Universidad de Córdoba

Social Media and Intercultural Learning: An approach to EFL for Secondary Students

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(perfil profesional)

Trabajo Fin de Máster
2019-2020

idep
Instituto de Estudios
de Postgrado

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization, the already increasing exchanges of information and people have been bolstered by digitalization, producing a profound impact on how people communicate and relate with each other. Consequently, mobility and interconnectedness have resulted in the blossoming of global cultural diversity, and it must be acknowledged that "this "cultural turn" entails the recognition of culture, and perhaps more accurately, cultures in the plural, as constitutive of the human condition" (Tiryakian, 2003, p. 33). As a matter of fact, the multicultural nature of our societies demands greater cooperation to consolidate peaceful coexistence and respect for cultural otherness, preventing discrimination and social exclusion. It is thus unacceptable for today's democratic societies to tolerate attitudes contrary to human rights, such as racism and xenophobia towards immigrants and other minority groups. Such behaviors pose a threat to social harmony and equity, and therefore a paradigm shift is required to avoid prejudices and stigma towards minority groups.

Bearing this, education must be regarded as a powerful tool to help students experience both academic and personal growth, hence its remit must be to address the challenges brought about by globalization and this digital era, educating tolerant individuals. In this sense, the rapid advances in technology and a greater connectivity provide the perfect scenario for schools to promote intercultural awareness, a first step on the way to become a global citizen willing to bridge gaps among cultures. On this basis, education must encourage students to appreciate other cultures, and thus the teaching "about the double nature of multiculturalism (diversity and inclusion) needs to be articulated so that all members of the society can come to understand and appreciate this complex vision" (Berry and Ward, 2016, p. 445). Furthermore, English status as global language is unprecedented and cannot be disregarded.

From this perspective, learning English as a foreign language is a gateway to many opportunities nowadays, among which we may highlight the possibility to experience other cultures and broaden your horizons. Consequently, the foreign language classroom becomes a suitable environment to foster understanding among communities, given that English as a foreign language is a subject that can deal with any topic. In the light of the foregoing, the significance of teaching English through an intercultural approach lies in the fact that it enables students to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity, moving beyond stereotypes. This will prepare students to deal with conflict in our multicultural societies, ultimately building more cohesive societies. Additionally, education must take full advantage from technological advances by introducing learners to online communication and collaboration, thereby addressing the digital revolution and its impact on our day-to-day life. To this effect, we suggest a didactic proposal to develop cultural learning through the use of social media, aiming at helping students develop

respect towards diverse cultural groups in the English language classroom. This is intended to make learners reflect on the current situation concerning immigrants and other groups that suffer rejection, aiming at giving them visibility and acknowledging the cultural diversity and social progress they bring. For this reason, the suggested lesson plan covers the issue of racism and xenophobia, focusing on the need to unite in the fight against discrimination and uphold human rights.

Accordingly, the aim of this dissertation is to assess the current globalized era regarding culture and communication technologies, and to elaborate a didactic proposal to develop students' intercultural competence and respect towards diversity. In doing so, the general and specific objectives of this work are the following:

General objectives:

1. To analyze the implications of using social media to develop intercultural learning.

2. To propose a lesson plan using social media and an intercultural approach to develop students' intercultural competence.

Specific objective:

1. To provide students with a self-assessment tool to measure and improve their attitudes towards human rights.

The theoretical part of this thesis will review the existing literature on intercultural communication. The first chapter will analyze how the process of globalization has shaped our societies, creating multicultural spaces that demand social cohesion and empathy towards others. The second chapter will focus on the relationship between culture and language, stressing the role of intercultural citizenship education to build democratic societies. The third chapter will provide insight about digital communication and its implications on individuals' identity, behavioral patterns and relationship within a global community.

In chapter four, we will present the research design and methodology, which aims at studying the participants' attitudes towards cultural learning using this specific strategy. By using a mixed methods approach, this section suggests using a self-report questionnaire to assess students' attitudes concerning the activities presented in the practical section. Afterwards, chapter five will present in detail a lesson plan conforming intercultural standards and using social media, aiming at developing students' tolerance and respect towards diverse cultural groups. Finally, we will close this thesis with its conclusions, followed by the main limitations of the study and possible lines for future research.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter One: The challenges of Globalization

We are living a unique moment of increasing mobility and unprecedent interconnectivity due to the ongoing process known as globalization. This growing situation of interdependence among societies is defined by Giddens as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64, as cited by Alfehaid, 2014, p. 104). Blommaert also outlined this current context as "driven by technological innovations mainly in the field of media and information and communication technology, and resulting in new patterns of global activity, community organization and culture" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 13, as mentioned by Kramsch, 2014, p. 296). In this light, globalization encourages and nurtures the exchange of goods, people and information, resulting in what Kramsch explains as "a greater tension between what is taught in the classroom and what the students will need in the real world once they have left the classroom" (2014, p. 296). Considering the many economic, political, migratory, and academic challenges of globalization, it is of key importance to review the causes and effects of this era of global interaction.

Globalization did not occur by happenstance and overnight. Indeed, Kramsch identifies that the root causes of this current situation emerged over the first half of the past century, since along with "the invention of the internet in the 1970s and the unraveling of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s, [English markets] deregulation brought an unprecedent flow of capital" (Kramsch, 2014, p. 297). Block also reflects on the birth of this new era by doubting "whether globalization is the continued spread of capitalism, albeit by more sophisticated and technologically advanced means, or if it is indeed something the likes of which humanity has never experienced" (Block, 2008, p. 32). In view of the foregoing, it can be concluded that globalization is affecting the manner we communicate and relate with each other, and this also has direct implications in language instruction since foreign language education, as Alfehaid contemplates, "expands communications, interactions and integration of people either in the local or global contexts" (Alfehaid, 2014, p. 107). On this premise, foreign language teaching must be aimed at dealing with the consequences of this technological age that will be further explained below, with the purpose of preparing learners to cope appropriately with our rapidly changing societies.

The effects that globalization has had in our societies have given rise to both positive and negative consequences, which must be outlined in order to evaluate the impact of this global process. To begin with the positive effects, Pennycook distinguishes that English Language Teaching (ELT) in this era is "considered to be a kind of service industry" (Pennycook, 1994, quoted by Alfehaid, 2014, p. 106), which means that there is an increasing demand for learning English as a result of

its many applications in the present-day world. This is because, as it will be later explained in further detail, English has become the lingua franca par excellence and thus this "implies that there are many career opportunities for English language teachers" (Alfehaid, 2014, p. 106).

Another benefit outlined by this author refers to the creation and distribution of English language materials, which is increased thanks to "the application of computer networks in ELT that can help learners access multimedia materials" (Alfehaid, 2014, p. 106). This can be explained due to the fact that globalization has given place to a world without borders, which has given rise to a dynamic of constant mobility and trading. Crystal further develops this idea by stating that "there has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places" (Crystal, 2003, p. 14). As a result of these advantages, globalization and ELT "supports and strengthens communication between millions who have completely different cultures" (Alfehaid, 2014, p. 107), allowing people from different socio-cultural backgrounds to communicate and participate in the international community.

Notwithstanding the beneficial effects, Pennycook highlights the problem of ethnocentrism by stating that "the export of applied linguistic theory and Western-trained language teachers constantly promotes inappropriate teaching approaches to diverse settings" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 159), since Western teaching practices may entail the spread of cultural values and habits that are specific of a particular culture and thus unsuitable to certain contexts. Similarly, Auerbach supports this position by claiming that "commonly accepted everyday classroom practices, far from being neutral and natural, have ideological origins and consequences for relations of power both inside and outside the classroom" (Auerbach, 1993, p. 29, mentioned by Pennycook, 1994, p. 168). Following the ideas of Byram and Wagner (2018), Raigón-Rodríguez and Larrea-Espinar (2019) further reflect on how ELT coursebooks and materials have been affected by globalization, resulting in the spread of Western-style education. Therefore, they conclude that as "textbooks remain the backbone of ELT, teaching culture is still commonly misinterpreted as passing on cultural information about a country (Raigón-Rodríguez and Larrea-Espinar 2019, p. 135).

In addition to the abovementioned, Alfehaid alludes to the fact that globalization has changed the manner languages are learnt, since books are being replaced by smartphones and laptops' screens, which imply that "different psycholinguistic processes may be required to decode information from a screen rather than from a page, especially when this is done at the click of a mouse" (Alfehaid, 2014, p. 108). Furthermore, Warschauer and Kern reflect on how this new era has brought advances to language teaching but also dependence on technology and its availability, which they state as "if language teaching has become more exciting, it has also become considerably more complex" (2000, p. 1, quoted by Alfehaid, 2014, p. 108). Given that English

is the most language used online, this has supposed a paradigm shift for foreign language education, since "whereas previously educators considered how to use information technology in order to teach language, it is now essential also to consider how to teach language so that learners can make effective use of information technology" (Warschauer and Kern, 2000, p. 172). Additionally, this statement is reinforced by the fact that digital technologies require teachers to be digitally literate.

Bearing all this in mind, this first chapter will explore the effects brought by cultural confluence in our societies. Afterwards, attention will be given to the position of English as a lingua franca and the use of English as a foreign language (EFL) to teach culture. Lastly, we will review how this technological era has result in the need to be linguistically competent in more than a language in order to successfully communicate in analogue and digital media.

1.1 Multiculturalism and integration for harmonious societies

The most significant and powerful effect of globalization is the interaction of cultures and social groups due to higher population mobility, whether for business, leisure or educational purposes. The global nature of this situation has received the name of multiculturalism, a term defined by Tiryakian (2003) as it follows:

> A demographic condition referring to a society (which may or may not be a nation-state but may also include an empire) having two or more ethnic groups, each having cultural traits that may have some overlap with the other group(s), yet is distinctive enough to form a different cultural identity and community. (Tiryakian, 2003, p. 23).

After the liberalization and the opening-up of economies at an international level, modern societies were challenged by the rapid exchanges and interactions among cultures. In fact, Tiryakian reflects that this was "the first phase of liberal democracy. How states incorporated or did not incorporate various minorities in the institutional fabric of society was a major determinant and reflector of national identity" (Tiryakian, 2003, p. 21). This meant that societies were not homogeneous anymore, but instead cultural and economic globalization resulted in a flow of migrants whether out of or into the countries, exposing the ethics and values of societies.

Modern states were even more challenged as Tiryakian comments, due to the arrival of "various cultural minorities (racial, ethnic, sexual, even regional as in the case of 'ethno-national' communities predominantly living in a homeland territory within the nation-state) challenging the institutionalized cultural arrangements of modern societies" (Tiryakian, 2014, p. 22). Multicultural environments must be promoted and preserved by developing respect and positive

regard for the contribution that migrants bring to societies, which Rex affirms by referring to Parekh's words and stating that "the multicultural nature of such a society should be welcomed and celebrated. Societies with single unitary cultures are no longer likely in the modern world as a result of migration" (Parekh, 2010, quoted by Rex, 2003, p. 4).

Multiculturalism thus entails the coexistence of diverse groups, which is a common trait in most of today's societies. In this line, Berry, Kalin and Taylor (1977, p. 1, as cited by Berry and Ward, 2016, p. 441) define this cultural diversity in terms of three components: 1. Multiculturalism as a demographic fact since societies are now culturally diverse; 2. Multiculturalism as an ideology considering that individuals and groups hold general views about their acceptance or rejection of this diversity; 3. Multiculturalism as policies, because some governments articulate public policies and develop programs with respect to the acceptability and promotion of diversity.

These traits involve that the term multiculturalism must be understood as an event that requires a particular society to develop awareness and tolerance towards the diverse groups, and it also highlights the importance of ensuring their rights and integration through policy-making efforts. This can be better understood when considering the Rex's view, who elaborates on this subject by stating that albeit multiculturalism may be regarded as a positive feature of our societies, but "where there were violent ethnic conflicts within nations and cities (such conflicts were almost universal), multiculturalism was seen in a very much more negative light" (Rex, 2003, p. 4). For this reason, it is necessary to promote inclusion, rather than assimilation, in multicultural societies and to bridge the gaps between groups in order to remove cultural barriers. This is because the pacific coexistence of cultures depends on equal opportunities and social participation, since as Berry and Ward highlight, it is not about diversity, but "rather it is more about how diversity and equitable inclusion are managed or accommodated" (2016, p. 444).

In relation to foreign language education, multicultural societies demand learners to be "prepared for entering a wider world governed by norms of a different kind. These norms involve individualism and competition even though these may be contained within some conception of common citizenship" (Rex, 2003, p. 8). For that matter, education must be aimed at enhancing students' awareness of diversity, making them value the richness of cultures and ultimately fostering their communicative skills and willingness to encourage dialogue among cultures. Berry concludes that integration "can only be achieved in multicultural societies characterized by mutual accommodation, positive perceptions of diversity and policies to support cultural maintenance and equitable participation" (Berry, 2005, quoted by Berry and Ward, 2016, p. 452).

In this sense, intercultural competence plays a key role in allowing people to see beyond their own perspective and growing a profound respect for otherness, which will be explained in further detail in chapter number two.

1.2 English as a lingua franca and EFL to teach culture

Concomitantly with globalization, English language strengthened its role as lingua franca becoming the sole language of internet and international business. This is a unique moment as there has never been a language with such relevance on a global basis, which Crystal indicates by remarking that "there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. There are therefore no precedents to help us see what happens to a language when it achieves genuine world status" (Crystal, 2003, p. 189). The fact that societies have become multicultural and the increasing interconnectivity has brought about the necessity to communicate with people from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and this is where a common language becomes crucial. As Crystal reflects, in multicultural societies "the problem has been solved by finding a language to act as a lingua franca or 'common language'" (2003, p. 11) in order to favor trade and communication among linguistically diverse people.

Following this line, Alfarhan notes that English language has broaden its scope, gaining international prestige and importance since "with the world's globalization majorly in the economic sector, English has been seen to play a great role in facilitating communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds" (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 1). Furthermore, the birth of Internet favored communications and the sharing and exchange of information all over the world, English being the most widely spoken languages on the net. In this context, learning English exceeds trading and communicating, as it serves as a powerful tool to access knowledge. For that reason, being fluent in a global language is of key importance nowadays since, as Block and Cameron conclude, "distance is not an issue for these non-local networks, but language remains an issue of some practical importance: global communication requires not only a shared channel (like the Internet or video conferencing) but also a shared linguistic code" (Block and Cameron, 2002, p. 1).

In addition to trade and communication, being proficient in the current global language also entails more opportunities in employment since learning English ensures access to a vast amount of information and services that allow people to take an active role in current societies. For that matter, Alfarhan maintains that in this technological age, "English still remains the dominant language of communication for many people. Therefore, attaining proficiency in English gives someone the perfect opportunity to understand the modern society. English is depicted as a form of cultural capital" (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 2). Having considered the opportunities that English provides nowadays, the question that arises is: How and why did English became the global language?

The reason may lie in power. Crystal argues that "a language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people" (2003, p. 9). Accordingly, it can easily be realized that the English language and English-speaking countries such as UK and the US exert a world influence regarding cuisine, business, politics and popular culture. In this line, Alfarhan asserts that this international power dates back to colonial times and "the spread and development of English language can be related to the colonization of the world; since Britain had many colonies, it is considered as the main party that participated in the spread of English" (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 4).

Crystal additionally emphasizes that "it was considered self-evident that the civilizing influence of Britain was a desirable goal, anywhere in the world, and that the English language was an essential means of achieving this end" (2003, p. 78). For this reason, the political and economic power of Britain at that time gave prestige to the English language, thus becoming the language of power. This status could have been later reinforced because "most of the innovations of the Industrial Revolution were of British origin" (Crystal, 2003, p. 80) as well as the new means of transportation and communication that contributed to the spread of English. Besides that, the birth of ICT favored the widespread use of English in the media, the American influence reaching every corner of the world in the last two centuries and, "as a result, when new technologies brought new linguistic opportunities, English emerged as a first rank language in industries which affected all aspects of society – the press, advertising, broadcasting…" (Crystal, 2003, p. 120).

Thus, English became the language of power and more recently the language of knowledge, asserting its status as global language. But, why English instead of Chinese, Spanish or Russian? Crystal concludes that this is all because "the English language has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time" (2003, p. 78). The implications of this fact, however, go far beyond issues of communication. Since learning a language entails assuming its cultural traits, the relentless advance of the English language may have serious consequences for other groups and its respective languages and identities, especially for minority groups.

Joseph considers that identities are directly involved in how the English language is regarded, and he claims that identity "is at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used" (Joseph, 2004, p. 224, as quoted by Jenkins, 2007, p. 190). For that matter, the fact that there exists a standard language with such power has come to be a threat for other varieties and accents, since the tendency to use and impose English in all spheres may result in the detriment of other languages, their cultures and their people's identities. This notion is posed by Alfarhan, who advocates that "the effects of this globalization have affected the society in various ways; loss of cultural identity is one of the major effects that are associated

with the globalization of English" (Alfarhan, 2016, p. 1). Thereupon, it is crucial to value non-native English speakers and their original cultures, and to give them the same opportunities as native speakers. As a matter of fact, Franse stresses on the status of English that "when it comes to its speakers (and this is unique to the English language), non-native speakers (NNSs), those who learn English as a second or foreign language, outnumber native speakers (NSs)" (Franse, 2012, p. 3). Together with the aforementioned, Wallace additionally determines that although the future of English as a global language is certain and there are other languages widely spoke, "only English is used transnationally with a majority of its users now those for whom it is a second language" (Wallace, 2002, p. 101). Therefore, all English speakers, whether native or non-native must be given the same possibilities to gain access to our societies' services and goods.

As for EFL teaching, the use of the English language, and more specifically, RP English (UK) and Standard American English leads to a devaluation of other English variations (Indian English, Ugandan English, Canadian English) and accents (Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Southern American). In this connection, Franse states that English as a lingua franca (ELF) must be owned and belong to "all who speak it and is thus the exclusive property of no one particular group. This means that ELF is neutral and that all speakers can appropriate it to claim their identity in English" (Franse, 2012, p. 5). Hence, for the purpose of ensuring an adequate use of the English language, foreign language education must aim at teaching students to value accents and linguistic variations. In doing so, foreign language education must seek to reflect the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity, developing awareness and tolerance rather than seeking an unrealistic native-like proficiency.

1.3 Pluriliteracies and the digital era

The rapid creation and exchange of information on the net together with the ease of access is broadening the dimensions of learning and models of teaching. This digital revolution has also resulted in a generational change, where people grow up in environments exposed to information and communication technologies. In this regard, the complexity of the new circumstances has led to the necessity of adopting a suitable educational model to equip students with the skills needed throughout their lives. On this account, Meyer, Halbach and Coyle consider that "knowledge is not enough to make progress in a subject or discipline. Learners also need to be taught the subject specific strategies to solve the increasingly complex tasks" (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 2). In order to effectively respond to the challenges of this globalized digital era, Lee, Ardeshiri and Cummins consider that students "need to acquire multiple sets of skills to negotiate the diverse linguistic and cultural differences in their globalized or multicultural communication environment" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 5).

To that end, foreign language education needs an integrated approach to teach more than one literacy, defined by the UNESCO as an ability to "identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts", involving "a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 14). This is what Meyer, Halbach and Coyle propose in their pluriliteracies approach, which focuses on "helping learners become literate in content subjects or topics and to empower them to successfully and appropriately communicate that knowledge across cultures and languages" and thus acknowledges that learning "is not about reciting facts but about learners deepening their conceptual understanding which may eventually lead to the development of transferable skills and to new ways of thinking" (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 2).

The aim of this model is to help students become literate in more than one language, which will allow them to interact with people from different cultures and to play an active role in multicultural societies since "globalization have made it almost impossible to communicate solely in the native language any longer" (Hallet, 2018, p. 15). Likewise, the Council of Europe defends that a pluriliteracies approach fosters deep learning by focusing on language, since "through deeper learning (which often involves shared learning and interactions with others in a learning community), learners develop expertise in a particular subject and master its unique ways of creating and sharing knowledge" (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 2).

In this same vein Lee, Ardeshiri and Cummins (2016) additionally suggest a multiliteracies approach, addressing English language literacy, cultural literacy and media literacy to teach EFL, which conforms a holistic method that addresses the current implications of globalization for language and culture in digital and multimedia contexts. This approach was born with the idea of providing EFL students with opportunities to engage in interactive and participatory environments, as by accessing Internet "EFL students have increasing access to diverse authentic English media products online (e.g., YouTube videos, BBC news, open educational resources) that can be used for both language learning and entertainment" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 2).

Considering this, globalization and new media demand foreign language education to provide learners with both linguistic and cultural competences that could be achieved by exposure to authentic content through digital media. This alternative to EFL education considers the role of cultural literacy in current diverse societies, which they define as "the ability to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 7). When considering this approach, the English as a foreign language classroom becomes inclusive, as it is not only important to value the large amount of English varieties and accents, but our own students' culture as well: "we should allow

our students' own culture to permeate the classroom dialogues as well as facilitate students' critical cultural awareness of diverse cultures in this global world" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 8).

In addition to that, the Internet is a place where cultures and languages flow, and therefore it is a limitless and constantly growing source of valuable information for foreign language students. As a matter of fact, Buckingham also indicates that a media literacy must be understood as "a form of critical literacy. It involves analysis, evaluation and critical reflection. It entails the acquisition of 'meta-language'' – that is, a means of describing the forms and structures of different modes of communication" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 3). This author further concludes that media literacy is a set of skills that students nowadays require for different social situations because "the media are an integral part of the texture of children's daily lives, and that they are embedded within their social relationships" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 4).

Bearing in mind the above reflections, foreign language education could successfully address the challenges of globalization and the digital age by developing students' literacy in terms of language, culture and media competences. Nonetheless, the multicultural nature of our societies also requires an education in human and democratic values, enhancing learners' tolerance and respect for diversity. This is key to successfully communicate across borders and channels, and thus foreign language education should aim at developing students' intercultural awareness and intercultural competence, which will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Culture and Intercultural Communication

Multiculturality and interconnectedness are the basic principles underpinning our current pluralist societies. The essence of globalization relies on the ease of international communications provided by the Internet and other social media, and better travel opportunities. This has led to an increasing borderless world, although there are still barriers when it comes to information exchanges between culturally diverse groups. On this basis, foreign language education must raise students' awareness on how language and culture are closely interrelated and develop their linguistic and intercultural skills for the purpose of facilitating communication among people with different cultural backgrounds.

This notion is explained by Byram and Wagner, who state that the importance and "contribution of language teaching to the development of the individual and society provide all the justification one may need to envisage language teaching as an integral part of the curriculum" (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p. 147). Considering the role of EFL teaching, Sybing highlights the need for teaching awareness towards cultural diversity in order to enhance students' sense of tolerance and respect in current multicultural environments. In doing so, he states that "teaching culture in connection with language is a necessity; what is required with teaching the lingua franca is a greater awareness and sensitivity for cultural differences so that respect for all cultures is achieved" (Sybing, 2011, p. 269).

In this context, the aim must be not only to develop students' proficiency but also to improve their ability to analyse language in different socio-cultural contexts in order to properly understand and be understood. This is claimed by Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, who state that it "has been widely recognised in the language teaching profession that learners need not just knowledge and skills in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 7). Likewise, Corbett maintains that teaching culture through foreign language education provides students with the necessary skills to understand and respect the diversity of our societies, since "an intercultural approach trains learners to be 'diplomats', able to view different cultures from a perspective of informed understanding" (Corbett, 2003, p. 2).

Thus, the increasing interactions either via face-to-face or via social media require citizens to develop empathy and understanding, especially when it comes to using several languages for specific purposes. Regarding this, Byram emphasizes that "neither real-time experience of others, nor increased exposure to information, necessarily lead to empathy and understanding" (Byram, 2008, p. 17), and thus education must prepare students for coping with different situations and difficulties in intercultural exchanges. In this respect, Corbet advocates for changes in thinking and practice in education, valuing the inclusion of all cultures and realizing the importance of

integration in this interdependent world, which translates into "redefining the aims of language education to acknowledge 'intercultural communicative competence' rather than 'native-speaker' proficiency as the ultimate goal" (Corbett, 2003, p. 30). This idea implies an education based on improving relations among cultures rather than the unrealistic goal of developing a native proficiency, and thus entails respect for cultures, languages and identities, essential to peaceful cohabitation. Indeed, Kramsch (1998a) reflects on how the native speaker does not exist given the multiculturalism that characterize our societies, resulting in the impossibility of finding a monolingual/monocultural 'native' speaker of a language. The author thus affirms that "it could be that this monolingual speaker, depicted in a monolingual community, exists as a product of imagination, but it has never conformed to reality" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 33).

Accordingly, the shift in our societies and how we communicate means that we must be prepared to share, exchange and learn information through different means, and this cannot be achieved without proper training in intercultural education. This means, as Sybing (2011) concludes, that "the paradigm in foreign language education must therefore evolve from one of treating any foreign language culture as separate from the lives of language learners into one that recognizes that multiple cultures are already present in the local contexts that learners occupy" (Sybing, 2011, p. 468). Therefore, a feasible alternative to teach EFL is to adopt an approach to teach students culture and intercultural communication, as English as a subject can cover a wide range of topics such as intercultural communication and intercultural citizenship. To this effect, this chapter will analyze the components of culture, the intercultural dimension of foreign language learning and the need for intercultural citizenship to develop democratic individuals and societies.

2.1 What is culture? Cultural components and language

Whilst culture has always been an option in the teaching curriculum, foreign language education must consider the close relationship between language and culture and teach them as complementary and mutually reinforcing for the learning process. This is in line with Brown's argument that "a language is part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language: the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (Brown, 2007, p. 171). On this premise, foreign language education must aim at developing learners' understanding of the value of culture to be fully competent in an additional language such as English. This is because only by knowing the effects of culture on how people express and understand the world, will learners be able to fully grasp and convey meaning in intercultural exchanges.

In this regard, defining the concept of culture and its implications is key to understand its influence on language and identity. Culture is defined by Brown as "a way of life. It is the context within

which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It is the 'glue' that binds a group of people together" (2007, p. 169). This view of culture as an essential ingredient for societies and as a form of interpreting the world around us is in accordance with Loveday's definition, who views it as "the implicit norms and conventions of a society, its methods of 'going about doing things', its historically transmitted but also adaptive and creative ethos, its symbols and its organisation of experience" (Loveday, 1981, p. 34; as referenced by Corbett, 2003, p. 20).

Therefore, culture must be regarded not only as a manifestation of a particular group's behaviors and customs, but rather as a heritable trait that ensures the continuation of a community and its people's identity since "our cultural identity is derived from our sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group" (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 3; as mentioned by Samovar et al., 2012, p. 10). Additionally, Matsumoto (2000, p. 24) expands this idea by defining culture as:

> A dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviors, shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time. (Matsumoto, 2000, p. 24, as quoted by Brown, 2007, p. 180)

For that matter, culture assumes a dynamic role enhanced by today's digital and ever-changing societies, and Liddicoat and Scarino defend that culture must be understood in terms of "facts, artifacts, information and social practices, as well as an understanding of culture as the lens through which people mutually interpret and communicate meaning" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 46; as quoted by Byram and Wagner, 2018, p. 146). In this sense, it must be considered the fact that our societies are rapidly changing, especially as a result of the evolving nature of new communication technologies, and so do culture and language. Along these lines, Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2012, p. 10) distinguish three components that define culture and that are relevant to understand intercultural identities.

First, culture is *learnt*, since we learn it through interactions, observations, and imitation, the proper ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are communicated to us. Second, culture is *never static*. Within a culture, new ideas, inventions, and exposure to other cultures create change. Finally, culture is *transmitted intergenerationally*, as you learn your culture from family members, teachers, peers, books, personal observations, or a television host. This view suggests that culture, as language, allows the survival of a group and its identity by transmitting and sharing the values and beliefs, as well as by providing members with a unique manner of understanding and experience life. Besides that, these authors point out that culture is also symbolic, because words, gestures and other images do not express meaning by themselves, rather it is "our symbol-

making ability [that] facilitates learning and enables transmission of meaning from one person to another, group to group, and generation to generation" (Samovar et al., 2012, p. 10).

As for their perspective, it is of particular relevance with regards to the merging social media platforms, given that cultural information in the Internet is coded in a wide variety of formats such as images, videos, gifs, posts or memes. Having said that, the role of culture in dialogues among people, especially from different backgrounds, lies on the fact that individuals must encode and decode information with specific purposes. In doing so, Tang explains that "individuals combine symbols into messages that they encode to send to others. Encoding involves putting thoughts, feelings, emotions, and/or attitudes into forms recognizable by others (e.g., the spoken word)" (2006, p. 88). As a result, communication is strongly influenced by culture since the processes of encoding and decoding require speakers to convert symbols into linguistic forms in order to communicate with others. Following this, individuals must transform their cultural beliefs and values into language.

With respect to foreign language education, cultural knowledge serves students to grasp the full sense behind utterances by understanding the contexts in which communication occurs. Therefore, understanding the influence of multiple contexts on culture, and thus on language, allows students to adequately use language in different situations. This concept that Tang has identified as *behavioural culture* emerged since culture "is found to be an integral part of human communications whose meanings often do not lie in the linguistic items but in the social and cultural context as well as in the physical evidence provided by proxemics, kinetics, and other paralinguistic modalities" (Tang, 2006, p. 87).

On account of the above, EFL teaching must assume an approach that takes into account cultural learning in order to teach learners effective communication skills, and to properly interact according to the socio-cultural contexts involved in a conversation. To this end, foreign language learners will develop an appreciation of the effects of culture on interactions and relationships, and so Walker reflects on how "in order to perform appropriately and effectively in a second culture, a FL learner must draw on the 'inculcated default memories of that culture' rather than relying on his or her base culture or on 'a dialectic between base and target cultures'" (Walker, 2000, p. 233, as referenced by Tang, 2006, p. 87).

2.2 The Intercultural dimension of foreign language learning

In virtue of the cultural diversity that characterize our societies, both linguistic and cultural knowledge have become essential to effectively communicate across cultures. Although cultural knowledge will develop students' appreciation towards the target culture, education must also

aim at bridging gaps among diverse groups. For that reason, EFL from an intercultural approach could provide learners with both a target language of current global utility (English, in this case) and the awareness needed to overcome prejudices and to promote respect and tolerance among people. An intercultural approach to foreign language education aims, as defined by Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, "to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity" (2002, p. 9).

Within this framework, considering the intercultural dimension entails acknowledging the different linguistic varieties and the different identities of individuals. In this sense, language education from an intercultural perspective implies a change of focus since the objective is no longer achieving a native speaker fluency. Rather, it must aim at developing students as intermediaries between cultures, willing to prevent and resolve cultural tensions, and this means that "there is no perfect 'model' to imitate, no equivalent of the notion of a perfect 'native speaker'. There is no question, either, of expecting learners to imitate or attempt to acquire the social identity of a native speaker" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11). For that reason, an intercultural approach promotes a democratic use of the English language, as it focuses on the appreciation and improvement of multicultural societies through dialogue, instead of imitating the values of a single nation.

Nevertheless, Risager (2011) explains that, instead of a single dimension, foreign language learning and teaching is composed of three cultural dimensions: content, learner and context. The content dimension refers to those cultural symbols that are presented within the foreign language classroom, and that offer students a perspective of the target language and culture. The second dimension refers to the learners and their identities, the intercultural learning and intercultural competence. The last dimension deals with the setting and situation of learners and the teaching practice, bearing in mind "the situation and role of language teaching and learning in society and in the world" (Risager, 2011, p. 485). Such a view proposes an integrated approach, in which the context of foreign language education is deemed necessary to address students' needs and interests, by means of linguistic and cultural input. This is also linked to Holliday's context approach to EFL "where the aim has been to find ways to ensure that classroom methodologies are appropriate to local contexts" (2009, p. 145).

Likewise, in order to develop an intercultural competence, Byram (1997; 2008, p. 69) proposes a series of attitudes, skills and behaviours known as the five *savoirs* (savoir s'engager, savoirs, savoir apprendre/faire, savoir comprendre and savoir être). The most remarkable of them, according to Conway and Richards (2016), is savoir être, as "learners who develop this savoir are open, curious and ready to understand 'otherness' and how other's behaviours, values and beliefs

may differ from their own world view" (p. 3). In this way, applying Byram's model to develop an intercultural competence implies teaching through reflection, allowing students to leave prejudices and to regard other cultures and views from an equity perspective. Indeed, identifying and understanding differences among one's own and the others' cultures benefit individuals, in the sense that we can focus on what unites us rather than what divides us.

This multidimensional approach to EFL ensures that learners are exposed to language and culture, becoming aware of how interactions and meaning may differ depending on the speakers' contexts. Apart from that, Risager mentions how the intercultural competence is required to successfully communicate across languages, which is defined by Corbett as an "ability to understand the language and behaviour of the target community, and explain it to members of the 'home' community – and vice versa" (2003, p. 2). As a result, teaching intercultural competence through EFL implies moving beyond own assumptions and beliefs in order to perceive other realities and values as equally valid.

Byram, Gribkova and Starkey further develops the concept of intercultural competence by emphasizing that intercultural dialogues demand students "to acquire not just grammatical competence but also the knowledge of what is 'appropriate' language (2002, p. 9). In this respect, Kramsch determines that intercultural communicative competence is "not knowledge, but shared rules of interpretation that are applied judiciously to familiar and new contexts to make sense of the world" (Kramsch, 1998b, p. 27, as addressed by Corbett, 2003, p. 40). EFL from an intercultural perspective must therefore focus on developing students' intercultural competence through tasks involving reflection on the suitability of language in different cultural contexts. Besides, it is key to learn how to apply cultural knowledge purposefully, that is, bearing the other's necessities and wills to strengthen mutual understanding.

By virtue of developing an intercultural competence (IC), students will acquire an intercultural understanding, a term that involves, as cited by Conway and Richards, "appreciating the richness and diversity of other cultures… [and] recognizing that there are different ways of seeing the world, and developing and international outlook" (2016, p. 1). This is of major importance nowadays, since mutual understanding among diverse groups is crucial to the resolution of social conflicts related to xenophobia, discrimination, and inequality. Huber and Reynolds (2014, p. 16-17) also amplifies this by defining IC as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to: understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people; establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; [and] understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural

difference. It is by contemplating the need for unity among people that we can understand the weight of foreign language education in current societies. Teaching EFL from an intercultural approach must address both learners' and the target languages' cultures, examining the context in which the learning process will take, and the purpose of the same. Sybing ponders this point by alleging that foreign language education should "evolve from one of treating any foreign language culture as separate from the lives of language learners into one that recognizes the multiple cultures are already present in local contexts that learners occupy" (2011, p. 468). For this reason, an intercultural approach not only directly addresses the challenges of our globalized world, but it also proposes a model to effectively respond and solve its consequences on individuals and society.

To achieve this, EFL should have as main objective to raise students' intercultural awareness, which will allow them to appreciate differences and similarities between their own culture and the target language culture. Intercultural awareness will, additionally, help individuals manage misunderstandings that lead to conflicts between groups, helping build respectful and inclusive societies, since "rather than simply building on his/her pluricultural repertoire to gain acceptance and to enhance his own mission or message, he/she is engaged as a cultural mediator: creating a neutral, trusted, shared 'space' in order to enhance the communication between others" (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 122). Ultimately, enhancing students' intercultural competence and awareness in the EFL classroom will eventually lead to an intercultural citizenship willing to row in the same direction.

2.3 Intercultural citizenship for a fairer society

Given the growing complexity of interactions between societies, it is not surprising that conflicts may arise among culturally diverse groups. With a view to resolving possible differences among people, foreign language education must adopt a human right's perspective in order to build egalitarian societies. It is therefore necessary not only to develop individuals' intercultural awareness to welcome diversity, but also to build a sense of civic engagement as a mechanism to claim human rights. Byram and Wagner's position on this matter claims for an education aimed at teaching intercultural citizenship, so that learners will "engage with significant issues in their own and other countries […]. In doing so students acquire greater linguistic proficiency and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the intercultural speaker" (2018, p. 146).

Intercultural citizenship is a term that emerged as a response to the socio-political challenges of globalization, focusing on ensuring that all groups have the same opportunities and rights. Byram defined this vision of foreign language education as "a new dimension by combining language education with political education as a response to internationalization" (2008, p. 157), which

seeks to teach students both language and culture from a political outlook. It is therefore a complementary view to an intercultural approach to EFL, whose target is to develop world citizens. In this manner, foreign language education must show concern for social justice, and thus Sybing further adds that "teaching culture in connection with language is a necessity; what is required with teaching the lingua franca is a greater awareness and sensitivity for cultural differences so that respect for all cultures is achieved" (2011, p. 469).

It is increasingly inevitable to be involved in multicultural encounters, whether in real life or on the internet. Recognizing the value of diversity and actively building an inclusive society therefore depends on teaching individuals to deal with situations that will challenge their attitudes and beliefs. Nonetheless, by engaging in intercultural dialogue with groups sharing different ethos, people may disagree with certain convictions. In this line, Berlin states that "if they open their minds sufficiently, they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one could communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one's own" (Berlin, 1990, p. 10; as quoted by Byram, 2008, p. 175).

The usefulness of developing intercultural citizenship within the foreign language classroom rests on the fact that we, as individuals of multicultural societies, are susceptible to make assumptions about others. Because of this, education must teach individuals to suspend belief for the purpose of overcoming prejudices and stereotypes, and therefore "intercultural education should include consideration of stance, and a process of self-reflection and self-evaluation, so that both teachers and learners are conscious of this process" (Osler & Starkey, 2015, p. 31). In doing so, it is required that the foreign language learning curriculum encompasses both social and cultural issues through the target language. In that way, English as a foreign language becomes a medium for academic and civic education.

Osler and Starkey (2015, p. 33) address the significance of education as a key element in social understanding. To that end, it is necessary to train intercultural citizens, willing to respond to the challenges of globalization by promoting acceptance and respect. In doing so, they refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948, article 26.2):

> Education shall be directed to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace". (UN General Assembly, 10 December 1948, article 26.2)

According to this, foreign language education from a view of egalitarianism provides learners with many opportunities to build more just societies. Firstly, students consolidate their intercultural competence by engaging in purposeful tasks related to diversity and the promotion

of human rights. Secondly, teaching language and culture to foster social justice encourages learners to commit themselves to deep linguistic and cultural learning, dealing with challenging situations that requires eliminating cultural prejudices. Thirdly, teaching English from an intercultural perspective and aiming at developing democratic citizens entails using this global language as a medium for democracy. This is because the target language is used to boost social cohesion, mediating among groups and highlighting what binds them.

In summary, intercultural citizenship is a required vision for effectively relate and communicate in current multicultural societies. As explained by Huber and Reynolds (2014), teaching intercultural citizenship in foreign language education "requires individuals to develop their capacity to build common projects, to assume shared responsibilities and to create common ground to live together in peace" (2014, p. 21). All societies must advocate human rights and respect for diversity, working to integrate the different cultural groups and providing them with equal opportunities to study, to work and to total fulfillment.

Similarly, English must be taught as a tool to participate in global interactions through the net, where there are constant exchanges and interactions. Packer (2013) underlines the use of internet for teaching culture and intercultural communication by considering the many possible applications. For instance, the huge amount of information available and the use of the internet as a place for raising social awareness and civic activity, as "the enormous interconnectedness it brings about is also the source of growing inequalities and injustices around the world", and, therefore, "the teaching of foreign languages under global conditions necessarily acquires political meaning" (Packer, 2013; as cited by Kramsch, 2014, p. 307). In this manner and as it will be discussed in chapter three, the internet presents an additional challenge for foreign language learners: the unpredictable nature of linguistic and cultural patterns in an ever-changing context.

Chapter Three: ICT and Intercultural Communication

There is no doubt that, in an interlinked world, the internet is the most powerful means of communication across cultures. Our societies are becoming digital as people are increasingly connected to the net, creating online communities as a place for sharing knowledge and experiences. In accordance with that, Goulart (2017) outlines how mankind uses digital communication as a tool to share cultural values and identities "so that they can live together, express their thoughts, feelings, desires, worries, and they can interact, learn and be able to contribute to a better place to live" (p. 28). As a result, information and communications technologies (ICT) have created a scenario where intercultural interaction is enhanced through easy and instant messaging, bringing the peoples of the world closer together.

As Chen (2012) states, the digital revolution "has significantly affected humans' perception of the media, the usage of time and space, and the reachability and control of the media" (p. 1). This is of special relevance in the context of multicultural societies, as digital media shapes interactions in terms of engagement, how individuals express themselves and the scope of what is shared. In view of this, there is a great necessity not only to learn how to effectively communicate in digital settings, but also to ensure freedom of speech and access to information; and thus Ravi (2012) remarks how "endorsing technological pluralism is an important challenge of the twenty-first century" (p. 479).

Within this context, relationships among people from very remote places have been enhanced, as online communication facilitates trading and all sorts of exchanges of information and knowledge. As a result, Goulart (2017) reflects on how digital technologies "can empower human beings and online social networks have created lots of new forms of integrating people by amplifying their connections and the way how they communicate" (p. 29). From this perspective, internet users are inevitably involved in intercultural dialogues, as the net is characterized by the free and constant access of people from any socio-cultural background. Therefore, ICTs and social media are closely linked with intercultural communication and the need for intercultural awareness, as it is required to ensure inclusiveness in both the real and digital worlds.

As a consequence, internet serves as a meeting point for different groups and their interests, and this "emergence of new media has led to revolutionary changes in people's thinking and behaviors, redefined the sense of community, and restructured human society" (Chen, 2012, p. 3). This statement emphasizes the constant emergence of new social media platforms and online communities where intercultural interactions occur, and so it gives rise to concerns regarding the use of online sites. For example, as regards to how they affect the manner people connect with each other, or how online sites shape individuals' interests and identities, and vice-versa.

The associations of people from diverse cultural groups in digital settings are commonplace nowadays in people's lives, and receive the name of virtual communities, defined as a social network "outside the dimensions of time and space. The messaging is almost instantaneous and allows people around the world to be connected simultaneously" (Goulart, 2017, p. 32). In such spaces, a user can share multimedia content with everyone, thus offering endless opportunities for spreading and finding data within reach of a click. On this basis, Ravi indicates that "the global community has the opportunity to know more than before as the media increasingly has the ability to provide people with a great deal of second hand knowledge about not only the world at large but also the society we live in" (2012, p. 483). Given the importance that has gained in our daily lives, ICT tools such as social networks have become essential as they provide ample opportunities for expanding knowledge. Accordingly, Block emphasizes how the net has changed the context of English as global language, as "the Internet has made it possible for other languages, both 'big' (e.g. German, French, Japanese and Spanish) and 'small' (e.g. Catalan), not only to survive but to increase their numbers of users" (Block, 2004, p. 23). Since there are no restrictions on language suitability, individuals navigate freely to gain and spread knowledge, thus internet becoming a more democratic place. As a matter of fact, because of the enrichment that the net provides the United Nations (2016) declared that it "facilitates vast opportunities for affordable and inclusive education globally, thereby being an important tool to facilitate the promotion of the right to education, while underlining the need to address digital literacy and the digital divide, as it affects the enjoyment of the right to education" (UN General Assembly, June 27th 2016, p 2).

There is still a long way to go to attain such ideal scenario, since there are political and economic factors impeding the equal access to both education and internet. Notwithstanding, foreign language education could procure an atmosphere of mutual respect among using the net, promoting their integration. To that end, EFL from an intercultural approach must address the complexity of our multicultural and digital societies by teaching both cultural and media literacy. In this respect, Shuter (2012) is the promoter of a field of inquiry called Intercultural New Media Studies (INMS), which analyses the impact of digital media on intercultural relationships and thus it conforms to the subject of this chapter. With that in mind, this author also highlights that what is missing from intercultural studies "are lines of research on how ICT's affect intercultural communication between individuals and groups" (Shuter, 2012, p. 220), which is the focus of this chapter. To do so, the implications of digital communication will be first outlined. Secondly, importance will be given to the development of intercultural identities in the media. Finally, we will be analyzing an aspect of intercultural communication in the media that, according to Shuter (2012, p. 231), lacks attention: a socio-cultural perspective of intercultural communication in social media.

3.1 Implications of digital communication: the smartphone revolution

In recent years, information and communication technologies are developing at a dizzying rate, changing the paradigm of how people build personal relationships and invest their time. In an ever-changing environment like this, many challenges arise concerning language and culture, as there is no fixed criterion for anticipating the future of linguistic and cultural patterns in the digital media. It is undeniable that current societies are increasingly more involved in online communications through social media, and thus smartphones are becoming essential tools in our everyday life.

In this vein, Ravi (2012) indicates that smartphones "occupy an integral place in young people's lives, not as a means of social differentiations but as a necessary part of social communication through the maintenance of key social networks" (p. 480). Campbell (2020) also stresses how "mobile communication is not merely an affordance, but also a fundamental expectation that now structures how people experience social life" (p. 102). As a matter of fact, this author coins the phrase *smartphone revolution* to refer to the growing use of the mobile phone, even more so than computers, as main channel of communication that entails "technological and social changes associated with the leap from second-generation (2G) mobile calling and texting to third-generation (3G) mobile data and enhanced speed of the fourth generation (4G) infrastructure" (Campbell, 2020, p. 103).

Clearly, the present lies with online communication, as the speed at which the digital world moves is such that we are about to enter the fifth-generation technology, which will virtually connect people, machines and devices, such as smart houses or self-driving cars. Digital media have been proved to be an effective means of social and intercultural communication, especially when there is a dire need for international cooperation. In exceptional circumstances such as the recent lockdown, digital technologies have allowed people to maintain normalcy and contact with their loved ones and the outside world, bringing them closer.

Regarding this, an interesting concept discussed by Ravi is that digital communication technologies are distinguished by the potential to connect not only people, but also distant settings and contexts, given that "communication relationships are no longer restricted to place, but are distributed through space" (2012, p. 483). Social media have become an integral part of our daily lives, modifying our perception of time, space and relationships, as smartphones provide users with opportunities to interact with distant people and environments while remaining in their primary location. Fortunati (2012) reflects on this notion and argues that while an individual is physically in one place, "virtually, as an immaterial presence, he or she is elsewhere. An elsewhere that takes on an ever-increasing fascination, because it gives the reality of space a new connotation" (p. 516).

Extending this logic further, Campbell (2020) adds that "places are characteristically meaningful in that they are textured by memories, emotions, stories, cultural significance, and interconnectedness with other places" (p. 105). In this respect, interactions in cyberspace imply a different appreciation of space and place defined by what is share and for what purposes. As for intercultural communication, social media provide a unique chance to meet other people from varied places and socio-cultural backgrounds, thus enriching our understanding of the world around us. In fact, digital communication also serves as a medium to find emotional support and guidance, since the mobile phone "enables people, when they perceive the surrounding environment as extraneous to them, to contact somebody of their intimate circle, that is, to activate the reassuring procedure of recognition" (Fortunati, 2012, p. 515).

There are, however, concerns surrounding the excessive use of smartphones for online communication, implying that connection to social networks may have a consequent disconnection from reality. Peng and Zhu (2020) consider that most of smartphone users do not spend their daily lives online, but rather they alternate between mobile-off time and mobile sessions. In this connection, technological societies demand people to be multi-tasking and using digital media at all times in order to fulfill their obligations in their jobs, careers, and quotidian life tasks, such as sending e-mails, receiving calls or filling out forms. As a result, they conclude that "mobile phone users are expected to develop various mobile reengagement patterns at different time windows in a day to cope with their private and public affairs" (Peng and Zhu, 2020, p. 130).

Indeed, mobile phones were designed to maintain contact with our relatives, as texting and calling "emerged as a primary means for friends, family, and loved ones to stay in touch throughout daily life, flexibly coordinate social affairs and perform social rituals that reify and strengthen personal relationships" (Campbell, 2020, p. 102). This, according to Kobayashi and Boase (2014) continues to be the norm for many young people who use digital communication to send and receive short messages within their social circle, thus declaring that "if texting facilitates contact with close friends and family exclusively, and if it reduces heterogeneous encounters, it can have a cocooning effect" (2014, p. 682). Nevertheless, multicultural societies and the rise of social media platforms have changed this context, and nowadays people also find understanding in others they only know via online, creating virtual communities based on common interests. In such contexts where cultural information and values flow, it is necessary to understand how information is shared and understood in order to promote intercultural understanding.

One of the distinguishing features of information in digital media is the speed and ease with which it is spread. Dunway, Searles, Sui and Newly (2018) conducted a research to study how news are understood in digital media, and they conclude that "information is easier to process on larger

screens, which encourage heuristic processing. Smaller screens encourage systematic processing, requiring more cognitive effort" (p. 109). This is significant in relation to fake news and hoaxes that are often published on social media, which could result in misinformation and wrong attitudes towards cultural and ethnic groups as a worse case scenario. Instead, individuals must advocate for democracy and fair practices in media settings as well, which means that we must enable citizens to participate and engage in civic actions.

This is linked to the fact that digital communication allows users to contrast information and easily contribute to different causes concerning political, environmental and social issues. For this reason, Dunway et al. (2018) agree on the fact that sharing information through digital media increases civic engagement for varied purposes, by stating that "political and civic implications of internet proliferation, for example, suggests higher levels of political engagement among those using the internet for news, exchanging information and exploring interests" (Dunway, 2018, p. 109). In doing so, social media and other digital information media such as online newspapers encourage people to interact with one another and collaborate on common projects. This will have major impacts on society, as the net facilitates individuals' communication and coordinate action in real life. Therefore, Zúñiga et al. (2012) assert that informational media can "promote civic-oriented behaviors by triggering mental reasoning and elaboration of news events, which subsequently promote individuals' participation in public affairs" (p. 322).

By considering this, digital media could be used to develop students' intercultural competence while engaging in tasks aiming at the quality of our societies, since "the particular advantage of technology as an information repository is its potential to provide absolutely contemporary information from anywhere in the world" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 108). Accordingly, EFL from an intercultural approach could be taught through digital media to promote and learn cultural values, because ICT tools such as social networks provide unique opportunities to engage in real interactions with people from other cultural groups. However, Wan (2020) comments on the current situation by affirming how the COVID-19 "crisis has also shown that our education system is lacking in terms of digital preparedness. This issue pertains to most countries globally who are trying to transfer learning from classrooms to online" (2020, p. 4).

Considering that communication evolves extremely quickly thanks to digital technologies, foreign language education must take the best possible advantage of modernization. Along these lines, the EFL classroom will address the reality that individuals are living in by developing intercultural competence through ICTs, which will provide students with the required skills to establish relationships in today's diverse settings and contexts. One of the main challenges that digital communication present is how to teach culture through online platforms that were primarily designed for entertainment. This is supported by Liddicoat and Scarino, who emphasize

that "the issue here is less whether or not the source is reliable, but rather what the source affords as a learning experience" (2013, p. 109).

More than twenty years ago, Windschitl (1998) defended that as social technologies allow individuals to interact with others anywhere, any time, "internet-based activities in which students ultimately develop relationships with students in other cultures should have some influence on the learners' sense of the world" (p. 31). A manner to achieve this is the use of e-mail, because learners are involved in an "exchange of information that can be staged in particular ways and which allows for the possibility of some classroom interaction around the tasks involved between e-mail contacts" (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 112). The advantages of this type of communication lie on the fact that students are given the chance to reflect and interpret information before answering, as opposed to videocalls where responses are expected to be immediate.

Chat-style messaging such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat or Line, are apps that could be used to engage learners in real-time interactions and videocall with students from other cultures. However, live conversations demand students to be prepared to quickly solve possible communication mishaps, and thus Tudini (2007) remarks how "it is a relevant marker in the chat context that involves a degree of 'thinking on your feet' through real-time communication" (2007, p. 577). This could result in students focusing more on maintaining a fluent conversation rather than on identifying cultural patterns and values from the others.

Online forums and discussion lists, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google Classroom or Tapatalk serve as an effective way for students to reflect on the contents and materials, sharing their doubts by posting comments that could be replied by other students. Liddicoat and Scarino stress that cultural values and content are not fixed, but rather they are constructed through interaction, and by using these platforms students reflect on how "views are not homogeneous, and responses are individual rather than being culturally typical" (2013, p. 116).

Krutka and Carano (2016) advocate for the use of videoconferencing to teach culture and global citizenship education, since "videoconferencing affords educators a means by which to transcend geographic bounds with synchronous communication that holds potential for participants to feel social presence that may be less available in asynchronous interactions (e.g. discussion boards)" (p. 111). Therefore, apps such as Skype, Zoom, Webex or Gotomeeting could be used for educational purposes in intercultural dialogues, although it must be ensured that all students participate and share their views to prompt meaningful conversations.

Blogs allow students to share views and opinions in detail, offering the possibility of replies. Carney (2007) explains how blogs are easily accessible, and its use for developing intercultural competence lies on the fact that students can "reflect on the language they are producing for their

partner audience, thus paving the way for perhaps more intensive synchronous or interactive forms of communication later on" (Carney, 2007, p. 118). Therefore, blogs show potential to promote intercultural reflection, albeit they might be more effective when combined with other ICT tools to increase the flow of communication.

Another interesting and growing source of materials are websites, and authors such as Larrea-Espinar, Raigón-Rodríguez and Gómez (2012) collected the most relevant web pages for foreign language teachers and students to develop intercultural competence. They emphasize that as websites can promote linguistic and cultural knowledge, stresing that "being the internet an effective tool as well as an unlimited source of possibilities for the learning of capabilities, we need to put forward a cautionary note: this vast potential make absolutely necessary a careful selection of resources" (2012, p. 120). Those resources include sites such as http://www.culture-at-work.com/contents.html, https://eslflow.com/intercultural-communication-vocabulary-and-language-exercises.html, or http://www.everythingesl.net/inservices/crosscultural.php.

In the case of audio-visual content, Youtube is the leading app. This online platform as replaced television as a means of entertainment, since it combines social media and video broadcasting, allowing its users to choose among a wide variety of content from all over the world: vlogs, courses, tutorials, interviews, music videos, documentaries or series. Aznar, Trujillo, Romero and Campos (2019) have studied the implications of this platform on society, declaring that "Youtube is a leader of the masses and through its audio-visual content influences people's attitudes and behaviour" (p. 114).

Additionally, Larrea-Espinar and Raigón-Rodríguez (2019) present sitcoms as a rich source of cultural values and patterns. Sitcoms offer foreign language learners the chance to identify cultural and linguistic differences by watching comedy episodes, because "within tv shows, situation comedies (popularly known as 'sitcoms') have been commonly used in ELT due to its short-running time and the closed nature of episodes" (p. 140). In this sense, the variety of the topics combined with humour make sitcoms an ideal candidate for teaching intercultural awareness. This may result in higher motivation among learners that will increase engagement and willingness to learn about the culture depicted. The challenge of teaching culture and digital literacy is to find adequate sources and to transform them into experiential tasks that promote students' cultural reflection. Liddicoat and Scarino defend this by stating that "because they are not designed as learning experiences but as instantiations of cultures articulated through language for their own members, these experiences are not sanitized for learners" (2013 p. 121) and must be carefully selected.

3.2 Intercultural identities in social media

The significance of understanding identities in intercultural communication lies on the close relationship between culture and the expression of the self. Language enables individuals to express and transmit the cultural values that define their identities, three critical elements that shape individuals and, thus, societies. Rovira (2008) illustrates this idea by affirming that "language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values" (p. 66). In accordance with this view, Gündüz (2017) explains that an identity is the essence of a person, defining "the self as a part of a greater body, sense of security, belonging to a social, emotional, political body or community with affective bonds of solidarity" (p. 86).

Adolescence is a key period in maturation and the search of identity, a moment of physical, psychological and emotional changes that represents the transition from childhood to adulthood. In this regard, Weber and Mitchell (2008) argue that adolescence is a "heightened, and perhaps emotional, experiencing of life, a questioning or yearning for… some unknown future, the need to situate oneself, to find out who our friends are, to take one's place in society" (p. 26). For that matter, given that the usual target audience of social media are teenagers, it is of relevance to identify how identities are shaped in online settings, aiming at comprehending the implications in intercultural dialogue. Accordingly, Shuter (2012) defines cultural identity as a self-representation "derived from membership in social groups, a legacy of in-group identification that also influences communication in social groups. It is co-created and negotiated, impacted by internal and external factors" (p. 221).

In online contexts, however, identities are constructed differently since the spatial-temporal relationship changes, altering interactions among people from all over the world that communicate through cyberspace. As a consequence, Chen (2012) reflects on how "the use of new media is shaking the root of cultural identity by weakening or strengthening the intensity of the relationship between people and community" (p. 5). As a matter of fact, social media has radically changed our perception of the self and the other, affecting our relationships with others. This author additionally draws conclusions based on how this new scenario allows individuals to create "different kinds of new communities without the limit of time and space, which makes cultural identity more dynamic, fluid, and relativized, and imposes austere challenges to the autonomy and stability of cultural identity" (Chen, 2012, p. 5).

Considering this viewpoint, identities in online settings such as social networks become easily altering, as ongoing processes of self-creation and reaffirmation. This is in line with the definition of digital identity provided by Gündüz (2017), who considers that a digital identity "is attitude

norms that are blended with technology. Digital identity includes displaying ethical and appropriate attitude while using electronic environments" (p. 89). Therefore, it can be deduced that individuals' identities on the net are developed by means of what the users share, the intention behind the content uploaded and the interactions within the virtual community. Besides that, it must be said that identities in digital media are easily malleable and everyone can choose who they want to be, which Baldauf, Develotte and Ollagnier-Beldame (2017) highlight since "it is the user who chooses, depending on his desires and his interlocutor, how he/she uses or does not use everything that characterizes him/her as an individual" (p. 3).

Along with this, digital communication challenges our expectations and assumptions regarding interactions within the same group or with individuals from varied socio-cultural backgrounds, as social media give speakers the chance to remain unidentified or anonymous. Shuter further discusses that more studies are required to understand the creation of identities in online groups "since virtual communities are often pseudo-communities – sometimes anonymous and generally disconnected from physical space and time – intimacy and engagement can be quite limited, which are requisites for co-creation and negotiation" (Shuter, 2012, p. 223). Regarding the construction of identities and interpersonal relationships in the digital media, Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) researched on an online dating community to understand how people engage in interactions where they are expected to fulfil a partner's expectations. In these exchanges, the authors found that "participants reported using the profile to ideate a version of self they desired to experience in the future. For some, the act of constructing an online profile may begin a process of self-growth as they strive to close the gap between actual and ideal self" (Ellison et al, 2006, p. 432).

On this account, identities within the digital realm may act as a representation of one's own desires and ambitions, which is motivated by both self-interest and a concern to fit in and establish relationships. Regarding this, Şengün (2014) describes digital identities in terms of how users represent their personal appearance through avatars, which are virtual identities used in online contexts such as role-play videogames and social networks Avatars may, or may not, represent a user; they can portray real or fictional characters, then individuals could prefer to create a different image of themselves, or to assume another person's identity. Therefore, this author claims that in order to "maintain a communication in a multi-user environment with other avatars, a user has to have an idea of what kind of information can an avatar carry and convey, as well as the possible implications that his or her own avatar generates for the other users" (Şengün, 2014, p. 151).

In this vein, Ellison (2006) believes that "in certain online settings, such as online role-playing games, a schism between one's online representation and one's offline identity are inconsequential, even expected. (p. 419). An example given by Shuter (2012) is Second Life, a

virtual world similar to Sims where users can interact with people around the world using voice. This online community "may improve intercultural skills that are essential for intercultural competence and successful cultural adaptation" (Shuter, 2012, p. 228), since the aim of this game is for users to create avatars, explore the digital setting and socialize with other people

The effects of virtual communities on identity have implications concerning cultural preservation and transmission, resulting in everchanging patterns of behaviour and thought among users. This entails that digital communities are constantly changing and evolving, and therefore "these virtual cultures can alter pre-existing cultural identities, threatening traditional indigenous identifications that are co-created, negotiated, and developed" (Shuter, 2012, p. 22), thus challenging the concept of identity as resulting from group interaction and the sense of belongingness. This conception is better understood when considering the scope of the personal information we share in social media, which as opposed to real life interactions, stay stored in the cloud.

Baldauf et al. (2017) claim that the process of identity construction relies on memories and physical reminders of individuals' existence that may, or not, be preserved, such as photographs or documents. But on social media "all human system interactions are recorded, creating digital traces which are the connection between past and present/future, between self and other, between the self and the machine. They are at the heart of the dynamics of identity in social media" (Baldauf et al., 2017, p. 1). Weber and Mitchell (2008) agree on this and state that the content we upload define who we are, since "digital productions tell stories of sorts and leave a digital trail, fingerprint or photograph of 'where I was then', where we are now', 'who I would like to be'" (2008, p. 27). Individuals are constantly uploading personal content and information to social networks, and it depends on whether users want or do not want to keep their record of activities on social net. That is, digital identities are constantly being shaped because social media users decide when and which content they want to maintain, thus being able to reinvent themselves.

In this respect, Baldauf et al. (2017) further develop this concept of identity permanence over time, and argue that digital identities have the potential to become eternal, because the "permanence of records over time also poses the question of the construction of a digital identity after a person's death. Where does a person's construction of identity stop and the construction of a collective memory of a person start?" (p. 7). This implies that when a person dies, their digital identity may continue alive if their family or friends keep alive the memories and experiences by posting on social media. For example, the social media accounts of renowned people such as artists or celebrities are managed by their relatives once they are no longer alive, continuing their legacy and contact with followers and fans. Actually, Weber and Mitchell explain that in digital contexts "identity is not something that can ever be achieved once and for all: it is fluid and open to negotiation, but also subject to many constraints" (p. 43).

When considering intercultural dialogue, reflecting on similarities and differences is key to finding common ground and ensuring successful communication among members of a virtual community. In this respect, Shuter (2012) considers the concept of third culture, and explains that individuals could create a harmonious group by merging together their cultures and values, thus finding understanding. In this sense, "individuals must be consciously aware of their differences and capable of suspending judgement to build a third culture, a product of convergence, integration and mutual assimilation" (p. 224). In digital environments, this perspective can be applied to social network contexts, where individuals from different cultural backgrounds could build virtual communities by sharing and combining cultural information and interests. Nevertheless, Shuter (2012) emphasizes that, in order to attain this goal, "it may be necessary to utilize multiple new media platforms to achieve intercultural dialogue and third culture in a virtual world" (p. 226). By using different platforms, individuals could deepen their understanding of otherness as values can be expressed in different forms of communication, hence facilitating intercultural dialogue.

On this basis, McEwan and Sobre-Denton (2011) defend that online settings encourage the creation of third cultures given that space and time are reconceptualized, and therefore "virtual third cultures, unlike other types of cultural creation, transcend corporeal space. A plethora of cultural influences can come together in virtual spaces, creating multinational, multicultural third spaces – hybridized global citizenry" (McEwan and Sobre-Denton, 2011, p. 254). This is also in line with Campbell's (2020) reflection on how recent studies stress the role of digital communication as a manner of promoting intercultural dialogue, contemplating "an alternative perspective that views the technology as instrumental in the construction of hybrid places, where bits and atoms are mutually constitutive rather than separate and competing" (Campbell, 2020 p. 106). The idea of consensus among cultures in the cyberspace might be, however, jeopardized, since Shuter argues that as a result of the Western domination of cyberspace, "in so many significant ways – linguistically through the English language, symbolically via the West's pervasive icons, and materially in Western created hardware and software – it is unclear whether hybrid cultural identities are, indeed, possible" (Shuter, 2012, p. 222).

Identities online, whether representing real or imagined characters, are constructed by people interacting with each other. Weber and Mitchell (2008) describe this as a DIY work where individuals build up themselves, commenting how individuals are "bending and blending genres, incorporating old ideas, activities and images into new bricolages, changing the face, if not the substance, of social interaction and altering how they see themselves and each other" (2008, p. 44). As a result, an intercultural approach to EFL education must aim at developing students' digital literacy, understanding how people construct identities and meaning in online settings with the purpose of facilitating intercultural dialogue. Given the growing importance of social media

in societies, education should provide learners with the necessary skills to use digital intercultural exchanges as powerful tools to expand their cultural awareness and knowledge. As determined by Gündüz (2017), "social media is a magic wand that determines structure of society, forms a basis for polarizations and dissolutions and also ensures mergers and agreements" (p. 91).

3.3 Socio-cultural perspective of intercultural communication in social media

In industrialized societies, social media platforms have become a part of our culture as people are increasingly engaged in joining virtual communities and sharing experiences and opinions. Online communication has become part of our daily routine, to the extent that we always carry our smartphones in our pockets or in our hands to quickly check and answer notifications. This has resulted in the emergence of a cyber-society, which entails that "the moment media become invisible, our sense of identity, and indeed our experience of reality itself becomes irreversible modified, because mediated" (Deuze, 2011, p. 140), hence the importance of becoming conscious about cultural patterns in online interactions. In doing so, rising awareness on how people interact and behave will allow foreign language students to promote intercultural understanding.

Since social networking sites allow people to construct and shape their identities, it is clear that there are specific cultural use patterns structuring how people behave and interact with each other on the cyberspace. Indeed, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) use the metaphor "software of the mind" to refer to individuals' culture patterns of thinking and behaviour that are learnt throughout a lifetime, but that may be, as a computer program, modified and redesigned. In this sense, the authors affirm that this process of ongoing cognitive and behavioural modelling can be explained as:

> The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences. The programming starts within the family; it continues within the neighbourhood, at school, in youth groups, at the workplace and in the living community (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 5)

In view of the above, digital settings such as online communities and interactions through social media have revolutionised how culture is shared and understood, therefore affecting how identities are constructed and shaped. Deuze (2011) reflects on how social media allow people to design their own lives, and how "people produce themselves (and therefore each other) in media. This perhaps may additionally explain why people do not recognize their media habits because they are a constitutive part of them" (p. 138). Consequently, cultural patterns are continuously expanding and evolving, since people's interaction with each other and with the online environment change how they communicate. Following this, it is possible to link and analyze

certain cultural values and behaviors in order to find similarities and differences among groups and learn how to handle possible conflict situations.

To this effect, the model used par excellence is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, composed of six parameters or dimensions that we must consider in order to understand in which ways are interactions shaped by our cultural backgrounds. Such framework was developed by Geert Hofstede by the end of the 1970s with the purpose of promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, although this paper will work on the revised version (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). The six cultural dimensions that Hofstede determined to be relevant to consider in intercultural communication are the following: Power Distance, Individualism vs Collectivism, Masculinity vs Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long vs Short Term Orientation and Indulgence vs Restraint.

Power Distance Index (PDI) refers to the "dependence relationships in a country. In small-power-distance countries, there is limited dependence of subordinates on bosses" whilst in large-power-distance societies "subordinates are unlikely to approach and contradict their bosses directly" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 61). Implying that members of large-power distance cultures find social power inequalities as a normal practice, hence implying fixed social positions. Individualism vs Collectivism concerns societies' organization of interests according to the group, and thus Hofstede et al. describe that "the vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (2010, p. 90), which is known as collectivistic societies. In individualistic societies, however, the opposite happens. In fact, Rosen, Stefanone and Lackaff (2010) comment that, generally, "western societies are considered higher on the individualism scale, whereas Asian, African and South American societies are considered lower on the individualistic scale" (p. 3). Because of this dimension, individuals in virtual communities could follow several groups and maintain contact with their relatives or prefer to meet many new friends and show their daily routines publicly.

Masculinity vs Femininity is the dimension that deals with how a society's members achieve their goals. Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 139) determine the following goals for the masculine pole: high earnings, recognition, advancement and challenges. While for the opposite, the feminine pole is characterized for seeking good relationships with superiors, cooperation, living in a desirable area and having employment security. Thus, as Zaw considers, these traits show that "the distribution of roles between genders such as assertive and competitive and caring and nurturing is referred as masculinity and femininity" (2018, p. 78), respectively. Uncertainty Avoidance defines how a culture deals with unknown and strange situations, since "all human beings have to face the fact that we do not know what will happen tomorrow: the future is uncertain, but we have to live with it anyway. Extreme ambiguity creates intolerable anxiety" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 189). In this

vein, technology enables people to access to a wide range of information, thus expanding knowledge about the world around us, reducing that anxiety. Additionally, Zaw (2018) explains that "due to inner nervous energy, people from uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional and motivated. However, uncertainty accepting cultures are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to" (p. 78).

Long vs Short Term Orientation shapes how a culture perceives the future with regard to goals. For that matter, Hofstede et al. (2010) describe the fifth dimension as illustrated: "a persistence and thrift reflect an orientation toward the future, whereas personal stability and tradition can be seen as a static orientation toward the present and the past" (p. 239). This dimension shapes the focus and values of the members of a particular society, because it determines how objectives are regarded and it affects their adaptative capacity when it comes to learn foreign culture, both virtually or in real life.

The last dimension is Indulgence vs Restraint, and it influences how people behave according to societal norms and taboos. When a society is indulgent, there is "a tendency to allow relatively free gratifications of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun", whereas a society moved by restraints follows "a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 281). These traits define certain aspects of people's online actions and identities, such as openness in interactions through social media, or self-representation and self-promotion.

As described, the six cultural dimensions conform a framework that seeks to describe how cultures behave, in general terms, under certain circumstances. This determinism has been at the core of many criticism towards Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Nevertheless, EFL from an intercultural approach must ensure that students become aware of how unique and diverse the members of a group and their values are. In doing so, learners must understand that we should recognize all aspects and personality traits of a culture's individuals rather than labelling or classifying them into a general group, although there are similar characteristics between organic and digital cultures. In this vein, Shuter (2012) observes that there is a "tight relationship between the cultures of he physical and virtual worlds, demonstrating how crucial it is to consider and identify socio-cultural factors" (p.6). To this effect, it is important to encourage students to discover and identify how people from the target culture interact and behave in online settings, determining cultural use patterns to better understand differences and similarities among us.

3.3.1 Cultural adaptation and hybridity in online settings

A key feature in intercultural learning is the process of experiencing and adapting to the new culture, which is known as cultural adaptation. Sawyer and Chen (2012) explain this concept as "a process that requires people to change their ways of life and communication patterns in order to adjust to a new culture" (p. 154), implying that individuals interested in a particular culture must adapt their thinking and behavioural patterns in order to immerse themselves in the target culture. Along with this, Zaw (2018) further develops this theory by commenting that it is "a dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish or re-establish and maintain a relative stable, reciprocal and functional relationship with the environment" (p. 81).

That being said, a group that is likely to experience cultural adaptation is foreign language students that go abroad to learn the language by experiencing the culture. When leaving a home country, Zaw (2018) notes that learners may "face culture shock when they first get to the host countries. Therefore, they use different methods and resources to lessen the shock and to be adjustable in the new culture and community" (p. 76). As a result, when students arrive at the host country, they must face linguistic, cultural but also emotional challenges in the process of adaptation to the new environment. Extending this logic further, Croucher (2011) submits that cultural adjustment is a complex process that can be emotionally harmful because "generally, individuals experience stress, depression, loneliness, and other negative emotions" (p. 259).

Considering this fact, Sawyer and Chen (2012) highlight the importance of communication and intercultural education in this process, because "learning as much as possible about the host culture and intercultural process significantly influences the adjustment and emotions" (p. 155). In light of this, developing a sense of belonging and being able to cope with feelings is essential to improve linguistic and cultural learning, since students will feel at home and will develop more easily their communicative skills. As a matter of fact, these authors additionally state that "the empathy that is incorporated in this dimension influences the development of sensitivity and creativity. These traits encourage learning and increase global communication competence" (Sawyer and Chen, 2012, p. 155). Therefore, foreign language education must adopt a holistic approach by considering the role of positive emotions in intercultural adaptation and learning, promoting understanding among students and building support communities. In that respect, social media sites are a powerful tool to share experiences and be mutually supportive.

On this basis, Coucher (2011) claims that using social media enables individuals to stay in contact with their relatives and friends while continue learning about the host culture and its people. This is due to the fact that when people "migrate to a new culture, the use of social networking sites will more than likely influence how they perceive the dominant culture, a cultivation effect, which

may impact their communication with host nationals" (p. 261). Besides that, Chen (2012) acknowledges this point by stating that communication and interaction through social media "proves to be a critical element that can determine whether they can successfully adapt to the host country" (p. 6). Given the ease of use, social media platforms as educational tools provide learners with opportunities to connect with their home and host countries and, additionally, they are key for students to construct their intercultural digital identities. With that in mind, Croucher (2011) explains how "the use of social networking sites and other Internet media affects the maintenance of ethnic group members' identity. As immigrants culturally adapt, the use of social networking sites will be utilized to strengthen in-group identity" (262). This is because foreign language students are able to learn anything about the target culture and language by exploring people's behaviour and interactions through social media and communicating with them. Consequently, this will accelerate the process of cultural adaptation as students identify and imitate cultural patterns.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to bear in mind that individuals identity construction and how they embrace changes are factors conditioned by their cultural backgrounds, which is better understood when considering the Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, also outlined by Matsumoto, Yoo, Nakagawa, et al. (2008). These authors explain that emotion regulation is deeply influenced by culture since, regarding Uncertainty Avoidance, "cultures high on this value orientation are associated with greater levels of anxiety among its members from unknown or ambiguous situations" (Matsumoto et al., 2008, p. 927). Similarly, they stress differences in the display of emotions since collectivistic cultures promote "an ideology that individuals should adjust their behaviors to the group or context. If so, one may expect that members of collectivistic cultures would modify situations to regulate their emotions less than members of individualistic cultures would" (Matsumoto et al., 2008, p. 934).

From this perspective, EFL from an intercultural approach favours the process of cultural adaptation by using social media because of the interconnectedness and the strengthening of social bonds they provide. Besides that, intercultural awareness enhances students' empathy and tolerance towards diversity, as well as understanding towards one's own and other's values and beliefs, which improves students' emotion-regulation ability. Therefore, it is by using ICT tools and intercultural competence that learners are better prepared to deal with cultural adaptation. This will lead to cultural hybridity, which Clothier (2005) defines by considering how "authenticity and hybridity are not opposites but are natural extensions of each other. Hybridity produces new forms of authenticity and is inherent in processes of social and cultural dynamics in which various cultures confront each other" (p. 47). Hence entailing a continuous process of cultural creation and renewal that is a requirement to meet the rapidly changing conditions of today's societies.

3.3.2. Cultural use patterns of social media

Culture shapes individuals' identities and thus the manner in which they think and behave. In fact, Rosen et al. (2010) claim that such influence translates into discernible patterns of use of social networking sites since "systematic differences in SNS use result from different cultural identities" (p. 2). In this regard, it is of great interest to identify and outline not only how people from different cultures use social media to interact with each other, but also how individuals adapting to another culture profit from social networking to become members of their host society. As a matter of fact, it is therefore important to bear in mind that culture shapes social media use and vice versa, and also that there are other underlying factors such as gender, race, class, politics or religious underlying factors determining people's online behaviour.

With regard to how news is transmitted, social media are a means of communication of huge social impact that allow users to react, share and comment on the information. Gulyas (2017) studied how information is published and shared through social media by journalists from several countries, considering the news sources and its impact on society. The research consisted on understanding the role of the public as a source of information and the reactions of readers to news posted in social media sites, since "thanks to digital tools, such as social media, there is now a broader range of sources that journalists use and that the role of the public as a source is more enhanced in the forms of crowdsourcing and user-generated content" (Gulyas, 2017, p. 893).

The surveyed journalists are from United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Germany and Finland, Sweden and Netherlands, and the results showed that Scandinavian countries followed a different sourcing pattern from the rest of the surveyed places, presenting the public as key source. This can be attributed to how "the relatively small size, with a population of five millions, means that its news environment is inherently closely networked which arguably instigates a different attitude towards a more limited number of authoritative sources" (Gulyas, 2017, p. 894). Additionally, societies with lower Power Distance values show attitudes of independence and decentralization of power, therefore regarding public sources as valid as the information provided by respected newspapers and media.

Besides, Gulyas states that respondents in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada "used social media more for publishing and networking compared to those from Finland and Germany" (p. 893), and thus those countries that are more involved in social networking are likely to feel engaged with the audience. Following this, it is also remarkable that people from UK and the United States were the most likely to add and reply comments, "and this was the same in relation to using social media to make new contacts in their work" (Gulyas, 2017, p. 897). This could be linked to what Rosen et al. (2010) defend concerning social media sites, stating that "people from individualistic cultures are likely to engage in more attention-seeking behaviours via these sites,

opposed to those who identify with collectivistic cultures" (p. 2). Because social media are platforms that people use in their daily lives to connect with others, participants think of ways to present themselves in a socially appropriate manner. For this reason, there are cultural patterns that individuals should be aware of in order to maintain fluid communication with people from the target culture. Kim, Yun and Yoon (2009) conducted a study on social media consumption and cultural hybridity among Asian international students in South Korea, reflecting the collectivistic notions of this culture. The authors indicate that "in addition to having smaller social networks, respondents were also found to lead lives that were intensely goal-oriented" (Kim et al., 2009, p. 160), which is explained as Asian cultures tend to be collectivistic and belong to long-term oriented societies, rewarding and valuing labour and educational endeavour.

During the process of adaptation, students showed the same social media use patterns in their home and host countries, but analysis revealed that these sites had a great potential to hybridize reality for international students. The authors affirm that Asian students used social media networking to stay in touch with their families and friends, although "the internet appears to have contributed to building a 'telecocoon' or a sense of virtual co-presence for these students and their family and friends in their home countries" (Kim et al., 2009, p. 166). This tendency to communicate with an intimate social group is typical of collectivistic societies, since individuals are committed to group membership. Therefore, in Asian countries, close relationships and the sense of community have primacy over individualism and shallow relationships. In this regard, Rosen et al. (2010) further add that "the promiscuous friending sacrifices the privacy of the other friends and family in exchange for instrumental gains, thus representing a more self-focused behaviour" (p. 4), highlighting how members of individualistic societies are more likely to have large numbers of social media friends.

In the same manner, gender shapes individuals' online interactions, and so behavioural patterns differ from culture to culture. For instance, Rosen et al. (2010) analysed differences of social media use between men and women, and they found that "there are indeed differences in the way that people who identify with different cultures, based on both national identity and gender, manage their communicative behaviors within SNSs" (p. 5). Particularly in western societies, these authors declare that individualistic attitudes such as photo sharing represent a form of self-promotion, since it is a manner for individuals to emphasize their identities. In this concern, "the primacy of the female image and appearance, as opposed to the male image, is a well-defined (if culturally problematic) component of most contemporary, media saturated societies" (Rosen et al., 2010, p. 5). In this connection, Shuter (2012) considers that "men generally display more facial prominence (face-ism) than women in personal photos posted on Facebook" (p. 232). Hai-Jew (2018) also explores the concept of selfies as a universal phenomenon that has become a characteristic feature of digital culture along with avatars.

In fact, selfies appear to be more prominent in Asian countries, although the author points out that "the collectivistic ideology systematically guides most Asians' use of selfies and social networks in that they have the tendency to do the same as others or follow trends to feel belonged to a group" (Hai-Jew, 2018, p. 117). Certainly, this author argues that there are significant differences between Asian and African women's selfies, which he explains with the example of Nigerian women's style of sharing selfies on social media. As opposed to Western and Asian women, "conservatism seems to shape Nigerian women's philosophy of self-presentation, self-imaging and self-expression in public spaces. Female self-objectivation and objectified selfies is dominantly considered a taboo" (Hai-Jew, 2018, p. 121). Consequently, ideologies shape and determine cultural patterns in digital settings, affecting how people behave and present themselves online.

Besides information sharing and self-representation through selfies, social media allows people to interact with others, express their values and beliefs, as in the case of micro-blogging platforms like Tumblr or Twitter. Since "media become the playground for a search for meaning and belonging" (Deuze, 2011, p. 138), cultural groups find in social media a place to feel understood and to build online communities in order to reaffirm their cultural values and identities. Pennington (2018) conducted a research among Sunni Muslim bloggers located in western countries, stressing that many of the participants said they often feel marginalized in their host communities. The study about Tumblr showed that "for bloggers in this research, the space was one for negotiation and exploration; to either become more confident in who they already felt to be or to explore aspects of themselves they could not in other spaces" (Pennington, 2018, p. 632). As a result, social media platforms function as spaces for people to find support and to share cultural and religious values as a way to reconnect with themselves while they are far from home.

Likewise, Daehnhardt, Abel and Houben (2012) collected and examined Twitter to identify cultural patterns among people from Germany, the USA, Brazil, Spain and Japan, focusing on number of tweets and retweets, user mentions, URLs shared, replies and use of hashtags. Analyses show that while users from the USA and Germany shared more links and had more friends in the network, "Japanese users behave very differently. They tweet more on weekends, and share the least hashtags and user mentions when compared with other user groups" (Daehnhardt et al., 2012, p. 8). This is linked to the fact that Japan is classified as a culture of restraint, thus showing "fewer e-mail and Internet contacts with foreigners" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 297).

In addition, users from Spain and Brazil shared some similarities, for instance in the elevated number of retweets. On this account, it is of particular interest to study how social media shape users' linguistic and cultural behaviours, as these have a direct impact on how they adapt to another culture and construct their identities. Croucher (2011) describes how "the use social

networking sites and other internet media affects the maintenance of ethnic group members' identity. As individuals culturally adapt, the use of social networking sites will be utilized to strengthen in-group identity" (p. 262). This implies that teaching students to perceive online cultural patterns will allow them to better understand how to interact with people from different cultures and foster dialogue, which Pennington (2018) describes as "third places"; and given that they are "sites of practice and negotiation, where connections and identities emerge through interaction, then it would certainly seem that social media hold the potential to facilitate the existence, however ephemeral, of such spaces" (p. 633).

3.3.3 Critical analysis of social media and society

The technological revolution brought on by the process of globalization has given place to an increasing interconnectedness that is strengthened by social media platforms. Today, we are more connected, more able to communicate and meet people from other places than ever before, which inevitably has had effects in the manner we think, behave and build relationships. Certainly, digital communication has dramatically changed our perceptions of time and space, and how our cultural values are shared and transmitted, as it has been stated. This new paradigm entails a continuous construction of the environment we live in, affecting how we perceive ourselves and others in both natural and digital settings. Hofstede et al. (2010) consider that culture is constructed at the same speed as technology develops, and they reflect on that "culture accelerates our *material* evolution, but can we control our *cultural* evolution? Culture adapts to ecological circumstances, and our ecological circumstances are rapidly changing" (p. 474).

Such revolution has led to the emerge of different online platforms and communities that allow people not only to share their values, experiences and knowledge, but also to provide understanding and support. One of the drawbacks of digital communication is the possibility of neglecting the real-world relationships, although research works show the potentiality of social media to forge strong relationships with others and with oneself. This difficult and unprecedent situation has underscored the importance of being united, albeit it has also demonstrated that much remains to be done regarding online education. In this vein, Deuze reflects on how "the purpose of the media life perspective is not whether we can make reality more real, or whether more or less engagement with media helps or handicaps such noble efforts. The point is rather how we can interpret media life in terms of how we can change it" (2011, p. 143).

In view of this, we must effectively meet the challenges of today and tomorrow by providing a holistic education based on intercultural values to promote international understanding. Provided that we use communication technologies increasingly early, students' new lifestyles are shaped by the use of technological devices such as smartphones and laptops. Therefore, EFL from an

intercultural approach should take advantage of these innate digital skills of new generations and improve the quality of foreign language courses. By using social networks, education becomes a powerful tool to prompt meaningful interactions among students from different cultures, producing enriching opportunities through experiential learning. Besides, social media meet the need for consistent action in order to eliminate sources of cultural conflicts, enabling students to help become better engaged at improving our societies. As Hofstede et al. (2010) suggest, foreign language education has an important mission, which is to develop citizens willing to promote international cooperation, and thus they conclude that "you are an integral part of human evolution, the future is ours to create, and you can make a contribution, if ever so small" (p. 477).

III. METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICAL SECTION

Chapter Four: An intercultural Approach to EFL through Social Media

This chapter aims at describing the activities designed to achieve the objectives of this thesis and the methodology according to which the lesson plan was developed. In light of the current crisis situation due to COVID-19, this section offers a mere proposal to EFL education as there was no possibility of testing the activities or validating the results. For this reason, we will first present the research design and methodology, describing the justification, the target population and the research instruments to assess intercultural attitudes; and, secondly, the tools used to put into practice the sessions of the didactic proposal.

The rationale behind this paper is to address current global challenges associated with discrimination and racism by proposing a lesson plan that meets students' educational needs in today's multicultural societies. Having reviewed the existing literature on globalization, intercultural communication, and the use of ICT tools for education, the present research emphasizes the need for developing students' intercultural competence to build democratic societies. In this context, the unit "Time to be United" aims at developing secondary students' intercultural learning through social media, promoting cultural understanding and attitudes of respect towards others. On this basis, we suggest the use of different social networks to develop students' intercultural competence and EFL proficiency by teaching global citizenship, human rights and democratic values. Because we are more interconnected than ever, the multicultural nature of our societies entails that discrimination, racism and xenophobia are unacceptable for democracy to flourish. In this regard, foreign language education must promote inclusion in our communities and ensure that cultural diversity becomes an effective weapon against discrimination.

In view of this, the research problem addresses the current situation concerning the effects of globalization and ICT in the manner we perceive otherness, affecting how we communicate and relate with each other. This is matter of special concern for adolescents, as they undergo a process of establishing their identity and values, which are inevitable shaped by online interactions. To this end, EFL from an intercultural approach could provide learners with the necessary skills to move beyond prejudices and develop a sense of tolerance and respect towards otherness. Thus, this MA dissertation tries to provide insight regarding these research questions:

- How can social media platforms help students improve their intercultural competence and attitudes?
- How will reflecting on their cultural perceptions allow students to improve their attitudes towards diversity?

4.1 Research design and sample population

The design of this study follows a mixed methods approach. The idea is to collect both quantitative data by means of a self-report questionnaire to measure participants' perception towards the activities; and qualitative data by observing the students' attitudes and performance throughout the sessions. As for the sample population, the participants (N=25) would be fourth-year secondary students (15-16 years old) taking the subject of English (EFL), sharing similar educational and linguistic backgrounds and their language proficiency being equivalent to a level B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Bearing this, participants would be provided with a self-report questionnaire to measure their intercultural attitudes for them to reflect on the knowledge acquired by means of the didactic proposal. In this regard, Byram (2008) emphasizes the importance of self-assessment, as it offers students a valuable perspective about their own attitudes towards the learning process, in addition to raising self-awareness and promoting self-reflection. Following this, Mehisto (2012) also considers the importance of self-assessment by including self, peer and other types of assessment in order to develop quality CLIL materials, as explained in the methodology section.

Such questionnaire was designed by Raigón-Rodríguez and Larrea-Espinar (2019), following a six-item Likert scale (from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). In this respect, "the items are based on descriptors extracted from the FREPA project (Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches) and intended to measure the participants' perception" (Raigón-Rodríguez and Larrea-Espinar, 2019, p. 143). Accordingly, the questions are organized in three areas as structured in the following table:

Knowledge	This kind of activity helps me identify characteristics from my own culture and become aware that they are not universally shared (K13).
	This kind of activity helps me understand behaviors are determined by underlying cultural values (K8).
Skills	This kind of activity allows me to perceive reality from a different viewpoint, suspending my own beliefs (S2).
	This kind of activity allows me to compare my own non-verbal communication practices with those of others (S3).
Attitudes	This kind of activity makes me more interested and curious about other cultures (A3).
	This type of activity makes me want to distance myself from my own cultural perspective before judging the behavior of others (A12).

Table 1: Self-report questionnaire items to measure intercultural attitudes

4.2 Lesson plan methodology

The didactic proposal has been planned following an intercultural approach, which aims to "go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18). Given that this is an interdisciplinary approach, it is worth considering incorporating learning strategies from other methods and models. Therefore, with respect to the activities' design and the lesson plan materials, the methodology used is CLIL and its 4C's Framework, developed by Coyle (1999). Within this model, we have followed the adapted version of the CLIL Matrix by Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010); the Bloom's Taxonomy, revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001); the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978; McLeod, 2010); and Mehisto's (2012) criteria for developing quality CLIL materials. Furthermore, tasks were built following Cooperative Learning (Johnson and Johnson, 2017) and Project-Based Learning (Pecore, 2015), also bearing the psico-affective dimension of learning and the role of motivation (Arnold, 2009).

CLIL: The 4C's Framework

As described by Coyle et al. (2010), CLIL is a dual-focused approach, which entails that students develop both L2 linguistic skills and subject knowledge. Additionally, these authors stress the advantages of using this approach to respond to globalization and the digital era, because "young people growing up with this technology are prone to developing a mindset to which educators need to respond. This has been described as a desire to 'learn as you use, use as you learn'" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 10). The CLIL approach consists of four parameters corresponding to the 4C's Framework: content, cognition, communication and culture. The first "c" stands for content, involving the topic of the lesson. One of the key aspects of designing the materials of a lesson plan is to make students feel engaged and challenged to complete the tasks, which will lead to meaningful learning. For this reason, the CLIL Matrix (Cummins, 1984, adapted by Coyle et al., 2010, p. 43) offers a model that ensures "progression in language learning whilst maintaining cognitive challenge" (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 44). By following this quadrant, students are encouraged through activities that are designed according to their cognitive and linguistic level, thus facilitating engagement and increasing knowledge retention.

The second principle is cognition, which concerns the production and construction of knowledge. As previously mentioned, it is of great importance to take into account the cognitive level of students for progressive learning to occur, and, to achieve this, this didactic proposal has been designed based on Bloom's Taxonomy (1956, revised by Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). This model is defined as "a special kind of framework. In a taxonomy, the categories lie along a continuum. The continuum becomes one of the major organizing principles of the framework. In

our taxonomy we are classifying objectives" (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p. 4). Accordingly, these objectives recognize six levels of complexity that must be considered when building activities, and go from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as it follows: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. This model suggests considering the diversity of students' cognitive abilities, and therefore it is a requirement to adapt activities in order to meet learners' necessities.

This is closely related to the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), developed by Vygotsky (1978) and defined as "the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner" (McLeod, 2010, p. 1). For students to attain higher goals, it is necessary to guide them through scaffolding strategies, which McLeod defines as resources "provided by the educator, or more competent peer, to support the student as he or she is led through the zone of proximal development" (2010, p. 2). Such prompts will enable learners to become independent, and thus to promote a student-centred education. Some examples of scaffolding are using visual aids and realia, using gestures, organizing information in chunks or group and pair work.

The third "c" corresponds to communication, which implicates the use of language for real and meaningful purposes through students' interaction and linguistic production, entailing vocabulary, grammar and linguistic skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). For that matter, activities must encourage dialogue among students, promoting the authentic use of language in order to prepare them for conversations with people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the proposed activities develop students' communicative competence through pair discussion and group debate around topics of global importance and concern, such as discrimination, cultural and linguistic diversity, or the use of social media. Moreover, Coyle et al (2010) further suggest using the Language Triptych, which enhances linguistic progression since "it supports learners in language using through the analysis of the CLIL vehicular language from three interrelated perspectives: language *of* learning, language *for* learning and language *through* learning" (p. 36). This model explores the different language resources that learners will need to access new knowledge (language of learning), the vocabulary they will gain throughout the activities (language for learning) and the new language that students will develop after the sessions.

The last tenet deals with culture, which is closely intertwined with language, as we have stated earlier. Because of this relationship, foreign language education must aim at developing cultural learning by teaching students to appreciate other cultures and their own. Consequently, CLIL contributes to develop learners' intercultural understanding by growing "an ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviours and

meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors" (Byram, 1997, p. 12, as mentioned by Coyle et al., 2010, p. 40). Therefore, this parameter ensures that learners are able to successfully communicate across cultures, and thus the unit has been designed to help our students become responsible global citizens in our multicultural societies.

Criteria for developing CLIL materials

With regards to materials development, Mehisto (2012) proposes a series of general principles that must be followed to design quality CLIL materials. Such tenets are a manner of ensuring that activities are motivating at the same time they develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As a matter of fact, quality materials ensure that learners establish strong relationships between the classroom and the community, since they can apply the acquired knowledge for real-life situations in their everyday lives. From this view, designing materials based on these principles could help avoiding stereotypes and prejudices, given that "when taken as a whole, quality materials include people of all professions and backgrounds making a positive contribution to society. Quality materials help students develop media literacy, as well as to navigate prejudice and build inclusion" (Mehisto, 2012, p. 16).

Additionally, quality CLIL materials are intended to challenge students at a cognitive level, enabling them to experience autonomous learning and reach beyond what they could achieve by themselves. As a result, Mehisto (2012, pp. 17-25) establishes these ten criteria principles for the development of meaningful resources: 1. Make the learning intentions & process visible to students. 2. Systematically foster academic language proficiency. 3. Foster learning skills development and learner autonomy. 4. Include self, peer and other types of formative assessment. 5. Help create a safe learning environment. 6. Foster cooperative learning. 7. Seek ways of incorporating authentic language and authentic language use. 8. Foster critical thinking. 9. Foster cognitive through scaffolding of a) content, b) language, c) learning skills development helping student to reach well beyond what they could do on their own. 10. Help in making learning meaningful.

Cooperative Learning and Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Besides CLIL and the criteria to produce meaningful materials and activities, we decided to follow cooperative work to carry out the final project based on a jigsaw cooperative activity since, as Johnson and Johnson (2017) claim, "within cooperative activities individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and all other group members" (p. 3). In this sense, using cooperative work enhances students' communication and relationships as all members contribute to a common goal, strengthening the sense of community. To do so, each group has to accomplish a task by means of working first individually, thus increasing their sense of autonomy and self-reliance, and then by sharing and complementing each other's contributions. Additionally, this

interdependence ensures that students' appreciate and value their peers' work since they can only achieve the task once all participants have completed their own.

Besides that, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a method that enhances learners' "social skills including patience and empathy; and for students with low abilities to demonstrate teamwork, management and conscientiousness" (Pecore, 2015, p. 164). In this regard, the sessions have been designed to enhance critical thinking, collaborative and problem-solving skills, because the final result requires students to conduct a research project in order give visibility to immigrants and their contributions to our society. This is in line with Jenkins (2016), who claims that PBL promotes "more engaging than traditional lessons where students are concentrating on real-world tasks", thus enhancing motivation and facilitating learning for real purposes since it "provides opportunities for research authentic opportunities to use technology" (p. 9). In this way, PBL is a suitable method to accomplish the sessions' activities and final project as they imply using ICT tools such as social media platforms.

The psycho-affective dimension of learning
Last, but certainly not least, we must consider learning's affective dimension and its connection with motivation and thus engagement in the learning process. As stated by Arnold (2009), "an affectively positive environment puts the brain in the optimal state for learning: minimal stress and maximum engagement with the material to be learned" (p. 146). Therefore, enhancing affect in the foreign language classroom prevents negative emotions from occurring during the learning process, such as anxiety or stress, that interfere with the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. In this sense, in order to facilitate learning, the EFL classroom must provide a supportive environment, enhancing students' sense of worthiness since Rubio (2007) asserts that "neuro-scientific studies have shown that cognition and affect are distinct but inseparable, and have stressed the connections between the neocortex, involved in thinking, and the limbic system which is related to emotions" (p. 4). This will, in turn, encourage learners to take risks when dealing with new and complicated situations, thus increasing learning and achievement.

Furthermore, the use of group and pair work promotes understanding and support among students, which is increased in the final project as they all participate to fight discrimination towards immigrants. Likewise, motivation is increased through the use social media, since they are sources of authentic material where students can interact with people from all over the world and use language for real purposes. In addition, by making their work public, students might feel encouraged as their opinions can be read by anyone in the net, thus increasing their engagement and performance. Following this, some activities require students to use microblogging platforms, such as Twitter or Pinterest, to express their thoughts and opinions on a specific topic, enhancing self-reflection and critical thinking.

Chapter Five: Intercultural Lesson Plan - "Time to be United"

This chapter presents a lesson plan aimed at teaching learners the importance of standing together and facing discrimination, racism and xenophobia, which are a threat to contemporary multicultural societies. Following this idea, seven one-hour sessions have been planned by taking an intercultural approach to EFL, the final task consisting on raising awareness on the importance of ending discrimination and violence towards other cultural groups.

5.1 Introduction and objectives of the unit

To start with, the first session deals with global citizenship and the need to build together a global community to face the challenges of globalization. Throughout this unit, learners will understand and reflect on the implications of English as a global language, the role of human rights to ensure equal opportunities and how necessary is to create inclusive societies. The second session focuses on immigration and the reasons why people have to move to another country. The different activities require learners to think about racism and violence, reviewing how social media has a great impact in people's perception towards minority groups, as in the case of refugees.

The third session elaborates on the use of internet and social media to meet people from other cultures, emphasizing topics such as cultural identity and cultural assimilation. Additionally, it stresses how important is to consider cultural and linguistic differences when interacting with others. The fourth session deals with culture shock, prejudices and stereotypes, encouraging students to reflect on differences and similarities among groups, as well as to discover how they are perceived by other people. The fifth session makes students ponder on belongingness and the use of social media to feel connected to our beloved ones and our cultural roots; stressing the role of community for cultural transmission. Finally, sessions six and seven are focused on the final project, which consists on writing a blog entry to give visibility to the many contributions from immigrants to our societies in this crisis.

Regarding outcomes, the unit is based on these general objectives corresponding to foreign language education in secondary education in Andalusia, as described in BOJA 144/2016 dated on 28th June (https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2016/144/BOJA16-144-00479.pdf):

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

2. Expresarse e interactuar oralmente en situaciones habituales de comunicación de forma comprensible y apropiada, ejercitándose en el diálogo como medio para resolver pacíficamente los conflictos.

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, complementando esta información con otras fuentes para, con sentido crítico, adquirir nuevos conocimientos.

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

6. Utilizar con corrección los componentes fonéticos, léxicos, sintáctico-discursivos y funcionales básicos de la lengua extranjera en contextos reales de comunicación.

7. Desarrollar la autonomía en el aprendizaje, hábitos de disciplina, estudio y trabajo, la reflexión sobre el propio proceso de aprendizaje y transferir a la lengua extranjera conocimientos y estrategias de comunicación adquiridas en otras lenguas.

8. Desarrollar la capacidad de trabajar en equipo, rechazar la discriminación de las personas por razón de sexo, o por cualquier otra condición o circunstancia personal o social, fortaleciendo habilidades sociales y capacidades afectivas necesarias para resolver pacíficamente los conflictos, y rechazando estereotipos y prejuicios de cualquier tipo.

9. Utilizar adecuadamente estrategias de aprendizaje y todos los medios a su alcance, incluidas las tecnologías de información y comunicación y medios audiovisuales para obtener, seleccionar y presentar información oralmente y por escrito en la lengua extranjera.

10. Valorar y apreciar la lengua extranjera como medio de comunicación, cooperación y entendimiento entre personas de procedencias y culturas diversas, fomentando la solidaridad y el respeto a los derechos humanos, dentro del ejercicio democrático de la ciudadanía.

11. Apreciar la lengua extranjera como instrumento de acceso a la información y herramienta de aprendizaje de contenidos diversos, como medio de expresión artística y para el desarrollo de la capacidad de aprender a aprender.

In addition, the following specific objectives were elaborated, establishing that by the end of the sessions students will be able to:

1. Underline the implications of globalization and English as a global language concerning cultural and linguistic diversity.
2. Describe the influence of social media in our perception towards immigrants, refugees and other minority groups.
3. Interpret how people are perceived with regards to cultural identity, demonstrating empathy by recognizing other people's feelings.

4. Analyze the impact of stereotypes and relate cultural differences and similarities to personal experiences.

5. Examine the feeling of belonging and sense of community for cultural groups.

6. Develop respect for otherness and appreciate diversity.

5.2 Didactic proposal

Before starting the unit, we should make sure students are aware of the evaluation criteria. We must take a few minutes to welcome all students and to briefly introduce the contents and aims of the following lesson plan. It is essential to know learners' capabilities and needs in order to ensure that they feel comfortable and engaged throughout the sessions, which will favour a safe and inclusive environment. For that purpose, we should let students know that we will be providing extra support and guidance, as well as personalized individual tutoring for any concern, doubt, or suggestion they may have.

Lesson plan: "Time to be United"	
Course: 4º ESO	**No. of students**: 25
Age: 15-16 years old	**Subject:** EFL
English level: B1	**Related subjects:** Citizenship education; Civics and ethics
No. of sessions: 7	**Timing:** 1 hour each session
Key competences	**C1:** Competence in linguistic communication **C3:** Digital competence **C4:** Learning to learn **C5:** Social and civic competences **C6**: Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship **C7:** Cultural awareness and expression
Content	The topic of this unit deals with the promotion and defense of human rights, aiming at enhancing students' intercultural awareness and respect towards cultural diversity. In doing so, the sessions develop issues such as racism, xenophobia, prejudices or culture shock, advocating for equity and social cohesion. Thus, the lesson plan has a focus on citizenship, encouraging intercultural learning through a common project in which students must give visibility to immigrants and their rights, fostering peaceful coexistence among cultures. *Attitudes:* respect, consideration, affection, empathy and openness.

Cognition	Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS): *Remembering*: defining globalization; recalling own and other's experiences abroad; describing the use of social media to meet people; discovering the cultural gesture imitated by the peer; recalling feelings of belongingness. *Understanding*: explaining what a global citizen is; interpreting a poem; discussing about cultural identity and cultural assimilation; summarizing and indicating the purpose of Facebook groups' descriptions. *Applying*: choosing words to complete a text; relating historical to current events; illustrating what is culture shock; interpreting video information. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS): *Analyzing*: pointing out causes and effects of globalization; infer the correct words for each sentence; comparing characters' attitudes. *Evaluating*: comparing posts; judging the use of hashtags; comparing experiences on cultural identity and debating. *Creating*: writing a pin on Pinterest; writing a tweet; creating a post on Tumblr; hypothesizing about stereotypes; writing a blog entry in groups; design and create a wall mural Scaffolding strategies: Visuals, group and pair work, relate content to prior knowledge and experiences, organizing information.
Communication	Linguistic skills**:** *Reading skills:* reading a quote; reading a text about English as a global language; reading the poem "The Immigrant's Song", by Tishani Doshi; definition of belongingness; reading and reflecting on the descriptions of Facebook groups; blog entry about the author's Maya roots; reading a piece of news describing discriminatory attitudes; reading articles about discrimination to do the final project. *Writing skills:* writing a pin on Pinterest to promote inclusion; writing tweets on the influence of social media on people's view

towards minority groups; using words from English language varieties to reflect on meaning across cultures; writing a blog entry about social media influence on communication and relationships; establish conversations with people from all over the world via Tandem App.

Speaking skills: pair discussion on the influence of English as a lingua franca; brainstorming in pairs about the reasons behind immigration; group discussion about racism; pair discussion about culture and identity; speaking in pairs while imitating body gestures; speaking about discrimination and solutions in home and expert groups for the jigsaw project.

*Listening skills***:** listening to a video about global citizenship; listening to a TedTalk about Harriet Tubman; reflecting on cultural identity by listening to a podcast; watching a YouTuber talking about cultural assimilation; watching and reflecting on culture shock in South Korea; watching an episode from sitcom *Blackish* and discuss about racism; listening and watching a video from comedian Trevor Noah in Soweto.

Language Triptych:

Language of learning: vocabulary: globalization (interconnectedness, global citizenship, expanse), immigration (human rights, refugees, awareness, integration), cultural diversity (identity, assimilation, culture shock, cultural sensitivity), discrimination (privilege, violence, stereotype, prejudice), community and feelings (embrace, belongingness, inclusion, exclusion, rejection). *Grammar:* interrogatives, concessive clauses, relative clauses, present simple, present perfect, present continuous, past simple, conditional,

Language for learning: comparing and contrasting information (videos about racism, identity and cultural assimilation), organizing and structuring information (jigsaw activity, writing activities through social media), describing information (articles about immigration, xenophobia and racism).

	Language through learning: new expressions and vocabulary related to English varieties, other cultures, internet slang, human rights' vocabulary…etc.
Culture	Students will develop their intercultural competence by working on immigration and social inclusion. To do so, learners will reflect on the similarities and differences among cultures by studying language varieties and other cultures (Pakistan, Indian and South African English). This exposure to diversity has the objective of promoting appreciation and respect towards it, aiming at ending discriminatory and racist attitudes
Materials	Smartphones, tablets, laptops, pencils, markers, paper, notebooks, printer, glue, post-its.

Lesson plan: *Time to be United*
Session 1: *Going global*

Procedure: The unit starts with a Think-Pair-Share activity to make students think about globalization and its consequences on our societies. First, students must individually read the quote by Dr Martin Luther King Jr, taking notes to provide a definition for globalization. Then, they have to share it with a partner, completing the description of the concept. Finally, the action is repeated with the class as a whole to create an accurate definition. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

1. Do you know what is Globalization? Reflect on your own about the quote below, write a definition and share it with a partner. Then, try to come up with a complete definition by comparing your answers with other classmates.
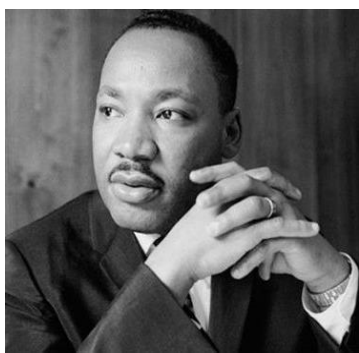
We have inherited a large house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together – black and white – Eastern and Western, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace. (Dr Martin Luther King Jr, 1967, *Where do we go from here: chaos or community*)

Procedure: Play the following video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVSgbU6WVSk where UNESCO participants explain what is global citizenship and why it is important for our societies. After that, students must explain what a global citizen is and answer some questions on interconnectedness, diversity and human rights. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

2. Watch the following video about global citizenship. Then, explain what it is like to be a global citizen and discuss the questions below with a partner.

a. Why is important to be a global citizen in an interconnected society?

b. How does diversity enrich our societies?

c. What is the role of human rights in ensuring equal opportunities for all people?

Procedure: Give students the following text adapted from this article https://www.inlinguanewdelhi.com/blogs/learn-english-open-yourself-to-opportunities on how English offer students many opportunities to study, work and learn from other cultures. Then, ask

them to rewrite the correct form of the words in bold and to choose the title from the box that best suits each paragraph. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

3. **Read the following text and modify the words in bold so sentences make sense. Later, determine which of the titles below suits best each paragraph.**

"A tool to learn other languages" - "The language of communication" -
"A global language" - "English opens doors to knowledge"

English as a global language

1:_____

Agree with it or not, but we **life** (1) in an English-dominated world. It is the language of the air (all the pilots are required to communicate in English) and the language of the land as well, since more than half a billion people in the world **usage** (2) English as their primary or secondary language. English is the most commonly spoken language around the world, and it is one of the official languages of the United Nations along with **Arab** (3), Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

2:_____

It is a status symbol, and an 'uber cool' way to communicate. This elite status and wide expanse of English makes it one of the most sought-after languages in the world. **Written** (4) and speaking English fluently can open a world of opportunities to a person. Won't it be fun to write letters and talk to interesting people? to write blogs on areas of your **interesting** (5) and let other people know you better, so as to influence and impress them?

3:_____

Today's media — such as the Internet, television, and the press — gives you almost unlimited access to knowledge. The bulk of this information is in English. With good English language skills, it would become **ease** (6) for you to access this knowledge. The world calls English "the language of communication", since it has become the **prefer** (7) language of almost all international conferences and forums. Moreover, prestigious events like the Olympics and international pageants such as the Miss World and Miss Universe contests are conducted in English.

4:_____

Talk to people from all over the world, make a lasting **impressive** (8) with your English conversation, comment on social sites fluently by learning written English. When people see your written English, they judge you. If your written English is good, you come across as an informed and **knowledge** (9) person, you can talk to people easily in foreign countries by learning and speaking English fluently, and you will definitely be **understand** (10) better if you speak English fluently. The benefits are many: you make friends easily, you discover other cultures, and also get to conduct business comfortably.

Procedure: In this activity, students must work in pairs to reflect on the causes and effects of globalization and English as a global language. To start, suggest students to think about, for example, trading, exchanges of goods, technology or mobility for them to create a T-Chart to represent some of the causes and consequences of globalization for our societies. After that, students have to write a list of examples on how English influences their own culture and language, such as vocabulary, practices or lifestyle. Finally, ask students to reflect on the questions below concerning cultural and linguistic diversity. **Timing**: 20 minutes.
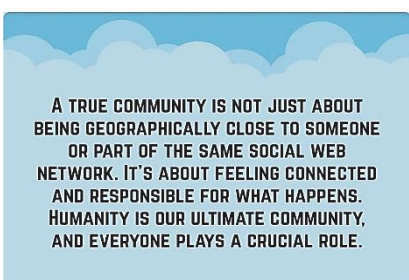
4. With a partner, think about some of the causes and effects of globalization for our societies. After that, write a list of examples of how English influences your culture and language (for example food, advertisements, social media, lifestyle or traditions). Finally, discuss the questions below.

a. What are the consequences of English as a global language for other accents/varieties/dialects? And for other cultures?

b. Could you think of ways in which we can give visibility to other cultures and languages?

Procedure: In this activity, students must reflect on how globalization requires citizens to be not only interconnected, but also to be united united to overcome prejudices and discrimination. For that matter, learners have to log in on Pinterest in order to create a board (which can be public or private) and start writing a digital portfolio by including others' pins and their own's. To that end, guide them to search for "global citizenship", "community" or "diversity", and to write their own pin to promote inclusion and fight discrimination. Finally, ask them to share it with a classmate, and to discuss on the pin (https://pin.it/3C0pjka) and questions below concerning diversity. Also, students could use Pinterest as a portfolio throughout the unit. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

5. The "world house" we live in leads to the necessity of working together as a big family. Log in on Pinterest and create a board named "My digital portfolio". Then, search "global citizenship" and have a look at quotes, art and posters. Save some of them in your board and write a pin on how we can promote inclusion and action against discrimination. After that, share your publication with a partner and reflect together on the pin and questions.

A TRUE COMMUNITY IS NOT JUST ABOUT BEING GEOGRAPHICALLY CLOSE TO SOMEONE OR PART OF THE SAME SOCIAL WEB NETWORK. IT'S ABOUT FEELING CONNECTED AND RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS. HUMANITY IS OUR ULTIMATE COMMUNITY, AND EVERYONE PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE.

➔ **Access this pin** https://pin.it/3C0pjka **and reflect on the questions below:**

a. How can we make our societies more inclusive?

b. Do you think social media platforms can be used to strengthen communities? How?

Procedure: This warm-up activity consists on making students reflect on immigrants and the reasons why they move to another country. For that matter, students must discuss in pairs about own or others' experiences moving abroad, and then use an online word cloud generator https://PollEv.com/free_text_polls/nwEvRbHsHgFW2ydiCdluR/respond to add their ideas, opinions and feelings on immigration. **Timing:** 5 minutes.

1. Discuss in pairs about friends/relatives that come from another country, where they come from and why did they move. Then, brainstorm on immigration to create a word cloud.

Procedure: In this activity, students must read the poem *The Immigrant's Song*, by Tishani Doshi (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56734/the-immigrants-song), use their creativity to draw a small sketch on what the poem inspires them, and to answer on their own some questions. After self-reflection points, explain learners how the Indian Welsh author addresses the division of India into India and Pakistan, caused by the British Empire, which gave place to violence among religious and ethnic groups. Therefore "the forests of the dead". Then, students must discuss in pairs some questions concerning cultural identity and social inclusion. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

2. Read the whole poem "The immigrant's Song", by Tishani Doshi, and interpret the meaning of the following lines. Sketch something in the canvas to represent your thoughts/feelings on the poem, and then, discuss with a partner the questions below.

"Let us not name our old friends
who are unravelling like fairy tales
in the forests of the dead.
Naming them will not bring them back.
Let us stay here, and wait for the future
to arrive, for grandchildren to speak
in forked tongues about the country
we once came from"

Self-reflection points:

a. Who are the protagonists of the poem?

b. Which feelings do these lines convey you?

c. Look at the three last lines, how is cultural identity addressed regarding immigration?

Pair discussion questions:

d. What part of someone's identity do you think people first notice?

e. How is literature and poetry important to people's culture and identity?

f. What could we do to help immigrants settle and integrate in our societies?

Procedure: Play the following TedTalk https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-courage-of-harriet-tubman-janell-hobson#review about the story of Harriet Tubman, and ask students to comment on the forum section of that video by adding their own opinions and answering to one of the responses. Then, ask learners to make five groups of five people to draw analogies between the video and reality nowadays, reflecting on the systemic racism in the US. **Timing:** 15 minutes.

3. Watch the following TedTalk about Harriet Tubman and contribute to the discussion forum by responding to one of the answers or by adding your own. Afterwards, make groups of five to compare this piece of history with current events in the US. Use the statements below to guide your arguments and share your opinions with the rest of the class.

Group reflection ideas on the issue of racism in the US:

a. America as the land of opportunities: a country made great by its cultural diversity

b. Equal opportunities for every citizen and respect for human rights

c. Social power and white privilege

d. Violence, discrimination, and the role of news media

Procedure: For this activity, students are required to gather in groups of give people and reflect how social media influences people's views towards immigrants. To do so, ask students to watch this status https://twitter.com/UNHCRUSA/status/1266866988741083136?s=19 uploaded by the UN Refugees Agency. Then, ask them to search on Twitter "welcome refugees" and "#WelcomeRefugees", since there are significant differences in the use of both phrases: while the first one is mainly used by Spanish users to convey hate messages, the second one promotes refugees' inclusion. After thinking about this, students must write at least a tweet talking about how social media influences our opinion towards certain people and the need to be united. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

4. In the same groups, watch the status uploaded on Twitter by the UN Refugees Agency. Then, search on Twitter Spain "welcome refugees" and "#WelcomeRefugees", judge the use of the phrases for such different purposes and how social media influences our opinions towards people. Finally, choose a picture representative of a discriminated group and write, at least, a tweet to raise awareness about the importance of being united in crisis situations. *Remember to use adequate hashtags to make your information more accessible.

Consider these two questions before writing your tweet:

a. How do media represent immigrants and refugees?

b. How does this influence the audience's perception towards other cultures?

Session 3: *Inter(net) connected*

Procedure: In this first activity, students are asked to reflect on friendship in social media and in real life, and if they have met people from other countries. Then, they must use Padlet (https://padlet.com/) and add multimedia content to a digital wall in order to represent how social media connect people**. Timing:** 5 minutes.

1. Do you have any friends from other countries? Use Padlet to upload any multimedia content to create a digital wall about the role of internet and social media on connecting people from different cultures.

My Padlet wall: https://padlet.com/almumarkz/eoj9us476tf83mp7 *Attach there gifs, videos, stickers, voice messages, emojis… be creative!

Procedure: Play the following podcast called "An Insider-Outsider Perspective" (00:00-08:15 https://immigrantlypod.com/podcasts/an-insider-outsider-perspective), where Saks Afridi, a Pakistani American artist, describes his experiences as an immigrant in New York. There, students will also find the transcript to follow the conversation. Then, ask them to discuss in pairs some excerpts from the podcast. **Timing:** 15 minutes.

2. Listen to an extract of the podcast "An Insider-Outsider Perspective" (00:00-08:15), where the host, Saadia, interviews Saks Afridi, a Pakistani American artist who talks about being an immigrant in New York. After that, discuss in pairs the following excerpts and questions:

a. Reflect on Saadia's statement about the artist's name: "people who grew up in Pakistan or even Afghanistan knows that it represents an ethnic identity. It represents a tribe so I'm sure you're a proud of that". Why did then Saks Afridi change his name?

b. Why and how do you think that having to change your name affects your identity?

c. When talking about being a global citizen, Saks says that he does not think that he has a place to call home, since he does not consider New York and Pakistan: "either one more home or less home". However, he concludes that "New York is where my soul is". Why do you think he feels like that?
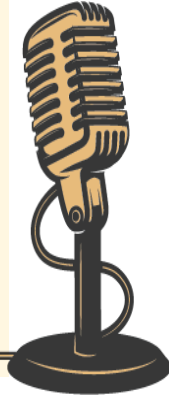
Procedure: This activity is intended to make learners reflect on how certain cultural groups have to change their own identity, and sometimes values, to fit in westernized societies. Play the following video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15bZTsOitT4&feature=youtu.be with English subtitles, where the South African Youtuber Sibu Mpanza tells the audience his experiences regarding cultural assimilation. After that, students will reflect on the questions below with a partner. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

3. Watch the following video from Sibu Mpanza talking about cultural assimilation and answer the questions below with a partner.

a. What do you think about the phrase "Assimilate or Die"?

b. Have you or one of your relatives/friends ever been forced to go through the process of assimilation in order to fit in society?

c. How would you feel about having to change your name or manner of speaking? How important is it to embrace your identity?

d. Considering the experiences of Sibu, how is assimilation completely opposed to integration?

Procedure: This activity aims at developing students' awareness on how what we say or how we behave may mean different things for others. In doing so, students must read an extract from Hart, Rinvolucri and Puchta (2011) *English in mind level 1: teacher's resource book,* where an interviewer asks David Crystal about the meaning of silence in other cultures. After that reflection, students are required to read some sentences in different English varieties, such as

South African, Pakistani, Indian and New Zealand's English. Then, they must read the meaning in brackets, and choose the correct word for each statement. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

4. When we communicate with people from other cultures, we must be aware that words and behaviours might be interpreted in a different way. Read the brief conversation below between a journalist and linguist David Crystal. Then, read the excerpts and infer the correct word for each of the sentences from the words in brackets.

Interviewer: And now on to a completely different question. When people are silent, does that mean different things in different languages?

David Crystal: Oh, absolutely. If in Japan a man says to a woman *Will you marry me? And she is silent*, this means *yes*. In English it probably doesn't mean yes – it could mean that the woman is not sure. In Igbo, a language they speak in West Africa, if a man says *Will you marry me?* And the woman doesn't say a word and stays there, it means *no*, but if she doesn't say anything and runs away, it means *yes*!

*South Africa***: (bioscope**, **walkie talkie**, **robot**, **café**)

a. Now now, don't cry, I'll take you to the _____ (cinema) tomorrow.

b. The police asked him to stop at the next _____ (traffic light).

c. _____(fried chicken snack) is a traditional South African street food dish.

d. She is going to the _____ (grocery store) to buy the newspaper.

*Pakistan***: (boots**, **hotel**)

e. The trainer asked him to wear a nice pair of _____ (tennis shoes) for the basketball game.

f. The _____ (restaurant) servings in Islamabad were twice the size of a single serving.

*India***: (issueless**, **opticals**)

g. You might need _____ (eyeglasses) for distance vision.

h. Anuja and Ranjit are an _____(childless) couple, they are focused on their company.

*New Zealand***: (bush**, **superette**)

i. The new 24h _____ (supermarket) is already full of costumers.

j. In Māori tradition, people and _____ (forest) are spiritually connected.
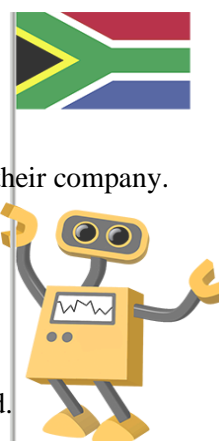
Procedure: To do this task, students must be provided the following link https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/cultural-sensitivity to Tumblr's cultural sensitivity tag, where they will find different posts regarding cultural diversity and awareness. After checking it, learners must be gathered in five groups of five in order to reflect on the role of social media to establish relationships with people from other cultures. Moreover, groups must discuss the positive and negative effects of using social networking sites, and how they have changed human relationships and communication. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

5. Have a look at this tag https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/cultural-sensitivity**. Then, in groups of five, write a short post on Tumblr reflecting on the role of social media to meet people from all over the world, the pros and cons and how they have changed the manner we relate to each other.**

<div style="border:1px solid #ccc; padding:5px;">

Session 4: *Culture shock*

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Procedure: This is an icebreaker activity that aims at developing students' intercultural awareness by telling them to imitate body gestures from other cultures. To start, learners be given a card that contains a gesture from a specific country, which they have to imitate throughout a brief conversation with a partner. The idea is for students to try to guess and spot what is "different" from the other, paying attention to body language in a conversation. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

1A. Play a guessing game in pairs: each of you will be given a card, which the other cannot see. Act just like the card tells you, ask each other questions and to try to discover what your partner means with their gestures.

Head bobble ("yes"/ "no" in India)

Bulls horns (greet in South Africa)

Tongue click ("no" in Croatian)

Pointing with your lips (Filipinas)

Rising brows ("no" in Turkish)

Pointing with your chin (Kenya)

1B. Now, imagine you are an international student, a sojourner or an immigrant that arrives where you live. Describe some of the things you would find different/shocking, such as people's habits, gestures, daily routines, etc.

Procedure: Play the following video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQTpQMVBkcQ about culture shock, where an interviewer asks different people which things from South Korea have impacted them. After watching it, ask students to give an example of culture shock, to interpret a statement and to discuss how would they feel if they were abroad and perceived as "strange". **Timing:** 10 minutes.

2. Watch the following video about culture shock in South Korea and follow the instructions below. Then, discuss the last question with a partner and relate to the people from other cultures that are treated with discrimination.

a. Illustrate with an example what is "culture shock"

b. Reflect on this interview: "Sometimes, people are unaware of people like me, you know, they are surprised […] You get use to this stuff, but it's also about awareness, you gotta' get used to foreigners or black people. There are a lot of people prejudice about black people, but it's just tv. We don't carry guns, I'm not a gangster". What is the role of media in creating stereotypes and to what extent do you believe it shapes people's perception towards others?

c. How would you feel if you were abroad and people would stare as if you come from another planet? Has it ever happened to you?

Procedure: Play a clip from episode number ten, season five, of *Black-ish*: "Black Like Us", which deals with the topic of colourism and discrimination. Ask students to focus on the opinions and attitudes of each character towards the incident happened at school concerning Diane's photograph. Then, ask them to summarize the idea of this chapter, compare the family member's reactions and reflect on the concept of "whitewashing" in mass media. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

3. Watch the episode "Black Like Us" (00:00-09:33) from *Black-ish*, and analyze the episode in groups of five. Follow the instructions below.

- Summarize this episode's plot. What do they mean by "issues with complexion"?
- Compare the attitudes of Rainbow, Dre and Diane towards the photograph incident. Who do you agree with the most and why?

- Considering what was mentioned about Lupita Nyong'o, search for actress Yalitza Aparicio in her recent cover for ¡Hola! Magazine. Were you aware of "whitewashing"? How is that a threat to identity?

Procedure: To do this task, students must be gathered in groups of five and choose a continent. Then, they have to choose a country, and to make a list of prejudices and stereotypes they consider people have towards the target country and which ones they could have towards them. After that, they must sign up in Tandem App (https://www.tandem.net/es), which connects people seeking to improve their linguistic and cultural skills. There, they will ask people about stereotypes towards Spanish people and which are some taboos and customs in their country. Finally, they have to reflect on questions concerning stereotypes and social media. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

4. In groups of five, choose a continent, and each of the members must choose a country. After that, make a list of prejudices and/or stereotypes people may have towards the members of that culture and hypothesize which ones would they have towards you. Then, log in to Tandem App, and search people from these places to start a conversation and compile stereotypes they have towards you, as well as taboos and customs in that country. Finally, reflect with your group the following questions and present your findings to your classmates.

- Do you believe that certain people are more subjected to stereotypes than others?
- How can social media, newspapers and television help avoiding stereotypes?

Session 5: *Belongingness*

Procedure: To start this session, students will be given the definition of "belonging" by the Cambridge Dictionary, which they must read and recall a moment when they felt they belonged to somewhere. Then, learners should reflect on the questions below, which concern identity and inclusion and exclusion in social groups and discuss it with a classmate. **Timing**: 10 minutes.

1. **Read this definition of belonginess and think of a moment when you felt like you belonged somewhere**. **Then, describe it to a partner and discuss together these questions:**

"To feel happy or comfortable in a situation" (Cambridge Dictionary)

- Did you feel like that because you were in a certain place or with certain people?
- How are we connected and what does it have to do with identity?
- In which ways is this feeling related to inclusion/exclusion within a community?

Procedure: For this task, provide students with links to Facebook groups where people share and talk about traditional food (https://www.facebook.com/groups/284737538704206/about/), cultural adaptation (https://www.facebook.com/groups/nisaff/) and experiences and advices for moving abroad (https://www.facebook.com/groups/366961367030120/). Ask students to read the description of each group, and to reflect on how virtual communities provide its members with support and care. After that, tell students to summarize what is the purpose of each group by looking at their descriptions, and to discuss with a partner some questions concerning the sense of belongingness. **Timing:** 10 minutes.

2. **Read the description of these forums and reflect on how Facebook groups and other virtual communities can provide people with support and understanding, especially when they are far from home. Summarize the purpose of each group, and then discuss with a partner the question below.**

- **Filipino cooking group**
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/284737538704206/about/
- **Nigerians in South Africa**
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/nisaff/
- **Moving to New Zealand**
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/366961367030120/
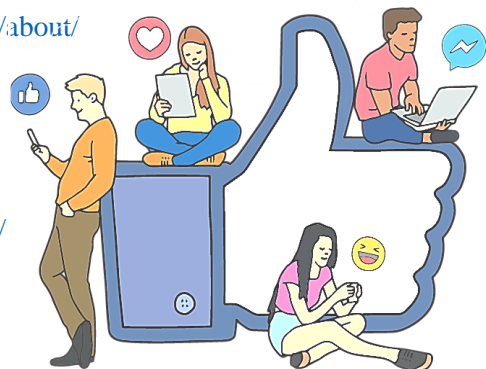
a. Do you belong to or follow any online groups/clubs?

b. In what ways social media groups could help people adapt to a new culture?

Procedure: Before playing this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s5iz6ml-qA from Trevor Noah in Soweto (Johannesburg), ask students to research on the apartheid and what it meant to the black community from South Africa. Then, play the video and ask students to reflect on belongingness, culture shock, cultural differences and similarities, the importance of Nelson Mandela and the issue of colourism. **Timing:** 20 minutes.

3. Before starting, do a little research in pairs about the South African apartheid. Then, watch this video from Trevor Noah, a South African comedian and television host speaking about his roots in Soweto (Johannesburg) and analyze the following things:

a. Explain this sentence: "I felt something, a voice inside reminding me of what I had forgotten".

b. Give an example of culture shock he experienced in New York; and an example of culture shock you would have in Soweto.

c. Did you find any similarities between Soweto's culture and your own?

d. Which is the importance of Nelson Mandela, or Madiba (in Xhosa language), for Soweto people like his grandmother?

e. Why were the other kids afraid from Trevor? Do you think this is related to colourism?

Procedure: In groups of five, ask students to go over this blog entry https://www.migrantrootsmedia.org/home/2020/4/14/recovering-maya-roots-gio-batz-giovanni-batz written by Giovanni B'atz, who talks about his Maya identity. Then, students must reflect on some ideas taken from this post and write down their ideas to later begin a group debate. Finally, they should compare these experiences to the ones told by Trevor Noah in the previous activity. **Timing**: 20 minutes.

4. Gather in groups of five and have a look at the blog entry called "Recovering Maya Roots", by Gio B'atz, and reflect on the following ideas. After that, take turns to present your thoughts in a group debate about cultural identity. Finally, share your conclusions with the rest of the class.

* Write down bullet point ideas on the following concepts, and then debate with your group mates. Finally, compare this blog entry with Trevor Noah's video in Soweto.

a. The issue of original names and feeling identified with your cultural background

b. Cultural transmission: his *abuelita*'s teachings and stories; her daughter Ixq'anil

c. The rejection of others from your own original community

d. Embracing diversity and challenging prejudices/stereotypes

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| Session 6: *Time to be United* |
| :---: |

Procedure: This is the final project, which consists on a jigsaw activity. First, explain students how nowadays' diverse societies require not only interconnectedness, but also understanding to promote social cohesion. Second, show students the following piece of news: https://www.apdha.org/cordoba/?p=620 describing how there are racist and discriminatory attitudes towards other cultural and ethnic groups in our society. Then, ask them to make five groups of five people, and to gather in expert groups to discuss the articles provided. After 15', tell them to return to their home groups, and spend the rest of the session writing a blog entry to give visibility to immigrants and their many contributions to our society (45'). **Timing**: 1 hour.

1. In groups of four, reflect on this piece of news and fight back prejudices and discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants by giving visibility to their actions via social media. To do so, take the roles explained below, and gather in expert groups to read the articles provided. After discussing the content of the links and having though about the project, return to your home groups and start writing a blog entry considering all members' information.

Roles for the jigsaw project

▪ **UN expert on racism:**
   https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/about-racism**.** You must read that article with the
   other members of your expert group. T hen, share your contributions with your home
   group, contributing with information regarding racism, its causes and how to fight it.

▪ **UN expert on xenophobia:**
   https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/Themes/Racial/Documents/Xenophobia.pdf You must read this
   article along with the other members of your expert group. Then, you have to explain how
   xenophobia affects our societies, and to defend the importance of respecting immigrants.

- **Human Rights' expert:**

  https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/Summary_Report_In_Search_of_Dignity.pdf read this document. You are in charge of defending immigrants' rights by supporting your project with the different laws that give people the same opportunities.

- **Social conflict expert:**

  https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/covid-19-has-made-the-invisible-visible-70837 read this article and reflect with your group on how this global crisis has highlighted the contribution of immigrants in certain areas of our societies. Then, decide which area will be represented by each group and why.

- **Leader:** You are in charge of maintaining group work balanced; revising grammatical and vocabulary errors when writing the project; deciding the structure of the entry and searching the pictures. In expert groups, you must agree with the other leaders to decide the structure of the project, the purpose and which is the expected final result.
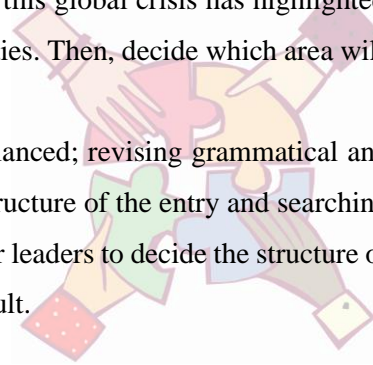
Session 7: _InVisible_

Procedure: This last session is to reflect on the unit contents as well as on what do students think about discriminatory attitudes. Firstly, ask students to reflect in pairs on the consequences of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, briefly describing their thoughts, feelings and hopes (15'). Secondly, ask them to print black and white pictures of diverse people, with the purpose of creating a monochromatic photo mural named "Time to be United", showing immigrants contribution to our societies. Then, students will write their previous ideas on fluorescent post-its, framing the collage and highlighting the images of all individuals. Additionally, students could use a photo wall online generator such as https://photo-collage.net/photo-collage maker/?slots=53&format=43&text=&version=1&orientation=L&motif=&placeholder=&mask=&number=&letters=&language=de&nr=279 to create a similar mural online, and upload it, along with the blog post, on Twitter (45'). **Timing:** 1 hour.

1. Work in pairs and think about what we have covered in this unit and discuss how racism and xenophobia continue to be a disease in today's societies. List your opinions, feelings, wishes and hope comments with bullet points.

2. Now, make your project visual by selecting pictures from diverse people and designing a photo wall. Print black and white photographs and make a collage under the title "Time to be United". After that, use fluorescent post-its and write your previous comments there, placing your messages as a photo frame. Additionally, use a collage generator to create an online wall and upload your projects to Twitter.

IV. CONCLUSION

As explained in the theoretical background, globalization and the digital era are constantly shaping culture and language, requiring education to shift in order to address students' needs. In this dissertation we reviewed literature related to intercultural communication and ICT with the purpose of designing a didactic proposal that addresses the implications of living in a multicultural and globalized world. In this line, foreign language education from an intercultural approach plays a major role, since it can provide learners with both linguistic skills and attitudes that are essential to establish dialogue and relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is because an education based on intercultural values has benefits at an individual and at a social level.

On the one hand, an intercultural approach to EFL benefits learners at an individual level since it develops their linguistic skills while learning values such as tolerance, respect for human rights, appreciation for diversity, empathy and openness towards other cultures. Consequently, students develop appreciation for other cultures and their own, using the target language to explore other perspectives and moving beyond stereotypes. Therefore, students acquire the intercultural skills and linguistic proficiency that enables them to successfully communicate across cultures. On the other hand, interculturally educated citizens are more knowledgeable towards cultural and linguistic diversity, thus reducing misunderstandings and conflicts among culturally diverse groups. This is due to the fact that individuals acquire a broader sense of respect, essential to stop discrimination and boost democratic culture. Then, by educating people in values of solidarity will ultimately create inclusive and fair societies, benefitting the international community as a whole.

Likewise, introducing ICT tools, such as social media platforms, enhances students' academic development and experience, especially regarding intercultural learning. Since the net is a place where people from all around the world share information and interact with others, it favors the transmission and continuity of cultural knowledge and values. Following this, social media platforms have become essential in our daily lives, making it necessary to stay constantly connected. For this reason, the literature review was focused on ICT and intercultural communication, stressing the influence of social media on users' identity and perception towards others. Therefore, using communication technologies for educational purposes is a way of taking advantage of these tools to favour students' engagement and interaction with other cultures and people. In the same way, exceptional situations, such as the recently occurred lockdown, underscored the necessity of cooperation to solve global challenges. This demands of us to come up with creative solutions to provide all students with equal opportunities to access education and internet, defending their rights to fulfil themselves in every sense.

Besides that, the didactic proposal must be understood as a call for action against harmful attitudes such as racism, xenophobia and social exclusion. Particularly in times of crisis, the most disadvantaged groups are the most severely affected, becoming the subject of discriminatory attacks. It is thus crucial to appeal to common sense and stay united when facing adversities, stopping discriminatory ideologies from growing and governing. We must combat systemic racism, violence and exclusion, teaching new generations to fight hatred and social injustice by appreciating multiculturalism and the richness that cultural diversity brings. It is only by working together that our communities can overcome the challenges we face, and to that end we must row in the same direction to ensure a sound future.

However, the main limitation of this piece of research was the impossibility of collecting actual data from participants. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, it was not feasible to conduct a research in a secondary school in order to test activities and measure students' attitudes, thus results could not be obtained and verified. This has had a direct impact on the research design, as the practical and methodological section are developed around a didactic proposal, and the conclusion section cannot provide a thorough discussion of results. Notwithstanding, future research and projects on ICT and intercultural communication could provide insight about the effectiveness of the activities to promote cultural learning. Additionally, this study advocates for an in-depth study on intercultural identities and community construction in the net, as social media and digital communication are always evolving.

To conclude, holistic education must develop students' academically and personally, teaching them to think critically and see the world through wider eyes by valuing others' perspectives and ways of living. There must be a commitment to provide accessible education for everyone, ensuring equal opportunities for development and growth so that children could improve the quality of their lives and that of their community. It is through an individual change that one can change the world, and thus an intercultural approach is indispensable for people to acquire the linguistic and cultural skills necessary to become global citizens. This will, eventually, develop individuals aware of their responsibility towards humankind, eventually taking an active role to change societies by promoting peaceful coexistence between peoples.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"
(Mandela, 2003, *Lighting your way to a better future*).

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