 1986). As a result, the curriculum of Education Authorities for foreign languages in the European Union and in our country have been influenced. As mentioned in those documents, students should widen their knowledge and comprehension of other communities, customs and ways of life through the study of foreign languages, which should be combined with the personal reflection of students on their own culture as factors for personal and professional development. Hence, a section dealing with this issue is necessary in order to show the effects of the cultural component in language learning.

As stated by the European Commission 2004-2006 (COM 2003 449 final, 24-7-20033), teachers should promote openness to others, the acceptance of differences and the disposition towards communication. In order to do this, students need linguistic knowledge as well as the understanding of the culture associated to that language. Both the European Union and the Council of Europe consider linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe as an enriching part of our patrimony which needs to be preserved. In fact, the knowledge of languages is
presented as a tool to favour a better understanding and mutual comprehension among communities as well as a means to develop tolerance and respect towards other cultures, contributing to achieving a feeling of European citizenship which will prepare citizens for the current context of international mobility.

_The White Book_ (1995), promoted by the Council of Europe, states three final objectives of language education, which include the increase of economic opportunities, the development of the sense of belonging and identity and the educational progress of individuals. All in all, it intends to favour social integration and cohesion. On top of this, the importance of this was showed through the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in 2001, also promoted by the Council of Europe (CEFR). This document emphasizes the importance of planning for language teaching and gives importance to the intercultural dimension by taking into account the current European scenario.

In fact, the importance of culture is made explicit and considered as essential as to be referred to already in the first pages of the official document. In the first page of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in section 1.1., the document states that “It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set”. (2001: 1) It also adds that “in an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture”. Moreover, some of the basic principles included in the same document in section 1.2, which refer to he aims and objectives of Council of Europe language policy, state “that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;” (2001: 2) as a means for “mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination”. (2001: 2)

In addition to this, which refers to general measures, the CEFR devotes some consideration to the skills in the use of languages that will enable speakers to satisfy their communicative needs and in particular (2001: 3):

1.1. “To deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so;”
1.2. “to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage.”

In respect to this, the European Framework also emphasizes the role of individuals as social actors carrying a baggage of knowledge about the world as well as aptitudes and skills which are important for communication. This is taken into consideration by Paricio (2014: 221) by stating that “communication appeals human kind in his total sense...as social agent, each individual establishes relationships with a wide group of superposed social groups which, united, define identity. Through an intercultural approach, one of the fundamental objectives of education in languages is the encouragement of a positive development of the students’ personality and sense of identity as response to the enriching experience which entails the confrontation of differences in the language and culture sphere” (Instituto Cervantes, 2002: 12). Hence, communicative competence is defined as the ability to function in a foreign language not only from a linguistic, but also a sociolinguistic and pragmatic point of view. Cultural competence, then, takes its basis from this tripartite division and widens it by incorporating intercultural competence.

As Paricio (2014: 221-222) observes, every communicative action is formed by both general and communicative competences which are combined and englobed within communicative competence. General competences are more closely related to intercultural competence and are divided into four subcompetences: declarative knowledge, skills and abilities (savoir faire), existential competence (savoir être) and the ability of learning to learn (savoir apprendre). Declarative knowledge or general culture includes knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness.

As included within knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge is the knowledge of the society and culture of the country or countries in which a particular language is spoken. It constitutes an aspect of the knowledge of the world and deserves special attention because it is not usually part of the previous experience of the students and tends to be deformed by stereotypes. In order to achieve this, we must start by knowing the customs and social habits, something which is referred to in the recommendations of the Reference Framework (2002: 97-98, as cited in Santiago, 2010: 122). This section contains characteristics of a concrete society and its culture, including aspects such as daily life, living conditions, personal relationships, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language,

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1 My translation.
social conventions or rituals in ceremonies and religious practices (Paricio, 2014: 222-23).

As regards intercultural knowledge or intercultural awareness, cultural approach is the best way to directly relate to the attitudes and ideology of students. The concept of declarative knowledge derives from the connection among cultures and the critical analysis of one’s own culture as well as the foreign culture. According to the European Framework, this intercultural awareness entails becoming aware of the way in which that community is seen from the perspective of others. In short, it has to do with the knowledge, perception and comprehension of the relationship between one’s own world and that of the community whose language is being studied, which is related to their similitudes and differences as a means to promote both regional and social intercultural awareness of both worlds.

The CEFR encompasses this idea and, moreover, underlies the importance of intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, and existential competence. By doing this, it brings up Intercultural Dimension as part of the teaching goals of language instruction in order to enable students to successfully interact and create relationships with others by raising their awareness of other cultures and perspectives; as intercultural speakers (Byram, 2002: 4)

As specified in the European Reference Framework, (Instituto Cervantes, 2002: 162, as cited in Paricio, 2001: 5), students must develop both plurilingual and pluricultural competences rather than trying to emulate the knowledge of native speakers. This last issue is defined as the skill to use languages for communicative purposes and to participate in any intercultural relationship in which any person masters several languages and possesses experiences of several cultures at different levels. This means that the final goal is that any speaker achieves a complex competence which he/she will be able to use in communicative exchanges. As well as linguistic competence changes and develops throughout life by contact with other speakers, the access to different cultures (national, regional and social) also lead to pluricultural competence. This intercultural approach to language learning has as one of its main objectives the balanced development of the student’s personality and his feeling of identity as a result to the enriching experience through the contact with different linguistic and cultural environments.

In relation to intercultural skills and abilities, the document makes reference to four capacities: the capacity to establish relationships between the native culture and the target culture, cultural sensitivity and the capacity to use a variety of strategies to make contact with people from different cultures, the capacity to play the role of cultural mediator between one’s culture and the target culture and to
solve conflictive situations and cultural misunderstandings and, finally, the capacity to overcome stereotypes. Hence, the intercultural dimension of language learning aims at intercultural speakers who are able to act and behave into a completely different context and mind framework of multiple identities and to avoid stereotypes which normally accompany the perception of otherness by giving it a single identity (Paricio, 2001: 6).

According to the philosophy of the recently developed Curriculum for the Teaching and Learning of Languages (Núñez, 2008) as regards the cultural syllabus, it contemplates the study of the people who speak the target language in relation to their society, history or values. To this, it adds the ability to use language according to the socio-cultural context, which refers to communicative activities. Regarding the socio-cultural aspect of the curriculum, students should acquire knowledge on the community whose language is been learnt in order to enable them to compare it with other cultures. By means of this, they will develop appreciation and tolerance for other ways of perceiving experience and organize social relationships as well as accepting their own identity and personal value. As regards cultural awareness, students should be able to reflect on and develop awareness of the role and nature of language and its culture in everyday life so as to understand the diversity around them and learn how to act consequently. In addition, by means of a constructivist learning conception, the contents and activities of the curriculum are thought as instruments which will enable students to build their own knowledge and development as well as making possible the achievement of determined goals and competences to be acquired.

Finally, it is also necessary to mention the Curriculum of Foreign Languages for Compulsory Secondary Education in our country (Real Decreto 1631/2006: 741-750, as cited in Paricio, 2014), which states that the learning of a foreign language goes beyond the linguistic elements and implies the integral formation of students, which favours respect, interest as well as communication with speakers from other cultures and develops intercultural awareness. Moreover, it emphasizes the attitudinal component as well, since it would contribute to the development of positive and receptive attitudes towards other cultures and help to understand and value their language. The curriculum is structured in four different blocks and the fourth one refers to Sociocultural Aspects and intercultural awareness. This last block, which is the most relevant for my didactic unit, does refer more directly to intercultural competence, as it contributes “a que el alumnado conozca costumbres, formas de relación social, rasgos y particularidades de los países en los que se habla la lengua extranjera, en definitiva, formas de vida diferentes a las suyas” (Paricio, 2014: 218-19).
2.4. Culture and Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence and intercultural awareness are terms which are more and more frequently used in different disciplines and really education. Risager (2001: 244, as cited in Paricio, 2014: 220) points that it was during the 80s that language teaching was influenced by intercultural perspectives. In fact, it is especially important for the purposes of language teaching, which ultimately derive from the new social context, the internationalization of markets and cultural globalization, which have increased exchanges among people from different countries and migration movements. As a result, due to the presence of people working in different countries and the increase of travelling for both touristic and academic reasons, cultural diversity and multiculturalism are present in most countries. However, in order to deal with the intercultural component and what it entails, there are some issues and conceptions to be considered first.

To begin with, it seems advisable to introduce this section by making reference to some authors and their ideas on the influence of culture. Sperber and Wilson (1994: 28-29, as cited in Santiago, 2010: 116), for instance, use the term context to make reference to the group of social and innate ideas that influence the understanding of information, both verbal and non-verbal, and as well as the way in which they are interpreted within a specific community. The same view is provided by George Lakoff (1996), who states that each individual interprets reality in terms of his culture, which is related to particular meanings and emotions and linked to experience and socialization. Hence, as can be inferred, these two authors refer to anthropological aspects of communication which affect all human beings but that are different in each individual according to his customs, culture and particular social meanings. As stated by Lo Bianco (1999), this same conception derives from the idea that we use language to do things, that is, we perform a cultural act (Kraschm, 1993, as cited in Lo Bianco, 1999: 113). This means that, in order to become intercultural speakers, language learners must take into consideration at least two cultures; their own culture and that of the target language or languages that they are studying. As a result, they will become mediators between those two cultures and come to terms with them.

In relation to communication and interaction, these contributions make us think that, apart from linguistic phenomena, cultural differences very often lead to interference and lack of communication and may be way more influential in this respect than linguistic aspects. The importance of culture and intercultural instruction in the language classroom is linked to the fact that most intercultural communication is not cause by grammatical problems, but communication difficulties which arise from the lack of knowledge of social and cultural patterns,
which are part of the speaker’s psychological structure and which (Krasner, 1999) coins as *linguaculture*. Thus, misunderstandings have to do with cultural schemata, which still need to expand and acquire more information related to a certain context. This means that the awareness of other cultures is not only necessary, but essential for language and communicative proficiency and real-life purposes. In this sense, making communication global should then be the way to comprehension. Hence, in order to reach agreement and successful interaction, we need to reach comprehension among cultures, that is, intercultural communication and knowledge.

This conception of intercultural understanding as linked to communication is exposed by Oliveras (2000, as cited in Santiago, 2010: 116), who states that “the notion of communicative competence transcends its sense of linguistic knowledge so as to be understood as the ability to know what to say to whom, when and how to say it and when to remain silent [...] It essentially has to do with the knowledge of psychological, cultural and social rules presupposed for communication”2. This means that the knowledge of context is vital for the correct interpretation of any message. This is also shared by Duranti (2000), who states that the culture of any society consists of everything that one should know or believe in order to behave in an acceptable way from the point of view of its members. Hence, when learning a second language, culture is regarded as “whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” (Hudson, 1980: 83, as cited in Krasnick, 1982: 35). Culture plays a key role in communication and interaction, and for this reason it should be present in the classroom as inseparable from language.

According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002: 7-9), intercultural competence and awareness are complex terms which englobe several components that must be considered. First, intercultural points of view and perspectives (savoir être), which include openness, capacity to examine one’s distrust to other cultures and the confidence in one’s culture. It is the will to reduce the importance of one’s own values, beliefs and behaviours and accept that they are not the only possible ones. It has to do with learning to consider one’s behavioural patterns from an outer perspective, that is, from the point of view of someone who has values, beliefs and behaviours different from ours. They also refer to knowledge (savoirs), which includes the knowledge of the different social groups, products and practices in one’s own country and that of the interlocutor; knowledge of the general interactional patterns among societies and individuals.

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2 My translation.
Thirdly, they also include the skill to compare, interpret and establish relationships (*savoir comprendre*), which is the general capacity to understand a document or event linked to another culture, explain it and put it in relation to documents and events linked to one’s own culture. Another feature refers to the capacity to discover and interact (*savoir apprendre/FAIRE*), which has to do with acquiring new knowledge about any culture and its cultural practices, as well as to using that knowledge, points of view and capacities by subjecting oneself to the roles of communication and interaction in real time. Last but not least, it also refers to having a critical vision of the cultural level (*savoir s’engager*), which entails the capacity to evaluate, in a critical way, the points of view, practices and products of one’s country and those of others nations and cultures.

### 2.4.1. Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching

Due to the nature of this research work and to the use of English language learning as the subject with which I will deal in my didactic unit, intercultural competence is especially interesting as considered to be implemented in the language classroom and, therefore, my didactic unit for what it entails as well as the benefits that it provides to both students and the language learning process. Hence, this section is especially important for it provides with a rationale for my choosing of this element as well as a justification for the development of many of the tasks and activities included into my didactic unit.

Although it was first studied and introduced by disciplines such as Anthropology or Pragmatics, Intercultural competence is also taken into consideration for education and the teaching of languages. Like this, language teaching becomes intercultural language teaching and expands the traditional way of teaching language by including culture as related to language. In this respect, as stated by Santiago (2010), intercultural communicative competence tries to offer a model for the integration of language and culture in the teaching of languages which goes beyond the acquisition of linguistic competence and aims at the formation of citizens for a multicultural and multilingual society. By means of this, teachers and other practitioners try to overcome ethnocentrism and raise comprehension and awareness as tools for integration into other cultures. In the language teaching context, then, intercultural competence has to do with the capacity to move among different languages and to communicate among cultures through their knowledge.

In relation to ethnocentrism, it must be observed that the language used by any group, society or person is directly influenced by his contexts, that is, the culture surrounding them. Any person belonging to a specific cultural or social group
acquires a specific way of viewing the world, which is reflected on his interactions with others. As pointed by Genc and Bada (2005), this behavior is influenced by factors such as family, friends, institutions or other social factors during their lives, which are clearly reflected in their attitudes, beliefs and values and in their use of language as regards to what they say and how they say it. Besides, most students live in a monocultural and monolingual world and this makes them biased in their views and judgement of others different from them.

As stated by Genc and Bada (2005) and others such as Kraschm (2001), people tend to approach reality from an ethnocentric point of view by thinking their own superior to others’, something which leads to conflicts when encountered with other cultures. This is due to the inability to position themselves in the others’ culture and points of view, which, according to Genc and Bada (2005), can be overcome by an outer look at one’s own culture thanks to a meaningful teaching of it. The study of other cultures may help by decentering students from their own culture and help them reach a medium ground between their own culture and the cultures of others.

As pointed by Agar (1994: 243, as cited in Krasner, 1999: 84) “the way those other people do things has its own coherence, a different coherence from yours. As you repair your frames, your mind and heart and soul become more complicated, you have new ways of seeing and doing.” Hence, by incorporating culture in the language classroom, students are made aware of this coherence and come to see different ways of life and thought from an internal perspective by immersing themselves into a new culture. Taking this into account, it can be said that the study of language as disconnected from culture enables nothing more than an incomplete language study which tends to demotivate students along the learning process. Thus, by studying culture, students go through a humanizing process which motivates them and their learning and, if guided appropriately, may lead them to notice similarities and differences among cultures.

Mistakes and misunderstandings are a natural part of cultural awareness and can be overcome if students receive the appropriate training and information. When interacting with native speakers, differences do always arise. However, from an intercultural approach, we must not try to avoid them, but negotiate and reach an agreement as regards these differences for both counterparts to feel comfortable. By means of this, empathy is fostered over rejection. This ability has to do with the personal sphere and in order for teachers to teach about it, intercultural exploration, as mentioned above, must come into play. As a result,
the difficult role of teachers in this respect has to do with supporting and helping learners recognize and solve the conflicts that they may encounter when interacting with others who have different values and ideas. According to Byram (1997, as cited in Paricio, 2001), fostering critical cultural awareness is very important in order to be aware of conflicts that may arise and to find ways to reach agreements and common criteria with others. Differences are not the problem, but judging them good or bad is. Thus, in order to avoid stereotypes, teachers must always make clear that what is taught in class are general tendencies of the target society, but at the same time stressing that culture and people are varied, changeable and dynamic, which is something that I have tried to show in my didactic unit by dealing with cultural diversity and ethnicity within one same country.

In an age as ours, which is inhabited by different people, cultures and ideologies, it is also important to become aware of our own culture and its effects. In respect to this, Risager (2001, p. 244 as cited in Paricio, 2014: 220) contributes to this notion by pointing that intercultural awareness does not only take into account the target country and its people, but also the students’ culture and their comparison as a means to adopt a critical attitude towards them to make students become mediators between two or more different cultures. Intercultural competence is not about learning about cultures and contrasting them, but it has to do with the ability to place oneself between those and to see them from a third perspective. This is what Kraschm (1993) calls the third place. For Starkey (2003, as cited in Paricio, 2001: 7-8), the development of this kind of awareness by means of comparison between both cultures should be initiated from the very moment in which any individual starts to learn a new language and continue during the whole learning process, resulting in important consequences for schools.

According to Paricio (2014: 219), the objective of intercultural competence is to make people become intercultural mediators able to act in a different context and to avoid stereotypes, something which has been defended by many specialists, such as Byram (1997) or Kramsch (2001). As regards educational contexts, Del Olmo (2000: 65 as cited in Santiago, 2010: 121) also makes his own contribution and states three specific objectives to be achieved for the achievement of intercultural competence, which include teaching to accept cultural differences for equality, teaching the acceptance of these differences as a means of improvement and teaching how to solve incompatibilities that may arise throughout the process. In relation to this, Sercu (2005, as cited in Paricio, 2014) observes that studying a foreign language entails contact with different cultures and puts students in contact with a cultural context which differs from theirs. It is then necessary that
teachers teach and promote this element for students to acquire both communicative and intercultural competence. All in all, developing an intercultural dimension entails recognizing the importance of both intercultural and linguistic competence as equal, the need to prepare students to interact with people from other cultures so as to help them understand and accept other perspectives as well as help them become aware of how enriching this experience is, which is one of the main goals of my didactic project.

As Krasnik (1982) and Dema and Moeller (2012) observe, though, teachers tend to find it difficult to deal with this kind of cultural knowledge and usually rely on the use of books and literature in order to teach culture. This offers a kind of factual instruction which, although interesting as part of the contents of the curriculum, tends to be categorized and forms stereotypes of the individuals and features of any society and does not pay attention to more relevant features related to social reality and ways of doing things. Due to this, I have chosen not to use any textbook activities and base my didactic unit on tasks and dynamic activities that go beyond the classroom and which show multiple cultural dimensions.

It is then clear that, by means of an intercultural approach, students will be able to analyse their own culture from an outer perspective, which is always a difficult task, and stay away from prejudice and rejection. Learners should be encouraged to observe cultural behaviours and reflect on them so as to be more prepared to communicate interculturally, overcome and accept differences and manage different situations arising from interaction. As a result, all these elements lead to think that there is a very close link between the learning of a language and the opening towards the culture or cultures connected to it in order to develop attitudes of respect, tolerance and comprehension towards other cultures. Besides, intercultural learning is also linked to the possibility of creating a critical spirit in our students in order to make them more reflexive through the study of other languages and develop a more objective and critical view about cultures and culture itself. According to Paricio (2014: 219), this “will facilitate intercultural communication because languages bear the contents, features and marks of the cultures of which they are the means of expression”.

According to Byram, Nichols and Stevens (2001), intercultural competence and awareness should promote the interaction of students by means of social and cultural aspects as well as the understanding and the appreciation of different values, culture, beliefs and behaviours, making internalization and globalization

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3 My translation.
part of instruction. According to Byram (2001: 16), intercultural speakers are those “who have knowledge of one or more cultures and social identities and who enjoy the skill to discover and relate to others belonging from different environments for which he has not been intentionally trained”, something which is shared by Paricio (2001). It is about a respectful approach to language. According to this, teachers must help students understand others as the basis for the acquisition of communicative and cultural competence.

In addition, Lo Bianco (1999) emphasizes that it leads to the understanding of the fact that everyone’s culture must be valued and that no background or better than others. By means of this, we will foster intercultural exploration and will influence the speaker in order to shift from a monocultural to a multicultural view of the world. It must be additive, not subtractive. This means that it must encourage biculturalism and bilingualism (or multi) but not the conformity to or the adoption of the norms of that specific group. It is, as I have already explained, about helping individuals find their third place between both cultures.

Some of the benefits of the intercultural component in language learning are mentioned in Genc and Bada (2005: 74) in reference to some authors. According to Kitao (2000) and Stainer (1971), it provides students with a rationale for studying the target language and makes it meaningful. In addition to this, Chastain (1971) observes that students fail at conceiving the existence of other people or culture behind the language they are studying. As a result, the study of language becomes somehow artificial, so, by making students aware of this fact, we can help them bridge language to real people and places. On top of this, Cooke (1970, as cited in Genc and Bada, 2005: 75) also mentions the contribution of culture to the general knowledge of students by means of the study of geography, culture, art or ways of life, which I have tried to attain during the first sessions by means of research on geographical facts on the part of students.

Others such as Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1965, 1972) and Cooke (1970) consider culture as a perfect way to engage students and increase their motivation, as culturally based activities such as research-based tasks on people and customs, the study of songs or the use of role-plays really interest students, as well as their curiosity and motivation. Hence, the importance of culture and intercultural instruction is not only essential for language learning, but also for understanding and motivation. Indeed, as pointed by Lo Bianco (1999: 129), it is possible that “the failure of some students to learn English and the fact that some ‘drop out’ of class may to some extent be related to these issues”, which is a statement with which I fully agree.
As noted by Galindo (2005), the introduction of intercultural awareness into language learners may most times cause culture shock, which is part of the affective component and may bring feelings of frustration, and defines it as the way in which specific aspects and situations surprise us negatively or positively when comparing them to our own behavioural patterns. It is usually due to differences, stereotypes, and images that we create in our minds about the target language and its speakers. However, students can be gradually led to understand and apprehend these differences and come to terms to them. An intercultural approach will help them be aware of the kind of experiences they may encounter and be ready for them as well as raising our students’ awareness, insight and sympathy regarding the ways of life of the speakers of the language that they are studying. In spite of this shock, this approach is something positive as it favours tolerance and openness towards other cultures. The pedagogical implications of this lead to think that education in second languages requires a more pragmatic, social and interdisciplinary approach which aims at bringing the language closer to its community, which should be one of the main objectives in the teaching of foreign languages so as to attain understanding among nations.

As regards the consideration of the elements of language learning from an intercultural perspective, we could divide its elements into attitudes, knowledge, skills and values. It is interesting to note that, as Byram, Grinkova and Starkey (2002) point out, knowledge and skills are usually focused on in class, while attitudes and values are something which very rarely appears during classroom practice, which is partly due to the lack of pedagogical theories related to help teachers address issues related to the affective aspect of learning as embedded into the learner’s development. When taking this approach, though, there are affective, cognitive and communicative elements which the language teacher must take into account. This affective element, however, becomes vital when students go abroad, as they may experience cultural shock, which may manifest itself in varied ways. Hence, teachers can help prevent or at least minimize this kind of reactions as well as making students take a centred position as regards what is familiar and unfamiliar, which is related to the already mention savoir être. It is advisable for teachers to use different activities addressed at raising the students’ awareness as regards cultural prejudices and the existence of stereotypes in order to destroy them and activities used to present any sociocultural aspect from the target language, which I have used in the latter sessions of my didactic unit.

In addition, it is interesting for students to contrast their opinions with other classmates, as they all come from different families that may share the same culture, but not the same knowledge, values or opinions. This is reflected on
educational programs such as Council of Europe’s All Different, All Equal campaign, which are based on the principle of “peer education” (Byram, 2002: 20), which has to do with learning from other classmates and not only from the teacher or the textbook and which I have tried to implement by means of student discussion and comparison of experiences and opinions related to their experience with the target culture.

In relation to teaching, Gómez (2004: 132, as cited in Galindo, 2005: 437) recommends that the information that students receive must be suitable to their formation, likes and interests. It must correspond to their level of linguistic knowledge and the introduced cultural contents must be contextualized and related to what the student already knows, that is, the learning process must be meaningful. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to take the culture of the student as a starting point so as to reach a general understanding of cultures and foster empathy. From this point of view, the goal is to teach them how to behave in an appropriate way, which is made possible through the knowledge of the existent cultural differences between one’s culture and the target culture and by acquiring the ability to solve problems deriving from them without risking the identities of any of the interlocutors.

We must foster a deep understanding of culture that goes beyond stereotypes and generalizations. Hence, it is presented as an intercultural learning whose goal is the development of openness towards different languages and cultures by fostering the student’s curiosity and empathy towards others. This can be attained, as it has been already mentioned, by working on positive attitudes, eradicating prejudices and making students reflect on their own culture. As a result, the shock and tension that sometimes results from the contact with other cultures will be reduced. This new conception of language, intercultural awareness and knowledge is revolutionary for language teaching as it takes the knowledge and conception of language and its speakers beyond the linguistic frontier.

On top of these considerations, it is also important to note that the intercultural dimension must not be understood as something static, but changing and dynamic. The role of teachers, then, should not be related to the mere transmission of data, but aim at encouraging an autonomous learning on the part of students, that is, they must be mediators between students and culture. This idea is supported by Sercu (2002), who believes that teachers should try to encourage the interest of students as well as their knowledge and openness towards different cultures, people and foreign countries. In addition, this dynamism is linked to the fact that the process of acquisition of intercultural competence along with all its elements never concludes, as identities and social
values are not fixed, but they are continually modified through the contact with new groups, that is, it does not have to be perfect to enable a satisfactory communication.

Of course, there are some experts that disagree with this intercultural approach and look at culture from a distanced perspective. Bada (2000, as cited in Genc and Bada, 2005) for instance, believes that the study of cultural values and social characteristic does not entail the conformation to such things and others such as Alptekin (2002) or Smith (1976) emphasize the fact that English has achieved the status of lingua franca and, consequently, its cultural background is not so relevant for such purposes. However, these are not views with which I can agree as they completely go against the purpose of this work and which have been proved wrong thanks to the different considerations, opinions and conceptions showed throughout this dissertation.

3. Project Work

3.1. The Origins of Project Work

As a second main part in this research work, I am also going to devote some attention to project work, also called Project Based Learning (PBL). The reason for this is not only the fact that I have used it as the main approach to cultural teaching, but that I consider it to be a very beneficial method which provides both teachers and students with several benefits. The use of project work as an educational tool, however, is not something novel. In fact, the roots of project work go back to the times of Comenius, who emphasized the internal potential of the child as the way to interest and motivate him and catch his attention, resulting in his development Mahrová, (2010: 10). However, the real origins of project work as thought for education purposes started in the 18th and 19th century thanks to the work of some thinkers, namely J. J. Rousseau, J. H. Pestalozzi, F. W. A. Frobel and C. Freinet, who rebelled against the rigid and formal educational methods of their time and contributed to many of the approaches used for modern education nowadays.

However, the use of projects has been spread more intensely lately due to the change of perspective that has taken place in education and its purposes. Today’s school is focused on a thought-provoking and critical approach. Hence, there are some aspects that need some attention, such as the social sphere, rather than the mere linguistic and formal aspects which are still given more importance, which is something that should be changed. Hence, in order to capture these changes, we must pay attention to three different aspects to be included in education, to which Rousseau and others coming after him contributed, which are sociological,
referring to the social abilities of students, psychological, which is linked to learning processes, and scientific, which, opposed to the traditional linguistic and formal approach, is based on problem-solving strategies and interaction as a means for learning.

Rousseau, who would be the first one to set the pace for those coming after him, believed that education should aim at developing social skills. This means that knowledge should not be learnt for the sake of it, by that this learning should practical and that, by doing, students can both learn as well as developing social abilities such as those of cooperation, which are so important in order to function in any society. In fact, Froebel regarded school as a miniature society in which students should be prepared to act in a bigger society by practicing social skills that would prepare them to be members of society. These ideas were also shared by those coming after him, that is, Pestalozzi, Herbart and Froebel, who paid special attention to the moral side of education.

According to these scholars ideas, education should focus on students and on how their minds work as a means to achieve success, since, as it is known nowadays, the mind of young people do not work in the same way as those of adults. Hence, if we are to help them develop in a physical, mental and moral way, we must try and see the world through their eyes, as well as stimulating and leading them in the right ways and direction. In this way, it is clear that some manipulation or interference is involved; however, it is present for the sake of greater purposes which should lead the young minds to reach adulthood in all its aspects. Pestalozzi was the first who tried to implement these ideas, and he did it in the form of cumulative, step-by-step, graded exercises which would help students acquire further knowledge despite starting from the simplest concepts and idea, which is something used by teachers nowadays. Besides, some other aspects that he emphasized are of prime importance for the development of students, as they include originality, invention, meeting new situations and problem-solving activities.

Herbart, however, considered this not as manipulation, but the guidance of the student towards a desired end, as he considered that potential was within himself that just needed development, which he linked to the solving of problems, creativeness and initiative. In contrast to Froebel, Herbart paid more attention to external factors as decisive for the child’s development... In his view, work was not self-activity, but self-realization. In fact, he mentioned the importance of taking into account the interests of students in order to lead their development.
As much as I agree with these ideas, there is an aspect of his philosophy with which I do not coincide, which is related to the treatment of the group of Rousseau. In my opinion, one of the main ways through which social abilities are to be acquired is the use of the group and group work, which is very present in my didactic unit. However, due to his emphasis on the individual, Rousseau completely neglected group and its importance for achieving the already mentioned development. Hence, I think that, despite having some strong theoretical basis, there are some aspects missing which greatly influence the practical implementation of these ideas. However, the idea of the group as something essential for the child’s development is emphasized by Pestalozzi, Froebel and Herbart.

3.2. Transferring Project Work to the United States of North America

The work and principles of these scholars were very important for the development of education. However, project work as such was not taken into account till the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, firstly introduced by David Snedden, who aimed at agriculture classes. However, it was John Dewey, together with William Heard Kilpatrick who would develop these principles so as to fit the purposes of educational purposes and placed students as the centre of education.

John Dewey and William Kilpatrick deserve special attention for the purpose of my research as their theory embodies many of the principles which I try to develop and attain in my didactic unit by pointing at the necessity of school as the place where students should be prepared for adult life through the teaching of practical contents.

This means that, as well as their predecessors, they focused on the social aspect of education and the students’ development, which should be attained by “social participation” (Stockton, 1920: 40) and involve not only learning of contents, but the ability to actually use them for real life purposes. In addition, they believed, as well as Froebel, in the necessity for guidance of students without the need of forcing them towards their development, which can be done by creating occasions and opportunities in which students can take part and use their capacities. All in all, they advocated for a type of education which is more in connection with doing and modern educational practices, such as construction, manipulation and the use of materials and tools. Besides, as well as Pestalozzi proposed, he thought of cumulative activities as the best way for the understanding and learning of students, which is something that I have tried to reflect on my unit by dividing different aspects into different lessons and building
the concepts from the simplest more objective to the deeper, more subjective ones.

From his point of view, which has been taken into account in order to develop my activities, learning happens through action and thinking, which should be used to solve problems and which, apart from attaining knowledge, should contribute to the collective good through individual work. In fact, they present it as a social practice which, in which the group takes importance, as opposed to what Rousseau believed. By means of this, then, this kind of learning is not only about the group and the importance/power of cooperation, but also about individuality and the contribution of each person, which should foster independence.

On top of this, he also paid attention to interests and emotions, something which probably came from Herbart’s influence, as it should be used as a tool to encourage learning and development and which takes the student as the centre. Following this line, Kilpatrick implemented this approach in the curriculum of schools and teaching methods, that is, the implementation of project work, as well as suggesting some guidelines, which included determination of the aim, planning, realization and evaluation “in order to motivate the learning of students”. (Kratochvílová, 2009: 28, as cited in Mahrová, 2010: 13)

3.3. Project Work: Conceptions and Characteristics

In my didactic unit, I have used project work as a classroom practice complement so as to teach the cultural component in the English classroom. However, this approach can be used in multiple ways, from being a subject on its own, to complement everyday practice and, despite just using it for the English subject, it can be used to bind several subjects together. This last implementation, despite its originality, is very time consuming and would have been difficult to implement in one didactic unit.

Before going further in my study of project work, it is necessary to start by defining what a project is and what this approach entails. However, that is not an easy task, as project work, as it will be shown in the following pages, is an extremely complex concept due to its versatility and multiple ways of implementation. Hence, I consider it best to include a series of definitions and conceptions on project work by different scholars which, at least to some degree, will help to define this ample term by mentioning different aspects concerning to it.

I think it is a good idea to begin with Mahrová (2010: 9), who provides a very general but appropriate conception by stating that “we call project work every
activity that is different from a traditional way of teaching and learning”. Despite being too general, it is a perfectly appropriate definition, as it shows that, contrary to the traditional classroom practice, this approach brings something different to the teaching-learning process. Complementing Mahrová’s definition, Thomas (2000) defines Project-based learning (PBL) as a working approach based on the organization of learning in the form of projects, and at the same time provides his own personal definition of project, which she defines as complex tasks which aim at involving students in tasks or activities dealing with the solving of questions or problems or the capacity to make decisions., with the purpose of making them more autonomous in their learning and helping them create final products at the end of each project.

In addition to this, Thomas (2000) goes even further and proposes five criteria concerning PBL, to which I will pay attention for the sake of this research work and with which I fully agree. First of all, she states that PBL projects should include problems and questions that students must pursue and answer through activities and tasks so as to serve a final real purpose. Secondly, they should transform and strengthen the students’ knowledge by posing difficulties that make them develop their skills and knowledge by solving problems, making decisions or investigating.

Besides, opposed to traditional methods, PBL is linked to the idea that projects are not teacher-centered and rigid, but oriented towards students’ autonomy, choice, and responsibility for their own work. And finally, they provide an authentic atmosphere for students by means of the topic, roles, context, and the final products to be achieved due to the fact that PBL poses real-life challenges focused on authentic problems which need solutions. To this, Beckett and Miller (2006: 24) add other features such as its extension over a period of time, its integration of different skills in a natural way its attention to both language and content, as it is in the case of English lessons and, more specifically, my didactic unit. Last but not least, he also refers to two very important components, both of which I have included in my unit and which are the main centre of it, which are the creation of a final product for which students should work and the importance of working in groups in order to achieve such product.

Deriving from all of this, it can be then clearly seen that, PBL is defined by all these scholars as an approach through which, apart from being the centre of the learning process, students are made aware of the purpose and usefulness of their work. Through PBL, school does not only become the place where students are prepared for life, but also part of life and the place where social participation takes place as a means to teach the learner and make him aware of how to handle real
life problems through different tasks and how a democratic society works by working in cooperation with others.

Regarding this idea, Stockton (1920) believes that the advantages of this approach are true and that as “it comes to be effortless, since the facts are built into the self though the concrete experience” (Stockton, 1920: 72), which means that the progress that students would make is greater by having them actively involved in the learning process, which, in my opinion, hardly ever happens, and sadly tends to be focused on the use of textbooks.

3.4. Using Project Work at School

Both my research work and didactic unit present PBL not as a subject on its own, but as an approach which complements classroom practice. However, there are some considerations presented by Stockton (1920) deriving from it that I have considered important enough so as to be included for a better understanding of what it entails. According to this scholar, the basis for PBL, that is, the need for using it, is man and his struggle with his environment by means of both physical and mental abilities. These abilities, combined, are to be used to advance and reach goals according to one’s possibilities.

This theory then entails that, in order to control different situations happening around him, people should be able to act accordingly to each of them as the situation requires. Taking this into consideration, it is obvious that this idea is presented in relation to work, to which this scholar adds some principles worth mentioning. First of all, he states that work is necessary both from an individual and social point of view. From this point of view, and directly applying to project work, this means that people, and in this case students, should be able to contribute to the group in which they are involved so as to reach common goals. This is not only connected to PBL on its own, but also to life in society, in which cooperation is important for the good of the group. In addition to it, this work is not only important from a collective perspective, as, by working for the group, people are also able to work on their individual capacities and individually develop while the process is taking place. Hence, by using PBL as a teaching approach, students are not only able to contribute to everyone’s good in the group by working as a whole, but also enables individuals to develop their own capacities and not only make students cooperative members in class and in society, but also independent and capable individuals.

Another idea connected to work is what Stockton (1920) would name as the dignification of work. This means that work is necessary for life and activity from both an individual and collective point of view, as it does not only benefit the
individual, but also the group in which s/he lives, which ultimately would bring satisfaction to all of them when they have been able to find solutions to problems that arise. In relation to PBL, this entails that, by working together to solve the problems presented in class and fulfilling the required activities, students would benefit and feel happier by being able to work so as to be actively involved in their learning. In relation to this, it is also important to mention the necessity for the division of work, which means that, when working in groups, as well as in society, each person needs to be in charge of part of what needs to be done, which entails that, when working on projects, students should divide the work and embody different roles for their project to work. All in all, all of these ideas are in connection with self-activity and cooperation.

Of course, my opinion is that these ideas should not be taken for granted, and the biggest challenge I find is that of working in groups. By this, I mean that, despite how beneficial Stockton considers group work, with which I agree, it is not always easy to implement in the classroom, as not all students enjoy working in groups and, certainly, teachers should be careful when grouping appropriately according to their capacities and willingness to work, which varies from one student to the other. In addition to this, students do not always find it easy to work in this way, as they are used to traditional approaches in which the class is in charge of the teacher and which do not put such demands on them, which could make PBL overwhelming at first. Despite this, however, I think that if used correctly and using it to complement other kinds of lessons, it is a very beneficial approach which should be implemented in class.

3.5. Project Work and its Many Configurations

As can be observed so far, Project-based learning is a very complex concept and it entails much more than the incorporation of projects into the classroom or the curriculum. In fact, it is a very complete and extremely useful approach in teaching and learning contexts due to the many different elements it includes. PBL includes an almost endless amount of features which make it an excellent learning approach, which has been the reason for choosing it as the main approach for my didactic unit.

Due its versatility, it can be adapted in very different ways according to the objectives to be achieved, which are influenced not only by the context in which the project is taking place, the materials and resources available and, very importantly, the kind of students who are presented with it. Hence, my intention within this section is showing the different ways in which this approach can be
implemented, as well as connecting them with my own didactic unit and the way in which I have chosen to develop it.

Regarding to the place in which it takes place, project work can be used both within and outside the classroom as, depending on the subject and activities, students may be required to venture outside the classroom. Most times, however, activities take place inside the classroom, which, I think, is greatly due to the existence of technologies which allow the access to information without the need to leave the classroom. Particularly in my didactic unit, most of the action takes place within the classroom, as many of the aspects dealt with can be easily retrieved from Internet sources. However, some of the last tasks derive from the students’ experience outside the classroom, on which they must reflect afterwards. Hence, it could be said that I use a combination of both internal and external activities.

In addition to this, the difficulty of tasks also varies depending on how they are designed, as they can be implemented as easy, short tasks, or as tasks that take longer and which are compound by several activities which include the active participation of students, which, at the same time, enable the practice of language, but also of content and which is how I have chosen to implement project work in my didactic unit. By asking students to gather and present information as well as debates and opinion exchange, I have tried to achieve not only the acquisition of content and knowledge, which was my main objective and usually is the main focus of project work, which in my case deals with cultural and intercultural knowledge and understanding, but have also pushed students to use language in a more natural and relaxed atmosphere. This is as well related to the role that PBL is given, which has been that of complement of an extracurricular activity, but that could be used as a reinforcement of classroom practice or even going as far as being used as the main method of instruction, which, as far as my experience goes, is not usually the case.

Obviously, the kind of tasks influence the duration of the project, which I have used sparingly throughout a series of weeks, but that could go from one single lesson to a whole academic year. However, I believe that devoting a whole year to a project is something difficult due to lack of time and the demands on behalf the educational institutions.

In connection to this, there are several activities involved in project work and all of them aim at the exposure of students to the target language by means of research and contact with authentic information sources. Among the different kinds of activities to be used, we could mention interviews, surveys or Internet
research, just to name a few of the many different tasks involved in this kind of approach. In fact, I consider technologies and the use of the Internet extremely useful as, despite not being as authentic as the real thing, provides with authentic information and is very attractive due to the amazing use of technologies that students have and which may encourage their work and make their learning more experiential.

One last element to mention would be the creation of projects, as many projects and their involved activities are thought as to create a final product, written or oral, which is thought to be exposed in front of the class or other people external to it. In this way, my didactic unit entails the creation of an e-magazine which is to be shared with the rest of the school in written form. However, oral exposition is also involved in the form of classroom presentations.

Despite not being able to include all the different aspects and ways of implementation which PBL entails, it is obvious from the above information that project work, if used appropriately, is an exceptionally useful classroom approach which enables cooperation, communication and a more profitable learning which should try to be implemented in classroom practice.

3.6. The Benefits of Project Work

3.6.1. Pedagogical References of Project Work in the Past

One of the main reasons for which PBL is defended as a great approach and for its inclusion in my didactic unit is the wide number of benefits that it offers. In fact, there have been and are several scholars which have contributed in this respect as a way of defending this teaching-learning method. However, I will only deal with some of the most prominent reasons with which most practitioners seem to agree with. Haines (1989) and Fried-Booth, for example, described it as the best way to include several skills and topics, which is not always possible when using other approaches. In fact, this can be easily observed in my classroom activities, as in several sessions students practice reading, writing, speaking and interaction, as well as listening through different tasks and different sources and, most importantly, are able to concentrate on several of them at the same time, and not merely focusing on one at a time as it would happen with other kind of activities usually used in class which tend to focus on just one language skill and which rarely include interaction, which is something continuous in PBL.

On top of this, both scholars, together with Mahrová (2010), consider them as the perfect opportunity to practice English without having to be in contact with natives speakers. I fully support this conception as, although the direct contact
with native speakers is something I regard important for language development, the opportunities for this contact are very rare. However, PBL can be very successful and motivating for pupils, taking into account that all the participants share the same level and, as a result, do not feel overwhelmed by the linguistic superiority of a native speaker.

3.6.2. Project Work, Motivation and Benefits

Among the different benefits attributed to PBL, I will mainly focus on motivation, as it is one of the main components of my didactic unit due to the topic as being linked to the cultural element, which students usually find very fascinating. In addition to this, my view on motivation is supported by almost all practitioners, as it has been linked to and linked to improved self-esteem, learner autonomy, and student-student cooperation, as well as self-confidence, to which I would add interest too. In order to achieve motivation, there are several factors to be taken into account. However, there are as many requirements as scholars dealing with this issue, which makes it impossible to include all of them in my research work. Nevertheless, I will devote some time to, what I believe, are the main important elements to be considered.

In order to achieve motivation, the first step to be taken into account is setting clear goals, as this may lead to letting students understand what needs to be done and work for it. In fact, the whole process may fail if this step does not take place, which is why I devote the beginning of the first session to explain what is to be done and its part as well as giving clear instructions for each activity by means of worksheets and online resources such as treasure hunts. In addition to this, autonomy is another concept worth mentioning in relation to motivation, which is defended by Benson (2000), as well as Beckett and Miller (2006) among others. By making students responsible for their work and learning, they become aware that the outcomes of their work, whether good or bad, are the result of their own effort and abilities. However the structure of the project and the amount of participation in decisions that students are allowed to make, they are still given the opportunity to negotiate different aspects of the project, such as topics, products, procedures, roles and responsibilities.

What this means is that, by giving certain freedom to students, we allow them to work on their own and achieve goals on their own, which is something that makes them feel good about themselves once that their work is finished. This could be easily applied to the creation of the e-magazine, as I believe that being aware of the fact that they have been responsible for the creation of such a material makes students feel self-sufficient, self-confident and, in some way, independent.
Moreover, if the extension of the project goes beyond one single lesson, students are able to work and develop their knowledge in different ways and at different stages, this resulting in a more consolidated learning and acquired information, which I have tried to reflect on my unit by focusing on different aspects of the same topic along the different sessions.

However, if we want our students to feel motivated towards the task ahead, it is important to set achievable goals, that is, it must be demanding enough so as to pose a manageable challenge for students, as something too easy would bore them and would not contribute to developing their learning, whereas something too difficult would stop them from learning due to the impossibility of fulfillment. Such an idea is defended by Becket and Miller, who states that tasks should be “neither too easy nor too difficult” (2006: 29) or Blumenfeld et al., (1991, as cited in Thomas, 2000: 6), which refers to it as “challenge”. Moreover, something equally important would be raising the interest of students, that is, choosing a topic which actually matches their likings and involves them. In my opinion, this is one of the most important features and something which I try to present in my didactic unit. Among the different aspects to be studied in the language classroom, culture seems to be the one that usually engages students the most. Besides, everything deal with in the classroom has to do with up-to-date information and contents accessed through the internet or their experience, which is something with which they connect more easily.

One last aspect related to motivation has to do with the feedback and evaluation that students receive from their work, which I believe are as powerful as the others, especially because of the affective and emotional dimension within they are included. From my point of view, ongoing feedback would be the best way to enable the development of confidence in students, as well as maturity, as they are made aware of the progression of their work and can feel more motivated to work for better results and to do their best. In order to achieve a positive self-esteem, moreover, the feedback should be always constructive so as to contribute to their improvement and positive self-concept. Nonetheless, we would obtain opposite results and both the students’ work and his confidence would be damaged.

On top of all of this, the way in which students are structured in PBL contributes to the benefits of this approach, as they are very often put into groups in which they must cooperate and work in a cooperative way in which interaction and communication must take place. Of course, this kind of grouping may have it difficulties, as working in groups is not always easy and there students who do not like working in groups because they are very individual or do not feel comfortable
working with other people. Besides, the way in which students are grouped is very important, as the differences of level or relationships among them may influence the working process. However, I consider that, if students are successfully grouped, PBL can lead to a higher self-esteem as each student is allowed to participate at the same level and feel useful, making them feel that their role is significant and that their work is as useful and as important as everyone else’s. By having students working in groups, we can make the class student-centred, deviating from the traditional passive role and creating a system of cooperation between the teacher and the students, which is something that Beckett and Miller (2006) observe as well.

One more factor from which PBL benefits, is authenticity. This means that the materials and resources used are not to be found in the textbook, which is not even considered in my unit, but in other materials such as films, paper materials such as newspapers or magazines, and, most importantly, the Internet, which is the most important one from my point of view as it has enabled the access to all kinds of materials and resources which greatly contribute to the development and use of projects. Moreover, this authentic element is achieved by putting the final sessions in connection to the students experience in a foreign country, to which they had actual access and gives a whole new meaning to the didactic unit and a sense for it.

Last but not least, two other elements which are present in my didactic unit and that benefits the effects of PBL are the use of content and the development of thinking skills, which I consider important due to the possibility of applying and transferring them to other aspects and aspects of everyday life. As regards content, students are able to learn not only about the subject itself, but many projects include elements from other subjects by referring to History, Geography or Ethics, which are part of some of my sessions. Regarding thinking skills, I mean that, having to work on their own and fulfill tasks; students are able to develop mentally beyond the contents themselves, but also to achieve a more critical, analytical thinking which they could also use in other subjects.

3.7. Project Work in Language Teaching

In addition to the aforementioned benefits, I think it necessary to focus on PBL as especially important for language learning as it is the main focus of this research work. PBL is especially beneficial for language teaching as it generally enables the development of language skills; encourages students to use the foreign language and, motivates towards language learning. The benefits of project work for language learning are almost endless, and that is what makes this approach such an appropriate way of working and learning in the English classroom, as it allows
students to work with and use what they learn and can help them forget about the language learning context within school as a rigid, grammar-focused and boring activity. In fact, Fried-Booth (1986: 7, as cited in Mahrová, 2010: 16) refers to this by stating that project work helps student put their language knowledge into practice by orienting their activities to the outer world and not so much to the classroom itself by allowing them to actually use and develop the communicative skills studied in class.

This means that students are given the opportunity to use language for real purposes, which makes their learning more effective and meaningful, due to the fact that students rarely have the opportunity to use the language that they learn in class in real life, which can make the subject quite demotivating and does not give any rationale for language learning. By using language in project work, students can be led to realise that language can be used for useful purposes and not merely because they are told to do so. In addition, by dealing with such an interesting topic as culture, they are more willing to focus on the content of the lesson rather than on language itself and feel more comfortable when speaking, which is something supported by both Hutchinson (1991) and Mahrová (2010).

Last but not least, project work in language learning classrooms can be quite useful at helping students overcome the fear of making mistakes, which especially applies to Spanish students and their sense of embarrassment, which tends to be higher when compared to people from other country and which is probably one of the reasons why Spanish people find it more difficult to learn to speak any language than people of other nationalities. In relation to this, Haines (1989: 3, as cited in Mahrová, 2010: 18) also observes the improvement of fluency and accuracy that may arise from interaction. In fact, I consider this kind of interaction as the best way to introduce speaking into the English classroom because it imitates authentic interaction despite not involving the participation of native speakers. However, it is important to be careful and remind students to speak in the target language, as they usually tend to speak in their native language when they are working in groups.

3.8. The Role of the Teacher in Project Work

Despite being a student-centered approach, teachers also have a role to play in project work as advisors, consultants and coordinators of the work taking place. Generally, teachers are unwilling to put this approach into practice for considering it extremely tiring, time consuming and difficult to implement, as well as presenting itself as extra work to be added to their already busy schedule. However, I think that project work can be used in class at times without entailing
so much work if planned carefully. In fact, Mahrová (2010) supports this idea, by stating that PBL does not entail an extra effort if he is able to plan and organize it well and students are willing to take their responsibility for the end product. Actually, I believe that if done correctly, PBL could even be beneficial for teachers as regards their role in the classroom and relieve them from such a role as it is that of communicator of contents, which puts all the responsibility on them and may be quite tiring and stressing.

In order to be successful, teachers need to plan everything carefully, which should include the time and duration of the project and a correct introduction of the topic in order to properly guide students. As not being the communicators of content anymore, teachers are advisors and helpers and may assist students and observe them rather than controlling the class or imposing their own ideas, which I have tried to develop by dealing with subjective topics and opinions such as experiences and stereotypes which would enable students express themselves without restriction. In fact, there are many scholars who support this, as Mahrová, Stockton (1920), Kratochvílová (2009) and Fried-Booth (1986). I have tried to present this in my didactic unit, especially regarding linguistic expression, as I have emphasized the use of dictionaries for vocabulary problems before asking the teacher for help in order to enable the students’ autonomy.

Besides, giving feedback and providing a final evaluation is very important for the learning of students, especially as they are independent in their work and do not have the complete guidance of the teacher telling them what to write or what to take as important all the time. Taking this into account, teachers should not only do this at the end of the project, but also during the whole process with the goal of guiding the activity of students. In my personal opinion, it is about the leading of students to learn by themselves, which emphasizes helping them learning to learn and which may be at times difficult, but clearly rewarding in the long run.

4. Didactic Unit: Londinium

4.1. Justification

This didactic unit is justified upon an academic exchange that the class will do with an English High School in London. They will spend one week in London, living with native families whose children attend the high school that these Spanish students will be visiting. In order to make this trip significant for the foreign language classroom, together with the classroom practice and objectives, there will be some sessions specifically devoted to cultural and intercultural aspects related to the country and its people, which will be developed in the form of a project
which will imply the creation of an *e-magazine*. The development of my didactic unit, *Londinium*, contributes to the development of the Stage Objectives in the Real Decreto 1631/2006 (LOE)\(^4\), which reflect the Key Competences set by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, as well as the Foreign Language Objectives, all of which are observed in the coming sections. According to these, students must “valorar la diversidad cultural manifestando actitudes de respeto y tolerancia hacia otras culturas y hacia opiniones que no coinciden con las propias, sin renunciar por ello a un juicio sobre ellas.”

Moreover, it also adds that “…el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera transciende el marco de los aprendizajes lingüísticos, va más allá de aprender a utilizarla en contextos de comunicación. Su conocimiento contribuye a la formación del alumnado desde una perspectiva integral en tanto que favorece el respeto, el interés y la comunicación con hablantes de otras lenguas, desarrolla la conciencia intercultural, además de ser un vehículo para la comprensión de temas y problemas globales y para la adquisición de estrategias de aprendizaje diversas. El proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en esta etapa educativa conlleva un claro componente actitudinal, en la medida en que contribuye a desarrollar actitudes positivas y receptivas hacia otras lenguas y culturas y, al mismo tiempo, a comprender y valorar la lengua o lenguas propias.”, which implies that “… aspectos socio-culturales y conciencia intercultural, contribuyen a que el alumnado conozca costumbres, formas de relación social, rasgos y particularidades de los países en los que se habla la lengua extranjera, en definitiva, formas de vida diferentes a las suyas. Este conocimiento promoverá la tolerancia y aceptación, acrecentará el interés en el conocimiento de las diferentes realidades sociales y culturales y facilitará la comunicación intercultural porque las lenguas son portadoras de contenidos, rasgos y marcas de las culturas de las cuales son el medio de expresión”, as well as referring to “valoración del enriquecimiento personal que supone la relación con personas pertenecientes a otras culturas.”

As it comes to the use of Project-work, “implica asimismo la curiosidad de plantearse preguntas, identificar y manejar la diversidad de respuestas posibles ante una misma situación o problema utilizando diversas estrategias y metodologías que permitan afrontar la toma de decisiones, racional y críticamente, con la información disponible”, and “hace necesaria también la perseverancia en el aprendizaje, desde su valoración como un elemento que enriquece la vida personal y social y que es, por tanto, merecedor del esfuerzo que requiere. Conlleva ser

\(^4\) The new Spanish Educational Law (LOMCE) comes into force during the 2014/2015 school year. As I started this project before this new law entered into force, and the law does not affect the 4\(^{th}\) level of Compulsory Secondary Education yet, I justify this didactic unit with the educational law established in 2006.
Capaz de autoevaluarse y autorregularse, responsabilidad y compromiso personal, saber administrar el esfuerzo, aceptar los errores y aprender de y con los demás.”

As it comes to the learning to learn capacity, “…aprender a aprender implica la conciencia, gestión y control de las propias capacidades y conocimientos desde un sentimiento de competencia o eficacia personal, e incluye tanto el pensamiento estratégico, como la capacidad de cooperar, de autoevaluarse, y el manejo eficiente de un conjunto de recursos y técnicas de trabajo intelectual, todo lo cual se desarrolla a través de experiencias de aprendizaje conscientes y gratificantes, tanto individuales como colectivas.”

Moreover, students will be also able to improve their communicative skills, learn new things, discuss real life matters and values while speaking, and read and write about things which actually interest and motivate them, contributing to the improvement of their communicative competence.

4.2. Contextualization

This didactic unit has been designed for a group of students in the 4th grade of Compulsory Secondary Education in I.E.S. Huarte de San Juan; a bilingual high school. The groups consist of 30 students, 18 girls and 12 boys, with ages from 15 to 16 years old. Their level of English is heterogeneous and moves between A2 and B2 levels. Besides, two of the students in the class come from curricular diversification. Despite being somewhat talkative, these students are quite participative and usually feel very motivated when involved in lessons which include cooperative work and communicative activities and which deal with topics which are interesting for them.

The class is normally distributed in 6 rows with 5 students in each of them. However, due to the cooperative nature of this didactic unit, which focuses on Project-work, desks will be grouped in order to form working groups. The number of groups and of students in each group will vary according to the activity that they will be required to do. The distribution of their desks will help students work more fluently in groups. The teacher will be in front of the class when it is necessary to give explanations to the whole classroom or when the class works as a whole, but will walk around the groups while they are working in order to assist them and check that everything is developing correctly.

As most of the sessions will require the use of the Internet, the teacher will bring the school’s laptops into the classroom so they have one every 2-3 students, and s/he will use her own laptop. In the classroom, they also have a blackboard, a digital blackboard, a projector and loudspeakers.
The trip will take place from March 22 to March 29. As there are other parts of the foreign language curriculum to be treated in class and there is so little time to pay attention to everything, lessons will be devoted to this cultural section once a week. This didactic unit consists of 6 sessions of 55 minutes each. Four of them will take place before they leave and the other two remaining lessons will take place after they have returned from their trip. Lessons will take place on Fridays, on February 27, and March 6, 13, 20, and will continue on April 2nd, which will be a Thursday, as there are two subsequent full hours to be devoted to English on that day in which they will discuss what happened during the trip, as well as working on activities related to it, and will be able to both finish their activities and their work on the magazine.

In addition, as it solely deals with culture and is linked to an academic exchange, this didactic unit is not devoted to any specific unit of the school year. At this point, though, students have already covered much of the content related to grammar and vocabulary, which will make their understanding and fulfillment of activities much easier than if this didactic unit had taken place at the very beginning of the school year.

4.3. Didactic Objectives, Stage Objectives and Key Competences

In order to show the didactic objectives to be achieved in this didactic unit, I will use a chart in which I will not only show them, but will also put them in relation to the Stage Objectives and the Foreign Language Objectives of the Spanish Compulsory Secondary Education of 2006, together with the Key Competences established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
1. To be able to find, skim and scan information from Internet sources.

2. To learn to learn.

3. To listen and understand videos.

4. To learn about other countries, cities and their people and A

5. Communication in foreign languages  

6. Digital competence  

7. Learning to learn  

8. Social and civic education

---

5. A. Asumir responsablemente sus deberes, conocer y ejercer sus derechess en el respeto a los demás, practicar la tolerancia, la cooperación y la solidaridad entre las personas y grupos, ejercitarse en el diálogo afianzando los derechos humanos como valores comunes de una sociedad plural y prepararse para el ejercicio de la ciudadanía democrática.

B. Desarrollar y consolidar hábitos de disciplina, estudio y trabajo individual y en equipo como condición necesaria para una realización eficaz de las tareas del aprendizaje y como medio de desarrollo personal.

E. Desarrollar destrezas básicas en la utilización de las fuentes de información para, con sentido crítico, adquirir nuevos conocimientos. Adquirir una preparación básica en el campo de las tecnologías, especialmente las de la información y la comunicación.

G. Desarrollar el espíritu emprendedor y la confianza en sí mismo, la participación, el sentido crítico, la iniciativa personal y la capacidad para aprender a aprender, planificar, tomar decisiones y asumir responsabilidades.

I. Comprender y expresarse en una o más lenguas extranjeras de manera apropiada.

J. Conocer, valorar y respetar los aspectos básicos de la cultura y la historia propias y de los demás, así como el patrimonio artístico y cultural.

6. 1. Escuchar y comprender información general y específica de textos orales en situaciones comunicativas variadas, adoptando una actitud respetuosa y de cooperación.

2. Expresarse e interactuar oralmente en situaciones habituales de comunicación de forma comprensible, adecuada y con cierto nivel de autonomía.

3. Leer y comprender textos diversos de un nivel adecuado a las capacidades e intereses del alumnado con el fin de extraer información general y específica, y utilizar la lectura como fuente de placer y de enriquecimiento personal.

4. Escribir textos sencillos con finalidades diversas sobre distintos temas utilizando recursos adecuados de cohesión y coherencia.

5. Utilizar con corrección los componentes fonéticos, léxicos, estructurales y funcionales básicos de la lengua extranjera en contextos reales de comunicación.
5. To compare others’ customs, practices and views of the world to our own.

6. To speak aloud in class and take part in communication.

7. To be able to cooperate in groups and cooperate with classmates.

8. To deal with British and Spanish sociocultural elements.

9. To develop critical thinking and autonomy.

10. To develop cultural and intercultural awareness.

11. To develop tolerance and respect for others.

12. To successfully use technologies.

13. To be able to talk in

competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression.
front of an audience and share information.
14. To express oneself in speaking and writing in an accurate way.
15. To develop moral and civic education and ethical values.

Figure 1: Didactic objectives, stage objectives and key competences.

4.4. Contents

The following table will present the contents of this unit, which include the different skills, linguistic components and attitudinal and sociocultural elements to be included into my didactic unit. First of all, I will pay attention to listening, speaking and interaction, which will be followed by reading and writing. To continue, I will also mention functions as well as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation aspects and I will finish by focusing on the attitudes and sociocultural elements of this unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LISTENING, SPEAKING AND INTERACTING</th>
<th>READING AND WRITING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening to the teacher and classmates.</td>
<td>1. Reading and understanding excerpts from the Internet dealing with United Kingdom and London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listening to some movie scenes from <em>Bend It like Beckham</em> and talking about them with the teacher and classmates.</td>
<td>2. Writing information found on the Internet dealing with the United Kingdom and London in order to discuss, make a presentation and share it with the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Speaking about cultural, sociocultural and intercultural aspects of the United Kingdom and London.</td>
<td>3. Writing the different sections of the e-magazine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sharing one’s opinion and reflections on culture and stereotypes.</td>
<td>4. Writing an individual composition reflecting on the trip and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Talking about one’s experiences and reflections on the trip to London and one’s interaction with life and people there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Comparing London and Britain to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
one’s home country.
8. Cooperation and interaction with the teacher and classmates to fulfill specific tasks and to create the e-magazine.

Figure 2: Contents.

4.5. Linguistic Awareness and Reflection upon the Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTIONS</th>
<th>VOCABULARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reflecting on sociocultural and intercultural aspects both in class activities and discussions as well as in the written composition.</td>
<td>5. Related to geographical aspects of countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Exchanging information and opinions on culture and stereotypes as well as habits and values.</td>
<td>6. Related to the different aspects to be considered when describing a city and its touristic offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Comparing others’ culture and habits to one’s culture and habits.</td>
<td>7. Related to multiculturalism, interculturalism and stereotypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Related to household, habits, school and parts and features of a city and its boroughs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAMMAR</th>
<th>PRONUNCIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Using the different grammatical structures presented in the different sources in order to express themselves, share information, opinions, and create different tasks, as well as writing a composition and an e-magazine.</td>
<td>1. Practicing their pronunciation by talking in class with the teacher and classmates as well as by delivering oral presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Simple Present and Simple Past.</td>
<td>3. Comparison structures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Structures to express agreement or disagreement.

Figure 3: Linguistic awareness and reflection upon the language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Valuing English as a tool for communication and international understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Developing critical thinking, tolerance, cultural and intercultural awareness and respect for others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Respecting others’ opinions, views and ways of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Viewing projects as the best tool to achieve autonomy and learn in a significant way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Viewing the meeting of people from different countries and their stay in a different country as an enriching experience from both a linguistic and personal point of view.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIOCULTURAL ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Becoming familiar with the British ways of life, attitudes, behaviours, customs and traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learning about the United Kingdom and London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Becoming aware of Spain’s sociocultural aspects and considering them as another way of life, not superior to that of others’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dealing with London’s characteristics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Sociocultural elements.

4.6. Cross-Curricular Issues

The cross curricular issues contained in this unit mainly have to do with social values as it fosters respect for other people and equality. The reason for giving so much importance to this is that, at this stage, students are mature enough to deal with this kind of topics. It is very important for them to understand and apprehend differences among nations and ethnicities as something enriching which should not be
misled by stereotypes and misconceptions in order to become mediators among cultures in the globalized world in which they live. In addition to this, cooperation and autonomy are also fostered in order to prepare students for social interaction and to be able to be competent and capable citizens as well as to learn on their own at any stage of their life. Last but not least, the use of technologies is also encouraged, as it is regarded as an essential tool and skill to be developed in a world which demands the constant use of technologies and for the creation of successful materials to be shared with everyone else in an easy and accessible way. All of these issues will be useful for students from both a personal and professional point of view, as they will help them in their relationships with others as well as being useful for their future careers.

_Education for peace:_ this is specially reflected on _Bend It like Beckham_, as the intolerance among different ethnicities and the differences between them result in personal conflicts within the family as well as with the main character’s friends.

_Multicultural education:_ through all the sessions, students will learn about other countries and cultures.

_Civic and moral education:_ this didactic unit tries to foster respect and equality not only for other countries and ways of life, but also for the inclusion of people from other cultures and ethnicities within the same nation by means of discussion on these aspects as observed both in the film, information found on the Internet and the contact of students with other people during their trip, which will be discussed in class. Respect and tolerance are also contemplated by encouraging everyone to express their opinion and by emphasizing the validity of everyone’s views and reflections from a respectful perspective.

_Ethics:_ which is directly related to the civic and moral education aspects already mentioned, to which we could add the consideration of others’ culture, ways of life and their acceptance as one more valid form of viewing the world which is not inferior or superior to our culture and comparing them to our own views of the world.

_Cooperation:_ this will be attained by having students working together in the different tasks and activities to be fulfilled.

_Autonomy:_ this is will be attained by having students working on their own, solving problems and being in charge of organizing their groups, without the teacher controlling the class or imposing her will or ideas.

_Technology:_ students will be constantly asked to use technologies to fulfill different tasks, which will contribute to the creation of an e-magazine.
4.7. Interdisciplinary Elements

As it comes to interdisciplinary elements, some activities will deal not only with English, but also with geographical, historical, political and ethical aspects, which are very important to understand the cultural and sociocultural aspects studied in class. By means of this, students will not only learn about the language, but will also complement this knowledge with extra linguistic information, which will contribute to their general knowledge and their knowledge of the world as well.

*Geography:* by learning and making reference to geographical aspects of the United Kingdom and London as related to the different countries constituting the United Kingdom, the weather, food, politics, ethnic groups or tourism.

*History:* by learning and making reference to historical aspects of the United Kingdom and London, which will be reflected by including information on aspects such as the flags of the different countries in the United Kingdom, their currency, historical day, architecture or monuments.

*Ethics:* as a subject, Ethics will be also dealt with in class by fostering respect and tolerance towards different people coming from different countries, with different ethnicities and views of the world by considering them equals.

4.8. Attention to Diversity

In order to make this didactic unit accessible for the needs of the students of curricular diversification, some activities will be adapted. In order to do this, the groups in which students will be working will be composed by students with different levels, so weaker students and students of curricular diversification will be grouped with stronger students so that they can help them or explain to them what they may not understand. In addition, the teacher will pay special attention to them while students are working on the activities and will give them as much as help as necessary. In the same way, these students will be handed the transcriptions of the film clips that are to be watched in class so they will be able to follow the dialogues more easily.

Besides, the number of minimum and maximum words required in the compositions will be reduced for students of curricular diversification. Hence, the number of words for their composition will be 70-100 (120-150 for the average student).

4.9. Methodology

The methodology to be used in this didactic unit will be mainly student-centred and will use Project-based teaching and learning and all the different features that it
entails, together with the creation of an e-magazine, which is the final product for which students must work. This approach takes into account the didactic principles in Foreign Language Teaching, which establish the need for autonomy and learning to learn skills, and which have been mentioned in the content section above in points B, E and G of Stage Objectives and point 6 in Foreign Language Objectives.

By incorporating the use of projects, this didactic unit combines both autonomous and cooperative learning, as students will be asked to work in groups and find the necessary information, as well as developing the different tasks which they are asked to do without being completely dependent on the teacher, who will act as a guide and facilitator most of the time. In addition, this didactic unit aims at developing the students’ communicative skills (speaking, listening, writing and interaction) by requiring them to speak, interact and negotiate in order to fulfill the different tasks and activities which they are requested to do, as well as incorporating various activities and tasks which include oral presentations and the exchange of information and ideas. In addition, by focusing on cultural aspects, students will be motivated to be more participative and willing to work on something that they actually enjoy and will feel more confident to use language by approaching these lessons from a cultural perspective.

Some sessions will be used to learn some general, more factual knowledge about the country to be visited, which will place students within the context in which they will be living, while the other sessions will take place after they have returned from their visit and will focus on more personal, down-to-earth, subjective issues such as everyday routines, behaviours, customs and habits and aspects which are specific to the people which they have met as well as cultural differences, cultural shocks, ways of thinking and their comparison to the students’ own culture. In this way, students and their teacher will be able to explore the more personal, affective, emotional and subjective aspects of culture.

In order to do this, the students and their teacher will work on a cultural project in which they will, on the one hand, discuss and work different cultural aspects and features of the country and, on the other, use many of the aspects learnt, researched and discussed to create an e-magazine in which they will reflect what they have learnt and experienced.

4.10. Materials

The materials needed for this didactic unit are:

- Slide projector
- Laptops and Internet connection
• Worksheets
• Pictures
• DVD film
• Loudspeakers
• Virtual platform
• Treasure hunt
• Blackboard
• Pen drive
• Students’ materials (pen, notebook)
• Powerpoint presentation
• Word Office
• PDF documents
• Yumpu Magazine Creator

4.11. Assessment

4.11.1. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria to be contemplated are put in relation with the didactic objectives already specified in section 3.3. In general, they focus on the students’ participation and interaction in the activities and tasks. By the end of this didactic unit, students must have been able to:

1. Find, skim and scan information from internet sources.
2. Understand and fulfill instructions.
3. Listen and understand videos.
4. Learn about other countries, cities and their people and habits.
5. Compare others’ customs, practices and views of the world to our own.
6. Speak aloud in class and take part in communication.
7. Cooperate in groups and cooperate with classmates.
8. Deal with British and Spanish sociocultural elements.
9. Develop critical thinking and autonomy.
10. Develop cultural and intercultural awareness.
11. Develop tolerance and respect for others.
12. Successfully use technologies.
13. Talk in front of an audience and share information.
14. Express oneself in speaking and writing in an accurate way.
15. Develop moral and civic education and ethical values.
4.11.2. Evaluation

In order to evaluate students, there will be different elements to be taken into account. As English lessons will only use one day a week to focus on this didactic unit, it will only count as 30% of the final mark at the end of the school year, which will be added to the mark obtained through exams and activities directly focused on the textbook and dealing with linguistic contents also included in the textbook. As being based on a project, this unit will not be evaluated by means of any tests or exams, but by taking into account the different tasks and activities in which students will work in class, that is, oral presentations, discussions and the final composition, which will result in the final product, that is, the e-magazine. Active participation in class and cooperation in the different tasks and activities involved will be taken into consideration too, as well as the linguistic performance of the students, so it is important for all students to work and take part in activities.

- Participation and cooperation in group activities: 15%
- Discussions and activities done in class: 15%
- Tasks:
  1. Searching and sharing information on the United Kingdom’s countries: 10%.
  2. Treasure hunt on London and oral presentation: 15%
  3. Pechakucha: 15%
  4. Individual composition: 20%
  5. Language production and accuracy: 10%

4.12. Sessions

Topic: Londinium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 1: Learning about the United Kingdom</th>
<th>SESSION 2: Getting to know London</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introducing the didactic unit and the e-magazine. Whole-class. (15’)</td>
<td>1. Treasure hunt. Searching information on London. Group work. (20’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Searching information on the United Kingdom. Group work (20’)</td>
<td>2. Creating oral presentations. Group work. (15’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Competition on the United</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 The tasks included in this didactic unit have been designed by the author of this Master’s Thesis.
**Session 1: Learning about the United Kingdom**

- Interaction, speaking, reading and writing.
- Vocabulary related to geographical aspects of the United Kingdom.
- Materials: slide project, laptops, Internet connection, worksheets, blackboard, magazine program and pen.

**Activity 1: Introducing the didactic unit and the e-magazine.** Whole-class. (15’)

In the first session, the teacher will start by telling students that, as they are going to go to London for an exchange, they will devote four Friday sessions previous to the trip and two sessions coming after the trip to learn about and reflect on the culture of
the country which they will be visiting, as well aspects observed during their trip so as to create an e-magazine in which they will include all kinds of information.

In this first session, the teacher and students will decide on the title of the magazine and what points they will include. In addition, the teacher will tell them what they will work on in each session as well as what program they will use to create their magazine. The main points to be included within the magazine will be:

- Title of the magazine: Londinium
- Sections:
  1. United Kingdom and its four countries
  2. Getting to know London
  3. Our visit to London: observations and experiences

The program that they will use to create this magazine will be Yumpu Magazine Creator, which students have already used in previous years.

**Activity 2: Searching information on the United Kingdom. Group work. (20’)**

Once they have dealt with all of these aspects, the teacher explains that they will start by researching on the different countries of the United Kingdom so that students become familiar with the national context in which they will be temporarily living.

The class will be divided into groups four groups, two of them will have seven students and the other two groups will have eight students. Each of them will be given one country from the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) on which they will have to research using the Internet and the computers available in class. Each group will use two laptops.

The teacher will provide each group with a worksheet in which they will be asked to search on different aspects related to each country and write down the information. This activity will not be included into their e-magazine, but will be useful for students to become somewhat familiar with the country they are visiting. This is the worksheet that students will be using:
### Using your computer and the Internet, find information about England/Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important cities/towns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three important monuments (explain what they are)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical dishes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While students work, the teacher will be walking around the class, making sure that students find the right information as well as helping them with language and vocabulary if necessary. The teacher will also direct them to online dictionaries in case that they do not know any of the words. However, they will also be allowed to ask her questions if they cannot find what they are searching. These are the dictionaries to which students will be directed:

http://dictionary.cambridge.org/

**Activity 3: Exchanging information on the United Kingdom. Group work. (10’)**

Once that time is up and the teacher has made sure that students have found all the information, the different groups are split and mixed among each other so as to form new groups in which at least one of the constituents belongs to one of the previous groups. Once they have done it, the teacher tells them that each member has to tell the others about his/her country so that everyone becomes familiar with all the countries in United Kingdom.

**Activity 4: Competition on the United Kingdom facts. Whole-class. (10’)**

When students have finished sharing information, the teacher will divide the class in two big groups and they will make a competition with questions on what they have researched. The group who gets more right answers, will win. The questions included in the competition will be:

1. Of what country is Cardiff the capital?
2. Name three important cities/towns in England.
3. What’s the traditional clothing of Scotland?
4. What’s the capital of Northern Ireland?

**Session 2: Getting to know London**

- Interaction, speaking, reading and writing.
- Vocabulary related to the different aspects to be considered when describing a city and its touristic offer, parts and aspects of a city, multiculturalism.
- Materials: slide projector, laptops, Internet connection, and treasure hunt.
**Activity 1: Treasure hunt. Searching information on London. Group work. (20')**

In this session, students will be doing some research in groups on the city that they are going to visit, that is, London. The class will be split into five groups with six students each. Each group will have two computers.

The teacher will direct them to a treasure hunt in which she has included different aspects of the city of London. Each group will be given a section on which they will have to research through some webpage links that the teacher will have attached to the treasure hunt. While they are working, the teacher will be walking around, checking that they are working properly, solving doubts and guiding them. They will be, once more, encouraged to use online dictionaries to solve doubts, as well as asking the teacher. The treasure hunt will look like this:

**Treasure Hunt: Getting to know London**

1. **Using your computer and the links provided, search information on one specific aspect of London.**

- Geographic situation, Districts, Transportation and Population
  
  http://geography.about.com/od/unitedkingdommaps/a/londonfacts.htm
  http://www.english-online.at/geography/london/geography-of-london.htm
  http://www.uk.filo.pl/england_london_geography.htm
  http://www.londontown.com/LondonStreets/
  http://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/getting-around-london/london-transport

- Tourism: Leisure time and entertainment
  
  http://www.expatfocus.com/expatriate-london-leisure-entertainment
  
  http://www.londontown.com/leisure/
  http://www.londonpass.com/london-attractions/leisure.html
  http://www.internations.org/london-expats/guide/living-in-london-15501/leisure-activities-in-london-3
  http://www.londontown.com/entertainment/
  http://www.allinlondon.co.uk/things-to-do.php

- Famous parts of the city: Westminster, Camden Town, Covent Garden
  
  http://www.londontown.com/LondonAreas/
http://www.visitlondon.com/discover-london/london-areas/central/covent-garden
http://www.camdenlock.net/
http://www.camdentown.co.uk/
http://www.londontown.com/LondonAreas/Westminster/

- Monuments, museums and galleries
  http://www.londonpass.com/london-attractions/leisure.html
  http://www.timeout.com/london/attractions/top-london-museums

- Ethnic groups and religions
  http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population/
  http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/londons-geography-population/londons-population-by-ethnicity/
  http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/london/religion.htm
  http://www.theguardian.com/graphic/0,5812,1395103,00.html

**Activity 2: Creating oral presentations.** Group work (15’)

When students finish gathering all the required information, they will have to make a presentation on what they have found, they should also include pictures. They will do it using a PowerPoint presentation.

**Activity 3: Performing oral presentations on London.** Group work. (20’)

Once done with creating their oral presentation, students will present it in front of the class so everyone knows about the different aspects researched on London. They will all work for a common purpose and the benefit of the whole class.

The presentation will last around 4 minutes and each of the students in the group will have to speak. They will be evaluated on the information they present as well as their linguistic expression and accuracy.
Session 3: Working on the e-magazine

- Writing and interaction.
- All the vocabulary used in sessions 1 and 2.

**Activity 1:** Writing information to be included into the e-magazine. Group work. (55’)

Session 3 will be devoted to the creation of the first part of the magazine, which will include some information on the country and the city which has been gathered in sessions 1 and 2. Each section will be written by the groups which researched on it and each group will use one computer. They will be writing them on a Word document and will have to include some pictures. The teacher will be helping with language use, answering questions, making suggestions and, once more, asking them to use online dictionaries.

Session 4: Multicultural London

- Speaking, listening and interaction.
- Vocabulary related to multiculturalism, people’s appearance, behaviours and customs, household, habits, customs and parts and features of a city and its districts.
- Pronunciation differences between British and Indian people.
- Materials: slide projector, loudspeakers, pictures, dvd film, worksheet with questions.

This session will be devoted to the apprehension of multiculturalism as a means of fighting some preconceptions on British people. It will not be included in the class magazine as such, but will help them acquire some views and mental development on the idea of preconceptions and multicultural education which, in some way, will influence their visit and their prejudgment on British people beforehand and will be reflected on their aftermath activities and reflections.

**Activity 1:** Warm up. Introducing multiculturalism in London. Whole-class. (15’)

The teacher will introduce the lesson by projecting some pictures which show different ethnical streets in London and people of different nationalities living there. She will ask them to describe the pictures according to what they see, what nationalities they can identify or where they think that they are located. These are the pictures that the teacher will show:
Figure 8: Retrieved from http://singletrackworld.com/forum/topic/12-term-family-visit-to-london-what-to-do (Consulted on 26/05/2015)

Figure 9: Retrieved from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2045447/Headteacher-David-Levin-says-London-divided-ethnic-ghettos.html (Consulted on 26/5/2015)
The questions that the teacher will ask will be:

- What can you see in these pictures?
- What nationalities can you identify?
- Where do you think these people are?
- Where do you think these streets are located?

The teacher will let them know that those pictures were taken in London and how multicultural it is. Then, she will ask them on their thoughts on multiculturalism and how multicultural their city is, as well as the nationalities that can be found and how they are treated. The questions she will ask will be:
Activity 2: Bend It like Beckham. Questions, clips and discussion. Whole-class. (40’)

Once they have discussed everything, the teacher will provide some worksheets with questions on some clips that they are going to watch from a British film, *Bend It like Beckham*, which takes place in London and shows the contrast between a white British family and a British family of Indian ethnicity. She will ask if anyone has ever watched it. If anyone has, she will ask them to provide a summary of the film, if not, she will give it herself, as they will only be watching some small clips.

She will tell them that they will be paying attention to customs and cultural/ethnic differences. They will go through the different questions to which they should answer together so as to make sure everyone understands them.

The questions which they will be answering will be the following ones:

**MULTICULTURAL LONDON: BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM**

- Do you think that multiculturalism is good? Why?
- Is your city multicultural?
- How many nationalities coexist in your city? How are this people treated?

- Pay attention to the clips you are going to watch and think about the following questions:
  1. What are the ethnicities of the characters in the film?
  2. Are there any differences between both families regarding their clothes, customs and religion?
  3. What differences can you find between Jess and Jules? What about their families?
  4. Do you think that younger Indian generations think and behave differently from older generations? How?
  5. Do you think that people from other ethnicities are well integrated? How are the relationships among the different ethnicities in the film?
These are some captions of the film which they will be watching:

![Figure 13](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2247786/Bend-It-Like-Beckham-musical-Get-ready-Beckham-musical-innit.html) (Consulted on 26/5/2015)

![Figure 14](http://my-bollywood.bloog.pl/id,2561628,title,Bend-It-Like-Beckham-2002,index.html?smoybbttaid=614eec) (Consulted on 26/5/2015)

![Figure 15](http://the-toast.net/2014/01/08/bend-like-beckham-celebration/) (Consulted on 26/5/2015)
After they have watched some clips of the film which are essential for the purpose of the lesson, they will answer the questions together. The teacher will ask different students so much of the class participates.

Attention to diversity: these students will be handed in the transcriptions of the film clips that are to be watched in class so they will be able to follow the dialogues more easily.

Homework: This will be the last session before they go to England. Before they leave, the teacher gives them a list of questions with aspects to which they should pay attention during their stay in London and which they will discuss when they are back. In order to do this, they will use a notebook in which they will write their observations during their stay abroad.
Session 5: The London experience.

- Speaking, writing and interaction.
- Vocabulary related to household, habits and customs, school, stereotypes, interculturalism, behaviours and customs.
- Materials: Powerpoint presentation, computers, Internet connection, worksheet, virtual platform, slide projector, blackboard.

**Activity 1: Warm up. British stereotypes. Whole class. (5’)**

This is the first session that students will have after having returned from their exchange in London. In order to start this lesson, the teacher will ask them whether they know what a stereotype is and whether they had any stereotypes on British people before leaving for their trip. She then projects on the projector a series of stereotypes on British people and asks students to supply her with more of them if they can think of any others, which she writes on the board.
According to your personal experience, are these stereotypes true or false?

1. English people are snobs.
2. All English people love the Queen.
3. The English love to queue.
4. English food is bad.
5. The English weather is awful. It rains all the time.
6. English people are very polite.
7. English people drink tea all the time.
8. All English people are pale and blonde.

These are the stereotypes which the teacher will project:

**Activity 2: Stereotypes compared to the London experience.** Pair work and whole class. (10’)

After this, the teacher will ask students to work on pairs and discuss these statements, whether they were true for them as regards their experience and, if they do not find them to be true, explain why. She will make clear from the very beginning, though, that there is no absolute wrong or right conception, but that different opinions are to be accepted. After this, she will ask each pair of students to comment on one or two of the stereotypes. In this way, she will try to make students aware of the fact that everyone is different and that stereotypes are not the rule. She will also ask them whether they think differently about British people and customs after this trip.

**Activity 3: Working on a Pechakucha.** Group work. (20’)

Right after this, the teacher will divide the class in six groups of five people and will ask them to work on a Pechakucha. She will first remind students what a Pechakucha is and how to create it using a Powerpoint presentation, although they are already familiar with it. She will give them the different aspects to include in their Pechakucha, which they will first have to discuss with the rest of the group: household, timetables, food habits, people’s behaviours and character, interaction patterns, families, the school in London, cultural differences and problems encountered which are related to communication or culture and to compare them to their home country.
They will have to do it in ten slides with an approximate duration of 30/35 seconds each. They can use both pictures from the Internet as well as personal pictures.

**Activity 4: Exposing the Pechakucha. Group work. (20’)**

Once they have all done their Pechakucha, each group will expose it. All the members will have to speak.

**Homework:** After they have all made their presentation, the teacher will direct them to the page of the class, where she has created a chart in which all groups will have to write. This chart is divided into different sections and it is called “Different Customs and Realities in London”. It includes the sections: Household, Timetables, Customs and Habits, Behaviours, Interaction, School life. Each student will have to collaborate by writing one or two comments on each section. This section will be included in the magazine.

**Session 6: Further reflections. End of the London experience.**

- Writing.

This last session will take place on the same day as the 5th session, and has been chosen to be done in the same day because I think it appropriate for a logical, smooth consecution of what has been dealt in the previous lesson, that is, customs and habits observed as opposed to stereotypes and preconceptions, and what is going to be done in this lesson.

**Activity 1: Writing a composition. Individual work. (30’)**

After having devoted some time to their experience in London, the teacher will ask students to work individually on their computers and write a composition in which they reflect on their experience in the foreign country, what they learnt from it, how they felt about cultural differences and how they reacted to this change of context and people. They will have to write their compositions in a Word document. The teacher will walk around helping them with their English as well as encouraging them to use online dictionaries.

They will upload their compositions to the class’ virtual platform devoted to compositions so that everyone can read them later and the teacher can have them to correct them later.
Attention to diversity: The number of minimum and maximum words required in the compositions will be reduced for students of curricular diversification. Hence, the number of words for their composition will be 70-100 (120-150 for the average student).

Activity 2: Finishing the e-magazine. Whole class. (25’)

After this, they will, together with the teacher, will put everything together and turn all the written word documents into PDF documents. Using Yumpu Magazine Creator, they will turn the PDF documents into a magazine, which will be uploaded to the class webpage and also the school’s webpage for everyone to see their work.

Yumpu Magazine Creator can be found in: https://www.yumpu.com/es

5. Conclusion

Before starting this project, my two main purposes had to do with proving the importance and usefulness of the cultural and intercultural element in language learning contexts, which has been so greatly discussed yet very disregarded during the last decades of language teaching, together with the use of project work as one of the most profitable learning approaches. My incentive was due to the fact that, from my personal experience both as a student and as well as a teacher during my teaching training period, I have always observed that these are two elements which teachers tend to neglect by thinking them not important for the education of students, while I consider them just as important as other elements of the curriculum, if not more. Hence, my intention was to prove the importance of both culture and Project-work in the Foreign Language classroom as tools for globalization, improvement and social interaction.

By working on these two topics, and especially by designing my own didactic unit based on my theoretical justification, I have found that, as opposite to teaching grammar, the teaching of cultural and intercultural elements is a difficult one that demands great thought and planning on the part of the teacher. The main challenge arose due to my intention to help students learn about culture not only as factual, meaningless information, but also with the purpose of bridging the student’s mental frame to the ways of life and the behaviour and thoughts of native speakers belonging to other communities as a means to foster intercultural competence and awareness. I think that teaching concepts or ideas that go beyond language itself can be quite challenging, as it has to do with what there is in our students’ minds and how we can appropriately lead them to think by themselves and develop their own ideas, which is something especially important in intercultural competence.
As if this was not difficult enough, inserting culture into Project-work in one single didactic unit proved itself the most difficult task when designing my didactic project, as there was always something missing from any of these two elements when I tried to put both together within the same activity. However, I believe that, by means of this didactic project, I have been able to prove not only that it is possible to work with these two elements, but also that students may probably find this teaching-learning approach much more appealing and interesting than some other traditional approaches. Of course, I am fully aware of the difficulty of putting this into practice due to institutional demands and the limited amount of time available in high schools. However, I believe that it is possible to, at least partially, put these elements into practice if organized in an appropriate way.

Through the use of culture and Project-work, I have intended to show that, beyond the linguistic aspects of language learning, there are other elements which need to be taught not only as a means to motivate students, but also to make them aware of the world around them and of the fact that there is a culture and people behind the language that they are studying. In addition, the use of Project-work has contributed to proving that students need to learn to work in collaboration, discover instead of memorizing and use different tasks and activities which link them to the real world by means of authentic materials with real-life purposes that go beyond the textbook and which equally contribute to the practice and improvement of their linguistic competence by means of an approach which allows the interaction of the different linguistic components of language. Overall, this didactic unit aims at helping students become intercultural citizens and be competent and capable human beings in a multicultural and changing world.
6. Bibliography


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