

IMPLEMENTING AN INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM IN A
COLOMBIAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Introduction	3
Theoretical Framework	11
Research Design	18
Data Analysis and Findings	27
Conclusions	42
References	46
Annexes	52

Abstract

This is a qualitative study that analyzes the implications of an intercultural language immersion program in a private bilingual school in La Calera, Colombia. The immersion program was implemented by creating artificial cultural environments across the school, after finding a disparity on the third grade students' reading skill. Only foreign cultural activities were selected for this program, expecting to promote natural interactions in the target language without being part of an academic activity. The purpose of the study was to analyze the influence of the program on the participants' reading skill and Intercultural Sensitivity. Data was collected using questionnaires, observation notes and journal logs; and it was analyzed using a triangulation method. Findings suggest that the exposure to foreign cultural activities outside the classroom could promote a spontaneous use of the target language, and therefore change the perception that students have towards the foreign language. Moreover, findings indicate that this type of programs could have a positive influence on the students' reading skill, as well as a similar effect on the students' perceptions of other cultures; or in other words, their Intercultural Sensitivity.

Keywords: Intercultural Sensitivity, Immersion Programs, Reading Skill

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo busca analizar las implicaciones de un programa de inmersión intercultural en inglés como lengua extranjera en un colegio bilingüe en La Calera, Colombia. El programa de inmersión fue implementado a través de la creación de ambientes culturales artificiales dentro del colegio, luego de encontrar una disparidad entre las habilidades de lectura de los estudiantes de tercero de primaria. Durante el programa, solo se utilizaron actividades pertenecientes a la cultura extranjera, con el propósito de promover interacciones espontáneas en

la segunda lengua por fuera del ámbito académico. El objetivo de la investigación fue analizar la influencia del programa de inmersión en las habilidades de lectura y la sensibilidad intercultural de los participantes. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de cuestionarios, notas de observación y diarios; los cuales se analizaron usando un método de triangulación. Los resultados sugieren que la exposición a actividades culturales extranjeras por fuera del aula podría promover el uso espontáneo de la segunda lengua; y por consiguiente, cambiar la percepción que tienen los estudiantes acerca de esta. Además, los resultados indican que este tipo de programas podrían influenciar positivamente en las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes, a la vez que podrían influenciar en su sensibilidad intercultural.

Palabras clave: Sensibilidad Intercultural, Programas de Inmersión, Habilidades Escritas.

Implementing an Intercultural Language Immersion Program in a Colombian Bilingual School

Introduction

Bilingualism is a matter that has considerably grown through the last few decades. This can be easily evidenced by looking at the numerous bilingual schools that exist nowadays in Bogota, Colombia. One of the reasons for this tendency is globalization, which has created a growing educational demand for bilingual schools and has forced some schools that were not bilingual, to become part of the change in order to remain competitive in the educational market (MEN, 2018). As a result, schools have built their curricula relying on conceptions or theories of bilingualism; which is why we consider bilingualism a topic worthy of studying.

The present study was carried out in a private bilingual school in La Calera, in a medium-high socioeconomic context with third grade students. By the time the study was implemented, the school was meeting the four parameters that according to Ordoñez most bilingual schools in Colombia follow in order to create an artificial bilingual environment: Introducing the language at the earliest possible age, learning academic areas in the foreign language, hiring as many native foreign language teachers as possible, and the requirement that everyone in the school speaks in the foreign language, in and outside the classroom (Ordoñez, 2011). However, all these actions have resulted insufficient in the sake of promoting an efficient bilingual environment within the school; taking into account that although the majority of the students have been together since preschool, nearly half of them struggles with reading and writing activities. Furthermore, the disparity among the students' reading skill, could be related to what Ordoñez states about the success in a foreign language learning process, which depends on the real need

for using it (2011). Therefore, we strongly believe that by creating the need for using the language outside the classroom through a language immersion program, the students' reading skill could be boosted.

However, language is not an isolated communicative tool and is closely related to culture; in fact, when students face a new language, they also face a new culture. Moreover, some cultural patterns are passed down through generations by using the language and can become part of it. Therefore, teaching a language without taking culture into account is a mistake. For centuries, cultural differences have been a reason for discrimination and exclusion, and according to Byrd and Carter, building cultural competences on the students could reduce discrimination (2016). Yet, the term 'Cultural Competence' is very broad, which is why we attempt to focus on the effect of this language immersion program on the students' ability to recognize cultural differences, or in other words, their Intercultural Sensitivity.

In this paper, we discuss the importance of a real need to use the language and evaluate the dependence between language and culture, followed by a conceptual revision of the concepts: Culture, Interculturality, Intercultural Sensitivity and Reading Skill. Then, with the purpose of creating a need for using the language, a language immersion program with intercultural components in order to comply with the language-culture dependence is applied. After the application, the collected data is analyzed and conclusions about the influence of the program on the students' reading skill and on their intercultural sensitivity are drawn.

Statement of the problem

Although the study took place in a bilingual school where students have an important ESL input and most of them have been part of the process since kindergarten, we found a concerning disparity on the third grade students' reading skill. In detail, a relevant number of students were continuously struggling with reading comprehension exercises according to their level. Because of this problem, a survey was carried out in order to gather more information about this issue. First, students were asked if they liked to read to which only three of them answered negatively. Then, students were asked if they liked to read in English and 40% of the students, who enjoyed the reading activity, answered that they did not like to do it in English. Lastly, students were asked the reason why they did not like to read in English to what all the students answered that it was due to the high difficulty that the task represented for them. In other words, although most of the students liked to read, the lack of English skills in some of them was affecting not only their interest towards the reading task, but their academic performance as well.

A possible cause for the disparity between the students' reading skill could be the fact that they do not feel the need for using the foreign language because we have noticed that they only interact with the L2 during their English-based classes, being exposed to the foreign language for three to four hours a day in academic plots only. According to Ordoñez "everyone can learn one or several languages and the success of this learning depends on the real need or wish to use the new language(s) in authentic communication" (2011, pg. 148). In other words, if students feel that they do not actually need the foreign language outside the classroom, language will be seen as an academic subject only and the learning process will be affected; furthermore, if the

language is only present in the classrooms, the students will not wish to use it as a tool for authentic communication.

Taking these aspects into account, a possible solution to the problem was the implementation of a language immersion program, recreating foreign cultural activities in order to promote natural L2 interactions in contexts different from the regular academic plot. However, this program would not only take into account the language component but also the cultural one, taking into account that “the acquisition of a second language is also the acquisition of a second culture” (Abbasi, Alavi & Momeni, 2013, p. 8). Therefore, during the immersion program all the sessions had rich cultural components that gave the program an intercultural attribute; and led us to ask ourselves about the possible effects of the program on the students’ perceptions about other cultures. In other words, we aimed to acknowledge the importance of the foreign culture in language learning by including meaningful foreign cultural activities, while analyzing the impact of these activities on the students’ intercultural sensitivity, described as “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003, p. 2). Consequently, this research project implemented an intercultural language immersion program that not only aimed to contribute to the improvement of the students’ Reading Skill, but also intended to play a part on their Intercultural Sensitivity.

Another point is that language immersion programs are primarily meant to work on oral communication, recreating real life situations with the purpose of eliciting spontaneous or natural communication between participants. However, taking into account that the problem that was found in the third grade students was a disparity in their reading skill, our immersion program needed to transcend the traditional emphasis and to have an influence not only in the students oral

communication but also in their reading skill. For this reason, we included written instructions in every session and analyzed the impact of these by observing the students' accuracy when following the instructions. That is, this research intended to address the reading problem through an immersion program that created the need for using the language in a natural way, and attempted to improve the student's reading skill through non-academic activities.

To this end, the first question that we planned to answer with this research was: what is the impact of implementing an intercultural language immersion program in a bilingual school, on third grade students' reading skill?, which is directly related to the reading problem found among the third grade students. Nonetheless, we considered the sociocultural aspect to be equally important, and that is why we wanted to know; how could an intercultural language immersion program influence the students' Intercultural Sensitivity? Thus, our research objectives were to establish the impact of an intercultural language immersion program on the reading skill of third grade students from a bilingual school, and to examine the influence that an intercultural language immersion program could have on the students' Intercultural Sensitivity.

Rationale

Teaching a foreign language in a bilingual school in Colombia is usually simplified to teaching other subjects in English, and schools tend to forget that language is a tool meant for communicating with others. We all learn a language because people around us uses that tool to communicate between them and at some point we feel the need to communicate with them, which leads us to learning their language. One of the problems when teaching a foreign language in a bilingual school, is that the students already have a tool for communicating their ideas and since the new tool that the school is trying to teach them does not seem useful outside the

classroom, they perceive it only as an academic subject. As mentioned by Ordoñez (2011), the students' success when learning a language will depend on the need and wish to learn it, so the lack of need does affect the learning process. Meanwhile, culture is also an essential component of language and therefore it should be taken into account when teaching a language. With this in mind, we decided to combine the cultural component of language with the importance of needing the language to communicate, in an intercultural language immersion program. In this section, we present the reasons why we believe this research is relevant in different levels. With this in mind, we first talk about the relevance of this research in Colombian bilingual schools, following with its relevance in the academic community and the society in general.

Taking into account the importance that bilingual education has acquired in Colombia, this research could offer alternatives for approaching the necessity of having a bilingual country, in order to meet the globalization demands (MEN, 2018). Although the offer of bilingual schools in Colombia is varied, most bilingual schools in Colombia still fail to create an actual need for using the language outside the classrooms, which interferes with the purpose of having authentic communication, and therefore it affects the language learning process. In fact, the most common solution to this problem nowadays is to send the students on international exchanges that are usually expensive and therefore, an exclusive solution that few people have access to. With this program, we aim to offer a different alternative to create the need for using the foreign language without having to go abroad, which in our perspective could help improving the foreign language learning processes in Colombian bilingual schools.

The academic community is always seeking for new approaches to cover a topic and each new perspective opens endless possibilities for upcoming research. In that sense, the fact that

there are few or none researches that have tried to describe the effect of an immersion program on children's Intercultural Sensitivity, perhaps makes this research a very attractive topic for the academic community. Even more, taking into account that immersion programs are usually found as alternatives for improving mainly oral communication, a focus on the reading skill could show a different perspective of immersion programs which would allow different types of future applications. Actually, the study might open new doors for future language learning solutions, in the sake of increasing the cultural input in language learning environments.

At the same time, there could be a positive contribution to society in general in terms of respect and inclusion. Discrimination is a problem that affects human relations in general, and is basically an impossibility to understand and respect other people's differences. In this respect, people traveling abroad to learn English, especially those that do not have a lot of money, tend to face different types of discrimination. Moreover, people that go to other countries to learn a foreign language, usually go through an acculturation process where their native traditions are replaced by the ones from the new culture due to their position of disadvantage, which in the end affects their identities (Del Valle & Del Valle, 2016). With that in mind, we intended to analyze the effect of the immersion program on the students' Intercultural Sensitivity intending to prevent negative intercultural encounters and seeking to develop the ability to recognize cultural differences and respect them.

Thus, this research is intended to have an important impact in different academic and social levels. On one hand, it is expected be of use to the school where the research took place since the results could offer them strategies to approach bilingualism in the school, while on the other hand, the academic field should use the outcomes of this research to enrich the discussion

regarding language immersion programs and foreign language teaching. Furthermore, it is possible that it contributes to the future society, in a way that people with better Intercultural Sensitivity could be better people in the future. Taking all this into account, the benefits of this project are plenty enough to carry it on.

Theoretical Framework

In the academic field, concepts tend to be defined from different perspectives depending on the context and other variables. In fact, this diversity of concepts and definitions plays a beneficial role on research projects because it enriches the discussion and most of the time, provides the researchers with a suitable point of view of the concept that they need. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to review the different theoretical viewpoints that we consider thoroughly important to the proper development of this paper. In order to do this, we evaluate different definitions or perspectives from different authors before resolving which of these definitions would guide our work. In this case, the three main constructs are Language Immersion Programs and Bilingualism, IC, and RS.

Bilingualism and Language Immersion Programs

In order to create an innovative intercultural language immersion program we first need to define what bilingualism is because in our perspective, it is the basic theoretical concept for any foreign language program. In this section we first revise different definitions of bilingualism and then review different conceptions of language immersion programs. In the end, these definitions will allow us to have a clearer conception of language immersion programs and how to create one.

Hamers and Blanc state that, “bilingualism is understood as the way learners manage two languages properly when expressing their ideas” (2000, p. 6,7). However, the word “properly” could have different interpretations and according to that definition two people with different levels of bilingualism, and both being able to express their ideas properly enough to be understood, would be equally bilingual. Therefore, we believe that the previous definition

should be combined with the one proposed by Estanga, Ecay-Torres, Ibáñez, Izaguirre, Villanua, García and Martínez, who say that bilinguals are “those subjects who were able to communicate fluently at least in 2 languages and made regular use for both” (2017, p. 145). Also, according to Hamers and Blanc, a bilingual should be able to have the ability to speak a second language while following the concepts and structures of that language (2000). Hence, we believe that bilingual people should have native-like control of all the four skills, being able to communicate their ideas fluently and thinking in English instead of translating.

Bilingualism in Colombia has become a national policy. For instance, The National Bilingualism Program is oriented towards “having citizens able to communicate in English in such a way that they move the country into universal communication processes, into the global economy, and into a cultural openness with internationally comparable standards” (Guerrero, 2008, p. 32). Which means, that for the Colombian government, bilingualism has become a vehicle for making the country a more competitive one in terms of economy and universal communication. Moreover, English is the language that the ministry of Colombia has decided to implement in public schools and is also the one that most private bilingual schools teach as a foreign language in the country. In other words, bilingualism has become a very important aspect on Colombia’s educational policies, along with an increased educational demand for private bilingual schools. For these reasons, we consider that bilingualism is a matter of national interest, and particularly English due to its importance in global economy.

Regarding language immersion programs, these are part of a teaching approach that aims to recreate foreign cultural plots to enrich foreign language learning. According to Lenker and Rhodes, “Foreign language immersion is an approach to teaching another language that involves

immersing students in the target language throughout the school day. Teachers speak only the target language to teach academic subjects, using a wide range of instructional strategies” (2007, p. 1). In other words, they provide different spaces for students to practice the foreign language in as many scenarios as possible. However, this definition only contemplates the option of having academic plots for practicing the language and does not mention the interaction between people from different cultures. According to Li, Steele, Slater, Bacon and Miller, language immersion programs are growing rapidly and “Their goals are to educate students to be bilingual and biliterate; enable academic achievement; and promote cross-cultural communication and understanding” (2016, p. 5). That is, a language immersion program is not only the interaction of two different languages but also the interaction of two different cultures and also, is not only about being bilingual but being biliterate as well, which means using both communicative and literacy skills.

Intercultural Sensitivity

A language immersion program, due to its characteristics, can tend to overshadow the learner’s native language with the purpose of guaranteeing the necessary fluency in the foreign language. However, this process can be seen as a discrimination act towards the learner’s native language and culture, which in this paper is a problem that we attempt to avoid due to the negative implications that it might have over the individual and the community in general. Which is why Intercultural Sensitivity is one of the pillars of our research. With this in mind, we define culture and its relation to language in order to understand Interculturality. Then we go through different conceptions of Intercultural Sensitivity and how that concept is closely related to our project.

“Culture is any kind of ritualized behavior that becomes meaningful for a group and that remains more or less constant and is transmitted down through the generations” (Astobiza, 2017, p. 1). That is to say, it is a set of rules that marks a behavioral path for a group of people and is in charge of regulating behavior in large scales. Taking this into account, culture would be closely related to language because is the tool that humans use in order to share their ideas. In relation with this, Abbasi, Alavi and Momeni state that “Without the study of culture, teaching a second language is inaccurate and incomplete” (2013, p. 9). And that suggests that any language teaching process should take culture into account.

Interculturality is the acknowledgement of different cultures in contact and the negotiation of meeting points between them (Gil, 2016). Therefore, the encounter of two cultures, where both sides that matched are willing to negotiate meanings, traditions, or alike, would be an example of Interculturality. In fact, the differences that arise from a cultural encounter will become an alternative to build a better understanding among the individuals and their cultures. With this in mind, and taking into account that the language immersion program had culture-based activities, the intercultural component was necessary for this project.

Bearing in mind that the program had a clear component of Interculturality, we decided to analyze the students’ Intercultural Sensitivity. In this respect, Bennet says that “the development of intercultural sensitivity describes how we gain the ability to create an alternative experience that more or less matches that of people in another culture” (2004, p. 11). Which means that, in the immersion program students would use their intercultural sensitivity to recreate the foreign cultural patterns that were present in the program sessions. But, in order to recreate them, they should be able to recognize them first, which is why Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman define

Intercultural Sensitivity as “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (2003, p. 2). According to (Bennet, as cited in Rodriguez-Izquierdo, 2018) the perception of cultural differences has six different levels: The first one is ‘Negation’, which is the rejection of cultural differences attributed to a lack of contact or disinterest; the second one is ‘Defense’, which is to admit the cultural differences but still finding one’s own culture superior; the third one is ‘Minimization’, which is to recognize cultural similarities and finding differences insignificant; the fourth one is ‘Acceptance’, that is ability to understand differences and similarities between cultures, and to acknowledge that the same behavior can have different meanings; the fifth one is ‘Adaptation’, which is to develop empathy and to allow one’s behavior to adjust without giving up one’s values; and the sixth one is ‘Integration’, which is the process of redefining one’s beliefs in order to unify cultural frameworks. Therefore, we sought to identify these perception levels among the students’ interactions, in order to identify whether the participants IS increased, or not.

In conclusion, this language immersion program could not be carried out without the inclusion of culture. Firstly, the connection between culture and language makes necessary to include the study of culture when teaching a foreign language. Secondly, the presence of two cultures (the one where the activities belonged to and their own) throughout the application of the immersion program, created an intercultural environment. And thirdly, the possibility for discrimination or cultural overshadowing within the program, due to the intercultural encounter compelled us to concentrate on the students’ intercultural sensitivity. As a result, the language immersion program did not study the language outcomes only, but the cultural ones as well; making this project an intercultural language immersion program.

Reading Skill

Although reading comprehension is frequently associated to the comprehension of long texts and its measurement is commonly linked to tests or workshops, the non-academic focus of this proposal forced us to find a different alternative to measure the students' Reading Skill (RS) throughout the program. That is, to avoid traditional tests as well as avoiding the students from noticing that their RS was being evaluated in anyway. In this subsection, we will define what the RS is and how is it related to the project, as well as the two different ways that we chose for measuring this skill.

This research sought to describe the effect of this proposal on the students' RS. According to Gómez and Ávila, "Reading is the process of identification, interpretation and perception of written or printed material" (2009, p. 55). Therefore, even though this proposal wanted to stay away from the academic plot, written material needed to be included in order to analyze reading. Consequently, the instructions of each immersion session were presented only in written form by using poster-boards (see appendix 6). Thus, the participants had to identify the characters present in the poster-boards and understand the instructions found in there in order to participate in the activities. With that in mind, reading was analyzed from two different perspectives, namely, the accuracy when following written instructions (AFI) and the appropriation of new vocabulary (AV). The former, understood as the ability and accuracy to follow the written instructions, and the latter about the acquisition of new vocabulary presented on the posters and its spontaneous utilization in later activities. In short, the RS during the immersion program was limited to the interaction with the written instructions, and was measured through AFI and AV.

Each of two ways that were chosen for measuring the students' RS, are strictly related to reading comprehension. On one hand, AFI measured to what extent did students understand the written instructions. For example, if the instructions said that they had to go around the court offering the lemonade but none of them did, it would mean that they they did not understand the written instruction; but on the contrary, if the students would start offering the lemonade after reading the instructions, it could possibly mean that they understood the written instructions. On the other hand, AV measured how many words could they understand and include in their oral and written production. That is to say, if the students used spontaneously vocabulary that was on the poster-boards, during and after the sessions, it would be an evidence of ~~reading~~ reading comprehension. Therefore, both subcategories (AFI and AV) contributed towards the analysis of the effect that this proposal had on the students' RS.

In conclusion, the concepts of language immersion programs, intercultural sensitivity and RS helped us without a doubt to carry on the present research. To begin with, the concept of language immersion program forced us to use only foreign cultural activities that could immerse the students into the foreign culture. Then, the concept of intercultural sensitivity made us focus on the cultural interactions in order to analyze the effect of the program on their intercultural competence. Lastly, the concept of RS guided us to design all the activities instructions as well as the parameters for analyzing their comprehension. In brief, the three concepts contributed to the development of this project.

Research Design

A research design is considered the structure of any study, as well as “the “Glue” that holds all of the elements in a research project together. In short, it is a plan of the proposed research work” (Millia, 2016, p.68). In this chapter, we explain how the data that aimed to address the research questions and objectives was collected and analyzed. We start by presenting the type of study and approach that was used on this research, followed by a description of the population and a review of the instruments that were used to collect the data; namely, journal logs, questionnaires, and observation notes. After that, we explain the pedagogical implementation of the project.

Type of Study

“Research is a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem” (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010, p.63), and in order to do so, specific patterns must be followed. Taking into account that this is an educational research, we chose to carry out a qualitative type of study, which according to Denzin and Lincoln, aims to “understand the meaning of human action by describing the inherent or essential characteristics of social objects or human experience” (as cited in Jackson, Ronald, Drummond, Darlene & Camara, 2007, p.23). For example, the description of students’ experiences and the social and educational outcomes of an immersion program, are a clear example of what the authors mean by describing social objects or human experiences. Moreover, in this type of study researchers tend to observe things in their natural settings, trying to understand the phenomena presented in there (Ospina, 2004); which required from us to take first-hand data from the students’ experiences and interactions, and keep the activities as natural as possible.

However, there are different ways to carry a qualitative research project, which in our case was through action research. This approach aims to help teachers to improve their pedagogical practices at the same time that it supports them while understanding their students' learning processes, through taking notes about the actions noticed and doing reflections upon the activities developed (Calvert & Sheen, 2015). This approach consists of 4 stages: "(1) identify a problem or question; (2) carry out an action; (3) observe and reflect on the outcome; and (4) plan another action" (Calvert & Sheen, 2015, p. 227). Furthermore, in the educational field "action research is the idea that teachers will begin a cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflection, and deciding on a course of action" (Ferrance, 2000, p.2). That is to say, when doing action research, there has to be a constant reflection about the practices of the study, and also in respect to the practices of the teaching activity itself.

As a matter of fact, qualitative research and action research guidelines contributed to the accomplishment of the research objectives. Indeed, this research approach played an important part towards the objective of describing the effects of the immersion program on the students' RS and their intercultural sensitivity, due to the descriptive emphasis of qualitative and action research. In addition, the continuous revision of activities within the program, contributed to the goal of keeping the students motivated and engaged with the project. Also, the sustained re-evaluation of research practices helped to the improvement and optimization of the study during its course which favored the entire research process. In conclusion, qualitative research and action research provided us with the necessary tools for carrying out this project, seeking to give answers to our initial research questions and accomplish our objectives.

Context and Population

Our research project took place in Colombia, where English is taught in most of the private and public schools across the country. The school where the project was implemented is a private bilingual school located in La Calera, which is a little town that limits with Bogota, the capital of Colombia. The school has a medium-high socioeconomic status, being closer to the high socioeconomic context, and teaches English as a second language. The students who participated in the project belonged to third grade, which had a total of seventy-one students divided into three groups. Despite of all the potential candidates, only one group of twenty-three students was taken into account for the application of the program due to convenience, since one of the researchers was their teacher; therefore it made it easier to access to them and to motivate them to be part of the project. The participants were between 8 and 9 years old, they had all been born and raised in Colombia, and the genre distribution was 5 (girls) to 3 (boys). Also, they all had a medium-high or high socioeconomic status, belonging to strata 5 and 6 (being 6 the highest stratum in Colombia).

Prior to the participants' selection process, a survey was applied to third grade students along with a revision of their overall academic results in English class. After this revision, which was part of the needs analysis, a problem regarding the students' RS was found. In particular, more than half of the class expressed that reading in English was too difficult and although they liked to read, they did not like to do it in English. These results led the research team to develop this project, aiming to address the reading problem of those students.

Taking into account that the participants of the project were all minors and that the research took place inside an educational institution, we needed authorizations from both the

children's parents and the school. Regarding the school's authorization, a permit was signed by the academic coordinator (see appendix 1), who urged us to ensure the students' safety throughout the entire program. In this respect, each activity was designed taking into account the possible dangers in terms of the students' physical safety; with that in mind, the materials, locations, and activities themselves were chosen in a way that they would not represent any harm to the participants. Regarding the parents' permission, an authorization form with a description of the research was sent to the parents of the third grade students who were willing to participate in the project (see appendix 2). As we explained to the parents in the authorization form, all the information that we collected was kept in secret and was only used for academic purposes; for this reason throughout the paper we referred to the students by their participant's numbers. In the end, a total of eight parents signed the authorization form, which consequently delimited the number of participants to eight students from third grade.

Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of this study, three different types of instruments were used during the data collection process including questionnaires, journal logs, and observation notes; taking into account that "all research involves the collection and analysis of data" Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2010, p.183). Each instrument had a different purpose but together they all contributed to the main goal of the study, which was to describe the effects of the program on the students' RS and their intercultural sensitivity. In this section, we explain how each one of these instruments contributed to the accomplishment of the research objectives, starting with questionnaires, then journal logs and closing with observation notes.

Questionnaire. The first data collection instrument that was chosen for the present study was the questionnaire, which is defined as “any group of written questions to which participants are asked to respond in writing, often by checking or circling responses” (Morgan & Harmon, n.d., p.3). Thus, through questionnaires we were able to get students’ feedback regarding specific matters such as intercultural aspects of the sessions, or reading-related questions. In other words, while other instruments could offer open or spontaneous answers from the participants, questionnaires offered us detailed and topic-related information that contributed to answering the research questions (see appendix 3).

Observation notes. According to Hart, “Observation techniques are most often utilized in qualitative studies” (2007, p.29); this because the best way to describe a phenomenon is by observing it. However, informal observations could be counterproductive for a research project, which is why “observation studies require the keeping of field notes or logs. This written documentation includes such things as reflection, personal notes, a detailed description of the environment, etc., which are analyzed with the observation” (Hart, 2007, p. 29). For this reason, the instrument that was chosen for this research project was observation notes, considered by Bryce as “an important part of grounded theory research because they allow a researcher to record observations and thoughts about the research process and topic as the research progresses” (2013, p. 482). Hence, observation notes were used as a data collection instrument during every program session and were taken by one of the researchers, with the purpose of describing the progress of the activities and the effects of the program on the two main concerns: RS and IS (see appendix 4).

Journal. Besides questionnaires and observation notes, we needed to have the students' opinions in order to see how the activities were influencing them. For that reason, we decided to include journal logs as our last data collection instrument. A journal log is similar to a diary in that it is used to write down personal perceptions about a specific subject; furthermore, this instrument seeks to allow the participant to record subjective data such as feelings, emotions, opinions, and alike (Symon, 2004). Keeping this in mind, journal logs were used for recording the students' personal opinions about the program activities, and for analyzing the change in those personal opinions through time, which contributed to eventual answers of both research questions.

In conclusion, all the three instruments contributed in a specific way to the accomplishment of the two research objectives. On one hand, questionnaires allowed us to collect answers about very specific aspects that we needed for answering the questions. On the other hand, journals gave a space of free expression to students so that they could express their opinions and ideas about each session and the program in general, which gave us the opportunity of examining how the students' ideas evolved as the program moved forward. From a different perspective, observation notes allowed us to look at the students' interactions and behaviors from the outside, which allowed to complement the students' points of view. Thus, all three instruments contributed in a different way with the purpose of answering the two research questions (see appendix 5).

Pedagogical Implementation

The program was designed as a series of interactive and fun activities that allowed the students to be part of an enriched foreign-cultural environment within the school. Although the

activities had a hidden academic objective that was to analyze the effect of the program on the students' RS through the analysis of their accuracy when following the written instructions, the whole program lacked a traditional lesson plan structure, taking into account that part of the program's purpose was to promote the use of the foreign language in a natural way, in contexts different from the academic one. Also, taking into account that the activities were going to take place during the students' breaks, these needed to be as fun and interactive as possible in order to maintain the students motivated and engaged with the program. Therefore, the sessions were mainly games and traditional activities from English-speaking countries that were chosen due to their cultural richness, which aimed to ensure the intercultural component within the program. The project was implemented during the course of March and April in the year 2018, and the sessions took place during 1st and 2nd breaks throughout these months; in total, ten sessions were applied. The activities were scheduled as shown in table 1, and their application kept the following order: First, the teacher would gather the participants together as soon as the bell rang; second, the students were given five minutes to eat their snack; third, they had to go to the part of the school where the activity was taking place (for example, the soccer field), where they should find the poster-boards with the activity's instructions and necessary information to perform the activity; fourth, after carrying out the activity, the students would go back to class and in their second break after having lunch, they would fill out the corresponding questionnaire and journal log. Some of the activities included in the program were baseball, American football, hockey, lemonade sale and cookies sale; which are not commonly present in the Colombian context and therefore, allowed an intercultural setting within the program.

Table 1

Activities' Calendar

Activity #	Name of activity	Date
1	Lemonade sale	March 14th
2	Football	March 16th
3	Hockey	March 21st
4	Cookies sale	March 23rd
5	Baseball	April 4th
6	Scouts expedition	April 6th
7	Basketball	April 11th
8	Tea party	April 13th
9	May Day	April 18th
10	Jazz Day	April 20th

In order to apply each one of the program's sessions, we followed the guidelines of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) approaches. On one hand, CLT "is an approach which proposes that language learning should be done in a meaningful setting with authentic language as the input" (Mustaphaa & Yahaya, 2012, p. 790), which is why foreign native-speakers took part of the foreign cultural activities that composed our program, ensuring authentic communication in a simulated foreign and meaningful environment. On the other hand, TBLL "is an approach which offers students material which they have to actively engage in the processing of, in order to achieve a goal or complete a task" (Hashemi, Azizinezhad & Darvishi, 2012, p. 526). Accordingly, written instructions were presented to the students prior to each session, with no access to additional information regarding the activities' instructions, so that the students needed to engage with the written material in order

to actively participate in the corresponding sessions. Consequently, the language immersion program was applied by using a combination of CLT and TBLL.

In conclusion, the present qualitative study was carried out by incorporating guidelines of CLT and TBLL, and data was collected through three different instruments, including questionnaires, journal logs, and observation notes. On one hand, CLT and TBLL approaches enabled us to carry out the program without an evident academic attribute, which allowed us to make meaningful sessions for the students by using the foreign language as an entirely social tool rather than an academic one. On the other hand, each one of the three instruments allowed us to collect different type of data such as students' opinions and researchers' observations, which were then triangulated so that we could have more relevant findings. In short, both approaches and instruments were chosen with the objective of describing the effect of the immersion program on the students' intercultural sensitivity and their RS.

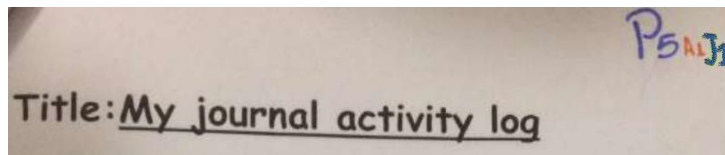
Data Analysis and Findings

In order to execute the language immersion program, we applied a set of immersion sessions throughout the program during the students' breaks at school; and selected traditional activities from English-speaking countries for this program in order to have rich-cultural sessions. Some of the activities were American Football, hockey, lemonade sale, cookies sale, scouts activities and baseball. Each one of these activities had written and spoken instructions in English and the interactions during the activities were supposed to be exclusively in English. This allowed students to interact with each other by using the foreign language in both written and oral forms, in a different context from the academic one. In the end, we applied a total of ten sessions in which students, through the use of different instruments, allowed us to collect information to analyze whether the immersion program had any effect on students' RS and IS.

The tools that we used to collect the data were: Observation Notes, Questionnaires and Journal Logs. The questionnaires contained a set of questions answered by the students after each session and designed to provide mainly, but not exclusively, information about the students' perceptions of cultural aspects, easily found throughout the activities. Observation Notes which were taken by one of us during each session, provided useful data about the students' interactions during the activities and their engagement with the program, as well as a feedback of their RS depending on how accurately the participants followed the activities' instructions. Lastly, Journal Logs (filled by the students at the end of each session) were a space for students' free expression, looking for personal opinions about the activities and spontaneous use of the foreign language. As it might be expected, every instrument provided valuable data that contributed to the description and analysis of all the categories in which the findings were divided. In addition, all the items

mentioned before were codified in order to organize the data as follows: “A” for the type of activity going from one to ten, for example, A1 corresponded to lemonade sale and A2 to cookies sale; “O” standing for Observation Notes which also goes from one to ten, “P” meaning participant which goes from one to eight, “Q” representing Questionnaire and “J” representing Journal Logs; going from one to ten both of them (as the sample below). In other words, codification made it easier to identify each participant’s process independently and the effects that the program might have on them.

Example of codification:



Our first research question inquired about the impact of implementing the program in a bilingual school on the third grade students’ reading skill; and the other one, sought to describe how would the program influence on the students’ ability to recognize cultural differences. Therefore, we divided the data into “RS” and “Intercultural Sensitivity” in accordance with both of the research questions. The first category, “RS”, was divided into two subcategories: “Following of Instructions” and “Appropriation of New Vocabulary”. In this chapter, we explain the data collection categories and subcategories, and describe the findings within their corresponding classification. Lastly, findings were triangulated, understanding theoretical triangulation as “the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena” (Patton as cited in Carter, Bryant-Lukosius,

DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014); that is, all subcategories were analyzed using information from all the three data collection instruments.

Reading Skill

“Reading is the process of identification, interpretation and perception of written or printed material. Comprehension is the understanding of the meaning of written material and involves the conscious strategies that lead to understanding” (Gomez & Avila, 2009, p. 55). However, taking into account the non-academic focus of this program, RS were only analyzed through the activities’ written instructions. For this reason we created two subcategories that could allow us to observe the progress on the participants’ RS through the only written material that was present in every session, such as activities’ written directions. The first one was “Following of Instructions”, understood as the accuracy of the students’ actions during the activities, associated with the written instructions given to them at the beginning of the sessions. And the second one was “Appropriation of New Vocabulary”, established as the use of new vocabulary by students, which was given to them in written form at the beginning of the sessions. In this section, we explain the two subcategories and describe the findings including data from the three instruments in order to comply with the triangulation procedure.

Following of instructions. “The goals of text comprehension vary widely” (Paris & Stahl, p. 76, 2005); but since our research takes place in an education background, it is imperative to talk about its educational application.

In educational contexts, the goal is often to learn from a text, that is, to construct a situation model that will be remembered and can be used effectively when the information provided by that text is needed in some way at a later time. (Paris & Stahl, p. 76, 2005).

In fact, some texts lead the reader into performing specific actions accurately (Paris & Stahl, 2005). With that in mind, our immersion program evaluated the students' reading comprehension by observing their accuracy, when following the written instructions given at the beginning of the sessions. By doing this, we avoided the use of reading comprehension tests with the objective of keeping students from feeling in an academic setting, and keeping their experience as natural as possible. In this section, we show different data samples that contribute on the description of the program's impact on the students' RS, through the observation of their accuracy when following written instructions. To this end, we share findings from early activities and compare them with activities carried later on in the program, in order to analyze whether there was progress on the students' Following of Instructions or not.

At the beginning of each session, new vocabulary was introduced because according to Mckeown, Beck and Blake "teaching vocabulary can enhance comprehension of texts" (2009, p. 219). After reviewing the related vocabulary, the instructions of the activities were shared in posters for all the participants and they all had to read them carefully. Then, after finishing reading and clarifying simple doubts, without repeating the instructions, the participants were supposed to carry on the activity/game as accurately as possible using the information that they remembered from the posters.

Excerpt 1: O1A1

Most of the group did not use the prior acquired vocabulary during the activity. Most of the participants used their L1 sporadically in their interactions among themselves. At the beginning of the activity, the participants constantly relied on the teacher in order to ask for specific words, after having used the word in Spanish, and being reminded by the teacher about the "only English" policy.

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During activity #1 students found it hard to carry on the activity after reading the instructions given at the beginning of the session. As seen in O1A1, the students asked several questions in order to clarify doubts about their role in the activity. This evidenced a low AFI and therefore a low level of reading comprehension, taking into account that the instructions attempted to describe as clearly and simply as possible what the students had to do during the activity (appendix 6). However, after a few questions for clarification, students were able to perform their roles successfully throughout the rest of the session.

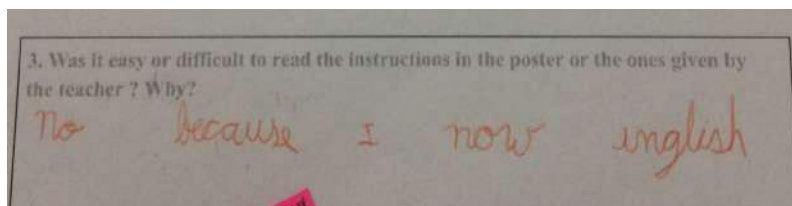
Excerpt 2: O6A6

Reading Development	<p>P2 Constantly asked for more instructions. She usually used Spanish. It was hard to understand the concept of attacking and defending in baseball. It was disappointing for the students that only one player at the time played for the whole team when batting.</p>	<p>P2 doesn't feel free to interact with the other players because of the language restrictions, but when he does it, he does it in English. Besides P2, the rest of the group seems to feel comfortable by interacting in English during the activity.</p>	<p>The concept of base wasn't clear until they saw bases in the game field. The dynamic of coming after hitting the ball and going through the bases wasn't absolutely clear with the written instructions.</p>
Culturality		<p>There was no evidence of comparison with any local activity or game</p>	
(Details of the culture immersed, when analyzing the student's contexts inside the activity in order to capture the use of foreign			

“The roles of the team and positions seemed to be clear to everybody except to Juan Diego, and they started picking the positions within the teams as soon as they all finished reading the instructions”

In contrast, when carrying activity #6 a progress in the overall reading comprehension was found. According to the collected data, most of the participants started choosing and assigning positions or roles within the teams after reading the instructions (O6A6). In this case, most of the participants evidenced a proficient reading comprehension by understanding the team roles and positions explained in the posters. Moreover, most of them started assigning and asking for specific roles within the teams which evokes a high level of reading comprehension.

Excerpt 3: P3Q3A3



“No because I now english”

Another example of an improvement on AFI was found on P3Q3A3. Here, the student was asked if it was difficult to understand the activity's instructions, to what the student answered: "No because I now english". This shows an improvement on the student's AFI, taking into account that in the initial session, most of the students manifested difficulties when reading the instructions. Moreover, in this activity the student does not only say that the instructions were clearer, but she even shows confidence on her English skills, by saying that they were not difficult because she knows English.

As noted above, the program seemed to have positive effects in some of the participants' reading comprehension. This, taking into account the difference between the initial accuracy when following instructions in activity #1, and the later accuracy in activity #6. Also, understanding the written instructions became easier as the program advanced, as seen on activity #3. Even more, some students became more confident regarding the English level, which could be associated to an exposition to the English language within more relaxed, natural and non-academic contexts. In other words, this program seemed to have a positive effect on the students' perception of the English language and on their RS.

Appropriation of new vocabulary. In this subcategory, we aimed to find to what extent the participants incorporated new vocabulary that was given to them at the beginning of the sessions. For instance, when analyzing the Journal Logs, Questionnaires and Observation Notes; we tried to find evidence of the utilization of vocabulary that was included in the posters presented to the students at the beginning of the sessions. Appropriation was defined by (Carton as cited in Baillette and Kimble, 2008) as the process in which individuals come up with unknown objects in their everyday use; understanding 'unknown objects' as the words that were

introduced in the posters at the beginning of the sessions. However, in order to be considered appropriation, the words needed to come up spontaneously, which is why we avoided to include any question related to vocabulary in any of the instruments. That is, the students needed to use the new words in their oral (during the sessions) or written speech (through Questionnaires or Journal Logs) without being asked to.

On one hand, we searched for any evidence of new vocabulary use in oral form and kept records of it in the Observation Notes from each session. On the other hand, we looked for new vocabulary found in the students' written productions, namely, Questionnaires and Journal Logs. Finally, the findings from the three instruments are correlated in order to find any relation between them. In other words, the appearance of new vocabulary in the three instruments would suggest an "Appropriation of New Vocabulary" which could then be understood as a positive effect of the program over the students' RS.

Excerpt 5: P5A1J1

MARK WITH AN X

1) Did you like the activity? YES NO

Why? *win money and sell the limonait*

2) Did you learn anything new from the activity? Can you tell us what?

learn to make limonate and negociet

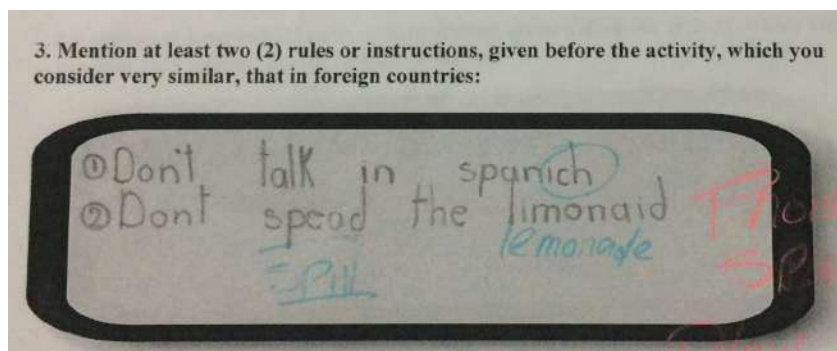
“ win money and sell the limonait ”

“Y learn to make limonate and negociet”

In A1, students learned the concept of selling (they knew how to say ‘buy’ but not sell) at the beginning of the session through the posters that we showed them prior to the activity’s application. After going through the data collected from this activity, it was found that some

students used this new word spontaneously. In the Journal Log P5A1J1, the participant used the word *sell* when answering the first question of the journal. The participant said that he liked the activity because he “win mony and sell the limoneit”. It is evident how the word “sell” came up spontaneously, since the question did not ask about the words that were learned during the activity or alike; but instead if he liked the activity and why. Moreover, the participant did not misspelled the new acquired word, in contrast with already acquired words such as “money” (spelled ‘mony’), and “lemonade” (spelled “limoneit”). Yet, this accuracy could be related to the short period of time that passed since the moment of learning the word, to the moment of using it. As noted above, new vocabulary was used by the students in an unprompted way in written forms.

Excerpt 6: P3Q1A1



“Don’t talk in spanish “

“Don’t spead the limonaid ” you

In the same activity, the word “lemonade” was new for some of the participants, but at the end all of them had acquired the word and used it for offering the product to the customers; at the same time, they learned the word “spill” from the instructions, in which we asked them to be careful when serving the lemonade. In the questionnaire P3Q1A1, the participant tries to use the word “spill” by making up the spelling (“spead”). Also, this participant uses the word “limonaid” referring to “lemonade”. In this case, it is clear how the participant uses the acquired words

spontaneously and even makes a sentence by using two of the new acquired words. In short, it is visible how the program might have a positive effect on the students' appropriation of new vocabulary, taking into account the written productions from P3 and P5 since the beginning of the program.

Excerpt 7: O1A1

Students' activity performance based on written instructions	<p>Some of them did not know how to say lemonade, but after a while, all of them were using the word with the customers.</p> <p>They also started using the English denomination for \$200 spontaneously in order to say how much the lemonade cost and when a participant said it in Spanish, the rest of them corrected him.</p>
CULTURALITY	

“Some of them did not know how to say lemonade, but after a while, all of them were using the word with the customers. They also started using the English denomination for \$200 spontaneously in order to say how much the lemonade cost and when a participant said it in Spanish, the rest of them corrected him.”

When taking field notes during the lemonade sale activity, it was found that the students were using vocabulary that they acquired during the same session. In Observation Notes O1A1, it is shown how the students started using the word “lemonade” in order to offer the product to incoming customers. Also, students used the expression “two hundred” in order to inform the customers about the price of the lemonade, although they had not mastered hundreds and thousands in English yet. Therefore, the “Appropriation of New Vocabulary” is present and spontaneous in the students' interactions.

Therefore, we can say that the program demonstrated to have an effect in the “Appropriation of New Vocabulary”, taking into account that we found words that were learned

during the immersion sessions in all the three instruments. In one of the journals from participant number five, the word lemonade came up spontaneously; in the same way, one questionnaire from participant number five showed an attempt for using the word spill as well as the word lemonade; and also, on the observation notes from activity number one, it was found how students used hundreds although they had not mastered them yet. It was also found that the acquired vocabulary appeared in both written and spoken forms, in an unstudied way. Then, taking into account that in order for a person to understand a text, the vocabulary in it has to be acquired first, the effect that the program had on the acquisition of new vocabulary was clear.

The program proved to have an effect on the students' RS in general. On one hand, the students' accuracy when following written instructions improved as the program advanced. On the other hand, the students appropriated different new vocabulary which was introduced to them in written form throughout the program. Consequently, the effect of the program on the students' RS was not only evident, but positive because the appropriation of new vocabulary and accuracy when following written instructions, showed an improvement during the application of the program.

Intercultural Sensitivity

The second category for the data collection process focused on the intercultural attribute of the program. During the program, the participants were exposed to foreign cultural activities with the participation of foreign teachers, who had lived in the natural plots of the chosen cultural settings. However, interculturality covers almost everything related to cultural encounters, which would be impossible to address in this research. With that in mind and taking into account that

the goal of this program was to avoid the overlapping of one culture over another, and consequently minimize the importance of one of them, we decided to focus on the concept of Intercultural Sensitivity, which refers to “being able to identify cultural differences” (D’ Souza, Singaraju, Halimi & Sillivan , 2016, pg. 910). In fact, it refers to “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, pg. 422).

Therefore, we believe that if the program is able to promote a reflective position towards the cultural differences, the problem of cultural minimization within the program could be avoided.

According to Dziedziewicz, Gajda and Karwowski, there are no suitable IS tests for children (2014), and the adult ones result too long and complex for our participant’s age and English level. Nevertheless, Bennet’s chart, which contemplates six levels of Intercultural Sensitivity, such as, Negation, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration, and goes from low to high level of IS was used as a guide for measuring the students’ IS. That is why during each session we looked for signs that could be associated to any of the Bennet’s levels. In that way, their IS could be ranked from high (integration) to low (negation).

Excerpt 8: P3A1J1

MARK WITH AN X

1) Did you like the activity? YES NO

Why? Because we pass very good and
we win money

Literal translation Minimization

Appropriation Value of Liter

“Because we pass very good and we win money”

At the beginning of the program, the students seemed to be at a ‘negation’ IS level, taking into account that there was no comparison between the foreign activity and any common activity for the students, which could be interpreted as a possible lack of recognition of cultural differences. In journal log P3A1J1 we found that the participant did not include any cultural difference when talking about the lemonade sale activity. Actually, the activity resulted interesting only because it was fun and because she learned how to make lemonade, but not because there were differences between the activity carried out and any other activity that they had performed before. In other words, there was no recognition of cultural differences so far, or at least these were not being shared in the journal.

Excerpt 9: P8Q2A2

Tell us in your own words what is your perception about your culture:

My perception is that Carlos Vives and Botero represent us and is our culture and our culture is happy.

Describe it here

Cultural Identity

Cultural Appreciation

Cultural Awareness

Tell us in your own words what is your perception about other cultures:

that we can see new things and are happy cultures but ours is happiest.

Cultural Empowerment

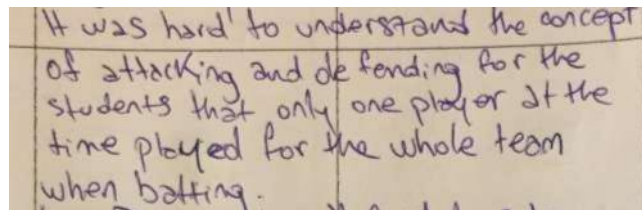
“ My perception is that Carlos Vives and Botero represent us and is our culture and our culture is happy

” “ That we can see new things and are happy cultures but ours is happiest”

On the next session, when asked about their perception of their own culture and of other ones, we found a possible example of a ‘Defense’ IS level as shown in P8Q2A2. In detail, when

participant #8 was asked about her perception of other cultures, she said that we can see new things and that these other cultures are happy, but ours (Colombian culture) is the happiest. Therefore, the participant seems to be recognizing cultural differences when saying that there are new things in the other cultures, but at the same time considers her culture to be superior than the others by saying that her's is the happiest, and this would match the description of the 'Defense' IS level. However, by recognizing not only differences but also basic similarities, the participant's IS level limits with 'Minimization'.

Excerpt 10: O6A6



"It was hard to understand the concept of attacking and defending for the students that only one player at the time played for the whole team when batting."

After several immersion sessions, their IS appeared to become more complex. About that, in observation chart O6A6 it is shown how during the baseball activity, the participants found strong differences between the baseball game and other games that were common for them. However, although it was very difficult to understand and accept the fact that only one person of the team was playing when attacking, while the defending team had all its members around the field waiting to catch the ball, they seemed to adapt and to start accepting these differences with the time. Towards the end of the session, all participants gave the impression to have adapted to the rules of the game and become more involved with the dynamics of it, and taking into account that these games were associated with the foreign culture were the game came from (Americans

in this case), it could be interpreted as an ‘Acceptance’ IS level. Therefore, it is possible that the program had influenced on the students’ IS, showing an evolution from “Negation” to “Acceptance”; or in other words, from low IS to medium IS.

The results suggest a possible influence of the program on the participants’ IS. This taking into account that at the beginning of the program the students gave the impression of being at a Negative IS level, while towards the end of the program, the student seemed to be at a higher level between Acceptance and Adaptation IS levels. However, the results could be linked to the complexity of the activities, rather than to an evolution of the participants’ IS. Moreover, the recognition of differences between the activities performed and those from their local context could be exclusively related to the differences between the games’ rules, rather than to cultural differences. Therefore, although there are signs of a possible relation between the immersion program and the participants IS, the results are not conclusive.

Conclusions

The purpose of a language immersion program is to provide students with the opportunity for learning and practicing a foreign language. In fact, it gives the students the chance not only to recreate real life situations, but to actually feel that they need the language in order to communicate with others. In bilingual schools in Colombia, the students usually lack the opportunity for practicing any foreign language in a context different from their classrooms, and in these cases, language can become an academic tool only. Thus, we decided to implement an intercultural language immersion program on third grade students from a bilingual school in Colombia. However, taking into account that a language immersion program includes several cultural aspects from the target language, and this can result in an overlapping of the students' native culture, we decided to analyze the impact of the program on the students' intercultural sensitivity.

The conclusions presented in this chapter aimed to answer the two research questions that were designed to analyze the academic and cultural impact of the language immersion program. On one hand, we wanted to know how the intercultural language immersion program could impact the students' Reading Skill; and on the other hand, we wanted to know how the intercultural language immersion program could influence on the students' Intercultural Sensitivity. Consequently, findings were divided into Reading Skill, with two subcategories that allowed its analysis: Acquisition of new vocabulary and accuracy when following written instructions; and intercultural sensitivity. In this chapter, the scope of the research along with suggestions for possible future research are presented, followed by specific conclusions related to

each one of the research questions, and closing with a general conclusion that connects the findings and includes possible practical applications of the findings.

In order to answer the first research question (what is the impact of implementing an intercultural language immersion program in a bilingual school, on the third grade students' reading skill?), findings were categorized into AFI and AV. Both of these subcategories were related to the ability to understand texts and use them in written and oral forms during and after the sessions. On one hand, the collected data denoted an improvement of the students' accuracy when follow written instructions, taking into account that students proved to be more accurate when adopting their roles in the later sessions than at the beginning of the program. On the other hand, data also indicated that the students' appropriation of new vocabulary was positively impacted by the immersion program, considering that we found evidence of students freely using new vocabulary that was introduced to them in written form at the beginning of the sessions. In short, the program seemed to have a positive impact on the students' RS, evidencing an improvement of the accuracy when following written instructions and indicating recurrent use of new vocabulary.

With regards to the second research question (how could an intercultural language immersion program influence on the students' intercultural sensitivity?), we found signs of prepress in regards to the students' IS. For instance, at the beginning of the program the students seemed to be at a negative IS level according to Bennet IS classification, but by the end of the program their IS level appeared to have increased towards an acceptance IS level, showing signs of recognition of cultural differences, through the comparison between the activities carried during the program and those that they took part in their regular interactions. However, this

conclusions are not definite, taking into account that the recognition of differences could be limited to the differences between the activities rules, and not the cultural differences per se. In short, further research is needed, in order to clarify this matter.

Regarding literacy skills in general, further research is needed in order to analyze the possible effects of an intercultural language immersion program on students' writing skills. For instance, the participants' English level made it difficult to analyze written productions, which suggests potential future applications in more advanced levels in order to analyze possible effects of the program on students' writing skills. Furthermore, the instruments used for the data collection process did not allow us to thoroughly catch writing productions where writing skills could be analyzed in detail. In the same way, further research could make an effort to include activities that involve writing in a more substantial way, without changing the non-academic essence of this immersion program. Hence, the possibilities for expanding the scope of this research and analyzing its possible effects on writing skills are diverse.

In conclusion, findings suggest that an intercultural language immersion program could influence positively in both academic and cultural aspects. Taking into account that acquisition of new vocabulary and following of written instructions seemed to be affected in a positive way by this program, we could infer that given the close relationship that these two subcategories have with language learning, the program could have a positive influence on the students' academic performance. Furthermore, taking into account that there was evidence of an improvement in the students' intercultural sensitivity, and that this category is related to the ability to recognize and accept differences between cultures, the problem of culture overlapping during the immersion program could be avoided by including cultural settings that make interculturality present during

the program. Therefore, the inclusion of these aspects in a language immersion program has shown to have direct influence on both academic and cultural aspects.

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