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**“Students’ cultural awareness in learning English as a foreign
language”**

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Students' cultural awareness in learning English as a foreign language.

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Students' cultural awareness in learning English
as a foreign language.

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Abstract

Learners' cultural awareness toward English language and its cultural elements has a profound influence on their English learning practice and performance. English learning does not merely mean the memorization of the grammatical formations and accumulation of the lexical items. The inseparability of the language and culture makes the English learning a process of acknowledging the English cultural features. The present research analyzes the students' cultural perceptions in learning English as a foreign language in order to know if they are aware of the importance that culture has in this process.

The aim of this article is to provide necessary information for the foreign language teachers and learners so that they can establish a good connection with the target language (English) and its culture.

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Dedication

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem.

Understanding a language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis but also certain features and characteristics of the culture. To communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating interculturally as well, which probably leads us to encounter factors of cultural differences. Such kind of differences exist in every language such as the tone of voice, appropriate topic of conversation, and expressions as speech act functions (e.g. apologies, suggestions, complains, refusals, etc.). Bearing the points above it can be stated that language should be understood as cultural practice, it cannot exist alone, in other words, between culture and language there is an interdependent and inextricable relationship. Mitchell and Myles (2004) argue that “language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other” (p. 235). This relationship can be shown in the area of semantics, when cultural denotations and connotations take place, in cultural norms of communication and when language takes a mediatory role in the social construction of culture. It means that language and culture are interacting with each other in a way that culture connects to all levels of language use and usage; i.e. there is no level of language which is not dependent to culture.

Additionally, the relationship between language and culture is made meaningful in language learning as “the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool” (Bennett, Bennett & Landis. (2004). p. 237). Namely culture is cultural communication information, which is potential for cultural confrontation and

misunderstanding between foreign language learners and native speakers. Being unaware of this kind of cultural knowledge often leads to a failure and even break-down in intercultural communication). It's highly recommended, both, the way how to use language and the way how to behave nonverbally as cultural contents of FLT (EFL). As said before, intercultural language learning has become an important focus of modern language education, a shift that reflects greater awareness of the inseparability of language and culture, and the need to prepare language learners for intercultural communication in an increasingly multicultural world.

Thereby, students need to comprehend the spoken language in real situations; they need to identify the moods, how the idioms varies, the type of interlocutor and other cultural and social facts, and so as what is culturally appropriate (UNESCO, 2006).

Since every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of the norms can be completely different and conflict with other cultures' norms. Consequently, communication problems may arise among speakers who do not know or share the norms of other culture.

As reported by Thi Thu Hien Trinh (2014) "culture is the fifth skill in foreign language learning." So, as it is necessary to develop the classical skills, it is now necessary to develop the fifth one, and the only way to achieve it is through culture and being aware of it. This paper intends to provide evidence as to support or deny such statement.

1.2 Purpose of the study:

The main goal underlying this project is to explore what is the students' concept of culture in the Facultad de Lenguas, BUAP. This research will focus on English IV LEI (with its acronym in Spanish: Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés) students' perceptions.

Such analysis includes students' awareness of differences between México and English speaking countries (Canada, U.S.A, and England) and the strategies to cope with a variety of intercultural interactions.

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1.3 Research Questions

This project sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. Do LEI students have cultural awareness?
2. Can LEI students evaluate their own cultural English level?
3. What are some of the linguistic and nonlinguistic obstacles to language learning according to students?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

1. Students are aware that understanding a second language does not ensure understanding the speaker's purposes thus comprehension of cultural habits and expectations are important in language teaching.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study sets out to detect cultural awareness in students in order to suggest a better EFL teaching strategy at English IV classes. It means that implementing teaching from an intercultural perspective will develop in LEI learners a critical cultural awareness of their behavior, skills and attitudes to understand and successfully interact with people from other cultures; such as an awareness of the inextricable and interdependent relationship between language and culture and teaching culture as an integral component of language teaching. In other words, through this study, teachers and students will be aware of the importance of becoming interculturally competent. Therefore, the results of this study will provide some insights and information on EFL teachers about the need of shifting from a traditional stance to an intercultural one to develop both linguistic and intercultural competences of learners.

1.6 Justification

While learning a foreign language, learners are acquiring a second culture, and “acculturation is the gradual adaption to that target culture” (Acton: 1979). Besides that, the goal of the career (LEI) is to train teachers (educated and competent English speakers able to transmit their teaching to their students), so that, the process of acculturation is acquired through culture teaching. As well if the MUM (This is the BUAP’S new educative model: Minerva’s University Model) considers as the central hub the integral and pertinent formation of the student in order to achieve the social needs of the 21st century, it is necessary to take into account the culture in EFL teaching in the Facultad de Lenguas, Buap

at language Meta IV. Indeed, one of the educative principles associated with the socio-cultural constructivist and humanistic learning and teaching conception from the MUM, is that learning is a reconstruction process of cultural knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore if students are aware that culture connects to all levels of language use and usage, in other words, if students are aware of the importance of culture in learning English as a foreign language.

1.7 Key terms.

Awareness: is the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects, thoughts, emotions, or sensory patterns... having knowledge; consciousness. (Oxford University Press, 2010.)

Communication: Communication is “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior” Webster, (1983, p: 266.)

Communicative Competence: is the ability to use language for communication, producing correct and appropriate messages in a particular social context. Canale and Swain 1980, as cited in Criollo: The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Thesis in Tesol-al. (2003.)

Cross Cultural Communication: describes the ability to “successfully form, foster, and improve relationships with members of a culture different from one's own.” It is based on knowledge of many factors, such as the other culture's values, perceptions, manners, social structure, and decision-making practices, and an understanding of how members of the group communicate verbally, non-verbally, in person, in writing, and in various business and social contexts, to name but a few (East-West Business strategies.)

Culture: “Culture is the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conception and beliefs.” Thompson (1990, p: 132.)

Cultural Awareness: is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Oxford University Press (2010.)

Intercultural Communicative Competence: “Intercultural communicative competence, or ICC, is the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” Byram, Gribkova& Starkey (2002: p. 10.)

Language: “Language is a means of communication between members of the public symbol of the sound produced by means of said human" Keraf (1980)

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to provide theoretical support about how important is culture in EFL classroom and how the development of students' cultural awareness leads them to more critical thinking, leads them to know that learning a language is not just developing the basic skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, but developing a cultural communicative competence. A definition of culture and cultural awareness, such as its importance in language teaching will be presented first. Secondly, the relationship between culture and language and its big importance will be specified. Then, the definition of teaching English as a foreign language will be mentioned and both its relation with culture and its influence within the English classroom. Finally, the definition of intercultural communicative competence, its influences in ELT and its Assessment will be added.

2.1. Defining Culture

Culture is one of the most confusing concepts in human and social sciences due to its variety of definitions. For some authors, culture would mean art, literature, customs and everyday life peculiar to a certain group, but these are called “*observable symptoms of culture*” by Saluveer (2004). However, culture also includes invisible features like beliefs, values, norms and attitudes. The National Center for Cultural Competence defines culture as “an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, manners of interacting, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations””. Moreover, it can be said that culture allows

the adaptation of a human being to his environment- establishes social patterns to be followed by a population.

The first attempt at defining culture was made by the anthropologist Tylor (1871), who said in his book *Primitive culture* that culture "...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Thus the American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) examined over 300 definitions of culture in their book: *a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*; culture definition emerged as a very broad concept embracing all aspects of human life. In addition, Hall (1981) considers that culture is a mold in which we are all cast, and it controls our daily lives in many unsuspected ways. Overall in the field of anthropology, "culture refers to the dynamic whole of belief, knowledge, art, technology, morals, customs and sometimes even languages that are inculcated in members of a society." Hall (1981).

Hofstede (1991) defined the term culture as the collective programming of the human mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another...Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values. Thompson, (1990, p. 132) said that culture is "the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kind, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conception and beliefs. In addition, Mead (2000), said that culture is the learned behavior of a society or a subgroup. In sum, culture is the integration of human behavior patterns that includes thoughts, communication, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, and manners of interacting and behaviors of a social group.

Depending on how culture is defined and which discipline one comes from, there are two types of culture as Brown and Eisterhold (2007, p. 20) cited: Big C culture and little c culture. Big C culture refers to that culture which is most visible- visible forms of culture include holidays, art, popular culture, literature, economy, politics, geography, law, religion, education and food. When learning about a new culture, the big C cultural elements would be discovered first; they are the most overt forms of culture- it is often what students of foreign languages are told they are studying when teachers bring in pictures of people in folk costumes... Little c culture, in contrast, is the more invisible type of culture associated with a region or group of people and language. Some examples of little c culture include communication styles, verbal and non-verbal language symbols, cultural norms etc. Culture is indispensable in order to fully understand a language, its nuances and appropriate uses.

In the opinion of (Yin, 2009) Big C culture is also called as *formal culture* – related to “civilization” usually constitutes “cultural knowledge information which often serves as cultural background knowledge”; likewise little c culture is called *popular culture or deep culture*, which is related to everyday life: living style, verbal and non-verbal... as mentioned before.

Lack of this kind of cultural knowledge often leads to a failure and even break-down in intercultural communication.

1.1.1 Cultural Awareness.

Tomlinson (2004) holds that cultural awareness involves a gradually developing of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how both cultures connect and differ. Tomlinson and Masuhara, (2004) also claim, that an increased cultural awareness helps learners broaden the mind, increase tolerance and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), cultural awareness encompasses three qualities:

- awareness of one's own culturally-induced behavior.
- awareness of the culturally-induced behavior of others.
- ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint (p.5)

Knuston (2006) suggests teachers should analyze students' real world and academic needs in terms of cultural knowledge, awareness or ability to function in appropriate ways (Knuston, 2006, cited in Beaudrie, et al (2009), p. 167-169).

Galloway (1984) has proposed a framework for building cultural understanding based primarily on process skills, but incorporating both factual and sociolinguistic content. She suggests organizing instruction around four primary categories of understanding:

- 1) Convention: The goal of this type is to help students recognizes and understand how people in a given culture typically behave in common situations. Galloway identifies two types of conventions: (1) context determined conventions, which includes extralinguistic behaviors that are characteristics in a given situation and (2) function-determined conventions related to sociolinguistic formulae or conventional utterances that are used to perform tasks in context. For example if one were teaching about foods, the teacher might focus on such context-determined factors as mealtimes, types of food, conventions of etiquette as well as on appropriate expressions associated with accepting and declining invitations, making reservations at a restaurant...
- 2) Connotation: The category of connotation deals with the many culturally significant meanings that are associated with words. As students examine their own networks of association they can begin to discover that the underlying meanings of words are determined by their cultural frame of reference.

Galloway (1984) states certain words evoke a cluster of feeling and images. For example the word 'time' may make one nervous. At the symbolic level, it represents pressure, stress, deadlines, schedules, responsibility. Simply, a person may fear death etc.

3) Conditioning: A third category of cultural understanding has to do with the fact people act in a manner consistent with their cultural frame of reference, and all people respond in culturally conditioned ways to basic human needs to learn how to interpret behaviors that are different from their own without making judgments based on their own standards. Students need to learn how to interpret behaviors. If the students begin to expect cultural differences as natural and inevitable and realize that there are indeed a variety of possible differences to the universal need for food, shelter, social contact, and the like, they may begin to view the other culture more emphatically.

4) Comprehension: This category of cultural understanding includes such skills as analysis, hypothesis formation, and tolerance of ambiguity. According to Galloway (1984), comprehension goals can best be achieved by paying attention to the source of one's information, examining one's stereotypes avoiding overgeneralization, and the ways to resolve conflicts.

Ho (1999) claims still, the development of the cultural awareness in English language classes may be influenced by a number of constraints, namely the teacher's cultural knowledge, the availability of native English speakers, time allowance for culture teaching in each lesson or even the system of education itself.

2.2 Culture and Language relation.

Language is the most powerful means of communication in the world. People express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. On the other hand, the power of language to reflect culture and influence thinking was first proposed by the American linguist and anthropologist, Edward Sapir (1884–1939), and his student, Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941). The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis stated that the way we think and view the world is determined by our language. So, language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in complex ways (Kramsch, 1998, p.3). Moreover it can be said that any language from any country is a

mirror that reflects its national culture. In other words, language expresses cultural reality.

The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture. From this, one can see that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Allwright & Bailey 1991). Not only language and culture are linked together but also act as a significant feature in intercommunication so we can claim that language is a vital factor in cultural interaction. In addition language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact. Language is a cultural component which can be described as a cultural communicating system that is used by people of a particular country in order to convey their purpose. Thus, Emmitt & Pollock considered that language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next (1997). This means that language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value (Kramsch, 1998:3).

It is commonly accepted that language is a part of culture, and that it plays a very important role in it. Some researches consider that language without culture would not be possible. As Brown (1994: 165), who describes the relation between language and culture as follows: "A language is a 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" Besides, Kramsch (1998: 3) identifies the ways how language and culture are bound together by indicating that people use language to express facts and ideas but also to reflect their attitudes which were gradually developed through the way that they live in the cultural communities. Moreover, language symbolizes

cultural reality because people view their language as a symbol of their cultural identity. In a word, culture and language are inseparable, they are bounded together. Language is like the soul of the country and people who speak it.

Language as one element of culture has a very important role in human life. Language allows a person to communicate with others in meeting their needs. Thus, it can be said it is the main function of language as a communication tool. This does not mean that the language has only one function. Another function is as a tool to express self-expression, a tool to make integration and social adaptation, as well as a tool to hold social control (Keraf, 1980, p.3). Thus language and culture belong together; this relationship has to do with interactions among the people since behavior change depending on the context.

2.3 English as a Foreign and Second Language.

The term English as a second language (ESL) is used to refer to the learning of English in contexts where English is the dominant language of public life. In such a context, English is widely heard and spoken in the community and is often one of the official languages of the country. Freeman (1998, p, 4) explains that teaching English in an English-speaking country differs from teaching in a country where English is not the main language of the majority of people. In such a country the students do not hear English in the community and English is therefore regarded as a “foreign” language. It is not always easy to differentiate between ESL and EFL (Bourne 2007, p. 21).

According to Bourne (2007, p. 190), the concept English as a foreign language (EFL) is traditionally used to describe a situation in which English is taught in a context where there is very little English used in the environment other than for international communication.

Here in Puebla, México at the Facultad de Lenguas, English is taught as a foreign language, it means LEI students learn English as a language that is not native to their particular region.

2.4 Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Foreign language learning is formed by several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture. What most teachers and students seem to lose sight of is the fact that "knowledge of the grammatical system of a language grammatical competence has to be complemented by understanding of cultural specific meanings communicative or rather cultural competence (Byram et al, 1994).

In addition, Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) involves the process of teaching the English language to students whose first language is not English. Contemporary developments in the foreign language learning field have highlighted the imperative need to teach the culture of the target language in ELT majors for future educators to incorporate this component in their lessons.

The field of foreign language teaching has undergone many fluctuations and dramatic shifts over the years (Kuhn 1970). Therefore, several cultural differences influence an English

language learning classroom. When discussing foreign language teaching and learning, it is important to distinguish between the learning of the mother tongue, or first language and a second or foreign language (Klapper 2006, p. 45). The first language is the language you are born into and which is spoken by the parents and family, it is acquired through life experiences. The second language is learned after a first language has been acquired and is typically learnt in a classroom from teachers. The crucial differences are that the first one is embedded from an early age, while the second one does not come naturally and is mostly acquired as the result of a conscious learning process (Richards, Platt & Platt 1992, p. 140,197).

It can be said that foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers.

2.5 The Relationship between Teaching English as a foreign language and Culture

Just as there is not a single thing in the world without a dual nature, so is language teaching. Language teaching and culture teaching have a dual nature. In order to conduct language teaching well, one must take up the teaching of culture and the teaching of language at the same time. When we learn a foreign language, we do more than learn a linguistic system. We acquire some degree of familiarity with the foreign cultural system. It is now broadly accepted in most parts of the world that learning a foreign language is not simply mastering the grammar, the vocabulary and other language skills; but more appropriately focuses on learning a means of communication. Communication in real situations is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free. Byram (1989, p.8) states: "as learners learn about

language, they learn about culture and as they learn to use a new language, they learn to communicate with other individuals from a new culture."

The problem is that the mastery of vocabulary and structures does not necessarily ensure a person's communicative competence. What the students really need is to be taught directly what people say in particular situations in English culture. Successful intercultural communication entails a great deal more than language skills; understanding a foreign language does not ensure understanding the speaker's intentions. That is to say, the ability to communicate successfully with native speakers depends not only on language skills but also on comprehension of cultural habits and expectations. The main purpose of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom is to enable students to take control of their own learning as well as to achieve autonomy by evaluating and questioning the wider context within which the learning of the target language is embedded (student-centered teaching.)

According to Tomalin & Stempleski (1993, p.7-8), modifying (Seelye, 1992), the teaching of culture has the following goals and is of and in itself a means of accomplishing them:

1. To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behavior.
2. To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
3. To help students to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.
4. To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.

5. At any rate, the aim of teaching culture is to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own, helping them to make comparisons among cultures' (Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996, p. 19).

2.6 Influences of Culture Teaching in EFL Classroom.

Culture teaching, in general terms, involves a comprehensive description of the “ways of a people” (Lado, 1957) which is intertwined with the teaching of language.

As seen before the main aim of foreign language teaching is to develop students' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various situations, so teaching culture should facilitate communication and understanding. (Seelye, 1992) formulates what he himself calls a super goal for the teaching of culture: “All students will develop the cultural understanding, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture” (1993, p. 29). In addition, in many regards, culture is taught implicitly, imbedded in the linguistic forms that students are learning. To make students aware of the cultural features reflected in the language, teachers can make those cultural features an explicit topic of discussion in relation to the linguistic forms being studied. An English as a second language teacher could help students understand socially appropriate communication, such as making requests that show respect. Students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms.

The most obvious influence of teaching culture in EFL classroom is the language of the native culture; a student brings to the classroom particular grammar, syntax and language

rules from the native languages that do not always translate directly to the English language. In addition, word order and gendered language is one of the most common language difficulties a non-native speaker encounters when learning English. Another cultural influence is learning or teaching style. Students may have different cultural expectations “regarding the length of the school day, student-teacher relationships or appropriate classroom behavior; all of these variables may interfere with instruction or learning and result in negative learning outcomes” (Wahlig, 2013). Since language and cultures are intertwined with each other, teaching a language cannot be separated from teaching its culture. In language teaching, on one hand, teachers and learners should pay attention to the culture difference since different languages reflect the different value system and worldviews of its speaker. By knowing the culture difference, one can avoid some mistakes while communicating.

On the other hand, the same concepts of the two cultures should not be neglected, since languages have influence on thought, when learning a foreign language, the learners should at the same time strengthen their mother tongue. McKay (2003) contends that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical. Linguistically, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. Moreover, pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials. Therefore, Krasner (1999) points out that the linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language. Language learners need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone in a foreign language. They should know that behaviors and

intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own community may be perceived differently by members of the foreign language community. They have to understand that, in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior.

2.7 Culture and Communication

Webster (2004) defined Communication as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior” (1983:266.) Communication can be described as an exchange of messages between a sender and a receiver. In this process the sender encodes the message, which means that he produces a set of symbols and the receiver has to decode the message, which means that he tries to understand the meaning of the symbols by interpreting or making sense of them. However, the message the sender thinks he has sent might be very different from the message the receiver gets because (s) he has interpreted it differently. In other words, sent and received messages are never identical. This can be explained by the fact that communication is a very complex process in which symbolic messages can be conveyed from one person to another, but meanings cannot. Furthermore, communication does not only include verbal, but also nonverbal messages. (Kress & Gunther, 1988.)

Meanwhile, culture is always connected with communication. Hall (1959:23) claims that “culture is communication and communication is culture.” This statement expresses that we communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules and norms. When we communicate with people from other cultures we

often are confronted with rules, norms, attitudes and behavior different from our own; and when the degree to which a communicator's goals are achieved through effective and appropriate interaction, received the name of Communicative Competence.

The concept of Communicative Competence was developed in the Anglophone world by Hymes's critique of Chomsky and in the Germanophone literature by Habermas (Van Ek, 1986). Hymes maintained that linguists, desiring to decipher foreign language acquisition, must take into consideration the way in which not only grammatical competence, but also the ability to use language appropriately is acquired. A useful framework for understanding communication competence was designed by Spitzberg & Cupach (1989) who states that it is known as the component model of competence because it is comprised of three specific dimensions: "motivation (an individual's approach or avoidance orientation in various social situations), knowledge (plans of action; knowledge of how to act; procedural knowledge), and skill (behaviors actually perform)."

Canary and Cody (2000) provide six criteria for assessing competence which include, but are not limited to, perceived appropriateness and effectiveness. The criteria include adaptability, conversational involvement, conversational management, empathy, effectiveness, and appropriateness. They are explained in more detail in the text below taken from the online article: "Communication Competence Defined!" by Dr. Lane (2009):

1. Adaptability (flexibility)

- a. The ability to change behaviors and goals to meet the needs.

2. Conversational Involvement

- a. Behavioral and cognitive activity.
- b. Cognitive involvement demonstrated through interaction behaviors.

3. Conversational Management

- a. How communicators regulate their interactions.
- b. Adaptation and control of social situations.

4. *Empathy*

- a. The ability to demonstrate understanding and share emotional reactions to the situation.
- b. Helping the other person.

5. *Effectiveness*

- a. Achieving the objectives of the conversation.
- b. Achieving personal goals.

6. *Appropriateness*

- a. Upholding the expectations for a given situation.
- b. A fundamental criteria for determining competence.

In few words, C'C is the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals -as the desired outcome of the language learning process is the ability to communicate competently, not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does.

2.8 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Life in this contemporary globalized world commands respective challenges in communication and brings nearly everyone into contact with people of other languages and cultures. So, for understanding better this idea; the definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence, its influences in ELT and its assessment will be presented.

2.8.1 Defining Intercultural Communicative Competence

Maureen Guirdham (2005) points out that intercultural communication is communication across cultures, it describes cultural dimensions applicable for all cultures. She believes that "Intercultural Communication skills may well hold the key to solving many of the current global conflicts." The use of the term "intercultural" reflects the view that EFL learners have to gain insight both their own and the foreign culture (Kramsch, 1993). As said before, it is of great importance to consider not only the linguistic competence (language's linguistic rules such as grammar, vocabulary...) but the cultural norms, attitudes and behavior of the speaker to communicate competently with people even though they have different cultures. The concept of Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is defined in a great number of studies "as the competence to obtain effective outcomes in intercultural communication situations" (Byram, 1997). In the past few decades, ICC has become an important research area in Intercultural Communication studies, and produced a considerable amount of literature.

ICC refers to the "ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (Byram, Zarate & Neuner, 1997). The ability to understand cultures, including your one's, and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully, includes understanding how gestures and the distance between speakers vary from culture to culture (Byram, Zarate & Neuner, 1997). Byram et al (1997) has refocused the goal of language education with culture integrated into language study. This competency emphasizes the mediation between different cultures, the

ability to look at oneself from an ‘external’ perspective, analyze and adapt one’s own behavior, values and beliefs.

An interculturally competent learner therefore displays a range of affective, behavioral and cognitive capacities (Byram, 2006: 22–26):

1. *Attitudes/Affective capacities*
 - Acknowledgement of the identities of others.
 - Respect for otherness.
 - Tolerance for ambiguity.
 - Empathy
2. *Behavior*
 - Flexibility.
 - Communicative awareness.
3. *Cognitive capacities*
 - Knowledge.
 - Knowledge discovery.
 - Interpreting and relating.
 - Critical cultural awareness.

Intercultural Communicative Competence is focused on culture-specific behaviors and how people from different cultures perceive, behave and communicate differently, based on sociocultural backgrounds. Understanding learners' specific culture in the field of language pedagogy is also regarded as a part of Intercultural Communicative Competence, which is well-known as cross-cultural communication where cultural knowledge is being required in the language classroom. With the gradual awareness of the importance of the communicative competence, we are sure that in EFL, more and more teachers will place their emphasis upon the improvement of ICC, and develop their students' intercultural communicative competence as well as the linguistic competence at the same time.

2.8.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence's Assessment

The process of becoming interculturally competent is much more complex than just realizing that there are one's and others. It requires certain attitudes, knowledge and skills to be promoted, in addition to learners' linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. Accordingly, Byram and Zarate identify the following components of ICC within foreign language education: "savoirs" (knowledge of Self and Other), "savoir comprendre" (skills of interpreting and relating), "savoir être" (intercultural attitudes), and "savoir faire/apprendre" (skills of discovery and interaction) (1997:11). Furthermore, Byram distinguishes "savoir s'engager" (critical cultural awareness) as the centre of his model of ICC (1997:54).

These "savoirs" also form part of the classification of ICC adopted by the "Common European Framework of Reference" (2001) where they have been developed into: "savoir" (declarative knowledge), "savoir faire" (skills and know-how), "savoir être" (existential competence), and "savoir apprendre" (ability to learn).

Despite recent research in the field of ICC the relationship between teaching-and-learning language and-culture and ICC assessment issues seems to have been underestimated, hence there is a need for a new conceptual framework of ICC (Byram and Zarate 1997). Accordingly, the three dimensions in assessing ICC are the following:

1. Savoirs, relating to the declarative knowledge profile which takes into account both small "c" culture and capital "C" culture aspects, such as ways of life, customary practices, music, arts, architecture, literature, history, individual and social norms of reference. It refers to collective memory, diversity in the ways of living as well as the sociocultural context of the target language communities.

2. *Savoir faire*, referring to the behavioral profile which is concerned with different forms of behavior in the target language and culture, pluri-lingual and pluri-cultural practices from the family, cultural and social environment of individuals, aiming at the development of specific skills related to various contexts of communication.
3. *Savoir être*, referring to the attitudinal profile which is concerned with the mental representations of individuals and the development of attitudes able to cross over from self-awareness to sensitivity towards Otherness, acceptance of and respect for the values of other cultures (Lussier et al. 2004).

The assessment of the three components of ICC is complex but rewarding as it provides feedback to students related to their intercultural learning, and it also informs teachers about the nature and level of their students' intercultural performance. Moreover, the focus here is not on how much cultural information has been obtained by the learners during a course, but on how intercultural performance has been integrated within the teaching/learning process, and on how the learners' progress has been determined. In this context, distinction should be made between formative and summative assessment. "The former is carried out during the course as an ongoing process, with the aim of giving students guidance on their performance, and improving the learning process, while the latter evaluates the learners' achievement at the end of a course, with a final grade or mark" (Brindley, 2001). Since ICC covers cognitive, behavioral and affective domains, its evaluation should be formative rather than summative (Lussier et al. 2007).

Secondly, the assessment of ICC should be continuous and not administered at one or two instances during a course (Lussier et al. 2007). ICC may be assessed either by the teacher or by the students themselves where they evaluate their own performance, or projects completed during the course (self-evaluation). Thirdly, assessment can be carried out at different phases of a course. For example, a pre-test intends to find out the initial level of the students' intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes before the course starts, a test during the course can "gauge progress and increase motivation" (Corbett, 2003: 194), and a post-test measures the students' intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes after the course has ended, giving thus some indication of the effectiveness of intercultural learning. Fourthly, different types of test format may be resorted to at different stages of an intercultural course, depending on the goals of instruction. Tests may be roughly divided into objective and subjective ones.

When assessing ICC, the teacher becomes an observer of the process of ICC development, and not only of its end product, therefore objective tests may be good for testing intercultural knowledge, but not necessarily for skills and attitudes. For a more global assessment of all the three dimensions of ICC, subjective tests are preferable. A further distinction is made between holistic and analytic assessment. The former "means making a global impressionistic judgment about the learners' performance on a task as a whole, whereas the latter requires that the assessor should observe closely all the three dimensions of ICC, or each dimension separately in order to come out with different profiles of learner performance" (Lussier et al. 2007).

Finally, the assessment of ICC may be either direct or indirect. The former measures learner performance directly by requiring the assessment to perform a role play (savoir

faire), or discuss another culture's attitudes (*savoir être*) in a small group with the assessor matching their performance to the most appropriate categories on a criteria grid. On the other hand, the indirect is "a pen-and-paper test, which often assesses intercultural knowledge", (Lussier et al. 2007.)

The rating scale for assessing each of the dimensions of ICC – *savoirs*, *savoir faire* and *savoir être* – includes certain indicators to define relevant levels of ICC proficiency: "low profile, medium profile, and high profile. It combines descriptors and criteria of performance to describe each level of ICC, presuming that concrete tasks may be performed with a particular degree of proficiency at one level rather than at another." (Lussier et al, 2007.)

2.9 Getting Cultural Awareness.

"Why are teachers teaching English? " There are lots of 'right' answers to this question, but many teachers answer that they are teaching English for the purpose of communication with people of other cultures. The concept of communicative competence has been transformed into the concept of 'Intercultural Communicative Competence'. Basically, ICC, as we have seen, requires that students acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness necessary to communicate interculturally. Byram points out that, to be able to acquire ICC, first learners must be aware of the importance that culture has and then to acquire certain "abilities." The first one is the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own" (1997: 52). The second is the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the

ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (1997:52). Both sets of skills obviously require the development of language competence. In addition, skills of analysis and interpretation are necessary, as are skills of relating between different cultures, and the ability to put all this knowledge and skills into practice in real situation.

Moreover, the teacher has been considered the expert knower of the language Kramsch (1993) and his/her own cultural knowledge thus seems to be the main source for students to learn about. However, this role of the teacher has been diminished, Kramsch (1993), with the booming of information technology and the effects of globalization that make many countries dependent on each other, students are now able to get access to many cultural resources and explore the target culture themselves. The availability of native English speakers as a rich cultural resource is also an important issue for consideration. Time allowance for culture teaching is also a big issue for teachers as lessons are already very loaded. In spite of that, if teachers know how to incorporate language and culture in language teaching in a flexible way, they can solve the problem easily and even make their lessons more interesting.

CHAPTER.III METHODOLOGY

This chapter has the purpose of showing the process that was followed to obtain the necessary information about the use of cultural topics in classes, if it influences and in what extent the students' awareness of the importance and consequences of culture in learning English as a foreign language.

A description of the setting, the participants, and the instruments used are provided. A step-by-step description of the data collecting and the analysis procedures followed to develop this research is added too.

This study was carried out using a case study and a quantitative-qualitative research; this implied the use of a questionnaire and an interview in order to collect information. In other words, this thesis seeks to explore student's cultural awareness while studying English.

3.1 Context

This research was conducted at BUAP language school directed to LEI (with its acronym in Spanish: Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés) students currently involved in English IV.

3.2 Subjects

A group of 26 students from English IV participated in this process. Five in the interview and the rest in the survey. As MUM (Modelo Universitario Minerva) students interested in

achieving the objective of communicating effectively, they were students from LEI. Their age ranged between 19-25 years old, fourteen students were females and twelve were males.

3.3 Instrument

As it was mentioned before, an interview and a survey were employed for this research. The former consisted in 5 open-ended questions and the latter in 7 questions: 3 multiple choice and 4 standardized open-ended, direct questions addressed to the students of Meta IV. Some of the questions were based on the questionnaire of Chunghong Zhou, (2011.)

Likewise, the interview and the survey have similar questions and both intended to obtain information about the students' perspectives about culture. According to their comments, the interview might show if there is any contradiction in what students think about culture in the survey and what they really say and express.

The interview questions are illustrated in Appendix 1, the survey in Appendix 2 and the transcriptions from the interview applied in Appendix 3. The students' answers in Appendix 4 and 5.

3.3.1 Interview and Survey

The interview and the survey were designed with the purpose of gathering the student's perception about culture in foreign English learning. Students gave their point of view about culture, this includes; the definition about culture, the importance of teaching culture

in classroom, their own evaluation of American English cultural knowledge, the problems that they found when dealing with cultural activities and the barriers that they have at the moment of speaking with foreign American people. The interview was in English in order to explore their language skills. The interview is more personal, there is a direct communication with the student, and the survey has some multiple choice questions that can guide students in choosing an answer.

3.4 Procedures

The questions for the interview were designed based on Chunghong Zhou's questionnaire, and it was previously revised by the thesis Director. Next, the interview was applied to the students from English IV.

Afterwards each of the questions from the interview were analyzed and transcribed (see Appendix 3). Then, two graphs from the two multiple choice questions from the survey were made (See Appendix 4), and the open-ended questions from the survey were analyzed (See Appendix 5.) Results are found in chapter IV. The information obtained was used to prove if the hypotheses made were true or false. Finally, conclusions about the student's awareness in the interdependence between culture and all levels of language were drawn.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter contains the results found in the data gathered through the interview and the survey applied to the participants in the group of English IV class. For a better organization of the results the students' answers from the interview were analyzed one by one and an interpretation for each question was drawn. Then an interpretation of each of the graphs of the multiple choice questions was made. And finally, the answers of the open-ended questions were analyzed and drawn into a conclusion.

4.1 Interview Findings

The results gathered through the interviews are explained in this section. The interview is intended to show student's personal perspective about the culture role in the process of English learning. (It is a direct transcription from the interview.)

Question 1 (Appendix No. 1): What does the word culture mean to you?

The results were (Appendix No. 3.):

STUDENT	ANSWER
Student 1	<i>Culture is a very important word because it defines what we are as human beings and what our roots are made of.</i>
Student 2	<i>It's a, culture it's like an education that we learn since we are kinds (kids) or fathers (parents) or family, or, or...</i>
Student 3	<i>Oh! Mmm...I don't know, maybe it's about customs, mmm maybe about the Mmm meals, traditions, something like that.</i>

Student 4	<i>Means...ehm...maybe ahm...Ahm...big...Yeah! It's the...ahm...the habits that, the ahm, in the, centrally we have.</i>
Student 5	<i>Ahm, culture I think it's ahm, ahm is a big word in aspect of a, many aspects of a, of a society, and also ahm, kind of knowledge that people should have.</i>

According to the answers, it can be said that student number one and three know about the visible features of culture, I mean, the observable symptoms: “C” culture; such as traditions, customs, religion... that define each group of a society (make it different from the others.) Student number two has a little confusion in what *education* is, since it is not the same definition in Spanish than in English (different cultural denotations). It can be said that student 2 got confused with education and cultural norms, which are the behaviors and attitudes that our parents teach us. Finally, student 4 and 5, without being aware of it, know about the invisible features of culture. Habits are values and beliefs applied to the daily life, normal daily behaviors! And all these form part of the “c” culture. Student 5 says culture is knowledge, and in part it is. Language expresses cultural reality, and is important to acquire this knowledge because through language we conduct our social lives, without this cultural knowledge we will be expressing as a “*fluent fool*” (Bennett, Bennett and Allen, 2003.)

In other words, two of five students did not provide a clear definition of what culture means. The other three gave a simple definition of culture, probably; the reason of their absence of cultural knowledge awareness is due to the lack of culture in their English classes. Thus the problem can be both teacher and student.

Question 2 (Appendix No. 1): How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?

The five students agreed that it is very important to have English culture. Three of five students said it is important because if they travel abroad they will know what expressions are used and which are not; the other 2 students did not give a clear explanation. Student number one is aware of the different customs and behaviors between the countries (México-U.S.A). Student four is aware of culture teaching in classroom and the prior knowledge of the teacher to be able to teach it to students. All of them agreed that is necessary to know about the culture of the language in order to know how to react properly in real situations.

The results were: (Appendix No. 3.)

STUDENT	ANSWER
Student 1	<i>Ahm! Is very important because we are not only learning the language, but we also are learning the culture, the traditions, the customs they have, also because we, when we are going to going abroad in a journey or maybe a study journey, we have to know what are they used to and what they are they not, what kind of food they eat, and what not; because as Mexicans we eat lots of food mostly and maybe they don't.</i>
Student 2	<i>It's very important be....because if you want to learn, learn English you have to know about the culture to, if you want to travel to the places where they speak that language; you have to know because, could, sometimes there are word, words or something that you think that is good, but if you say it in that country is bad.</i>

Student 3	<i>Ahm, for me is important because when you travel to another country you have to know that costumes to know how is, how will be your, bueno, your act, your... how to express with the person...</i>
Student 4	<i>Well, ahm, yes... I think is more important, because, ahm, the, the English is ahm, is a universal language... I'm thinking. And...and...is important to communicate the cultural to another kind of people.</i>
Student 5	<i>Well, ahm, I thinking if you ´re gonna be an English teacher, you should know the culture of, ahm the, of both! Of both countries, in this case of England and the United States, and it´s important because you can work, with ahm with ahm...with examples and, I don't know, maybe...maybe you can acquire knowledge about how teaching that cultures and, and mix with a teaching in Spanish... I don't know...</i>

Question 3 (Appendix No. 1): How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?

Student number five confuses history knowledge with cultural background; is not the same to know just part of the culture than culture in its totality! Student one is aware that cultural activities help developing a cultural knowledge and due to this she/he accepts that her/his own cultural knowledge level might be low. All the students agreed that they might have a lack of American English cultural knowledge. (Appendix No. 3)

STUDENT	ANSWER
	<i>Very, not very low but it´s undergraduate, I wish, I would have that knowledge, because I'm not used to</i>

<i>Student 1</i>	<i>read neither to watch news, so, so that's why I think is that, but I know a little about America's history, about, the presidents. That's it.</i>
<i>Student 2</i>	<i>Medium.</i>
<i>Student 3</i>	<i>I think that, Mmm medium</i>
<i>Student 4</i>	<i>I don't know it's low!</i>
<i>Students 5</i>	<i>Mmm, I've never think of that, but ahm... I think with an historic exam could be a nice evaluation...</i>

Question 4 (Appendix No. 1): What are your problems/ difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in the class? Why?

Students got confused at this part of the interview- with this question. It was necessary a previous explanation in order to help them answer it.

The results were the following: (See Appendix No. 3.)

STUDENT	ANSWER
<i>Student 1</i>	<i>Ahm, maybe because when they are taking about a topic and I, and I don't know about it, it's very difficult because I don't know what to say, what to write or what, what to understand, or how the words are spoken.</i>
<i>Student 2</i>	<i>Cultural activities in class... No, I don't have problems.</i>
<i>Students 3</i>	<i>I can ...ahm ...maybe when speaking, or a lot, little bit with vocabulary that I don't have.</i>

<i>Students 4</i>	<i>The different opinions, and maybe ahm, the religions, and sometimes ahm the classmates have ahm, ahm, strict rules, and they can't do what they really want to do.</i>
<i>Students 5</i>	<i>No, I don't have any problem... maybe ahm, in the way of grammar and vocabulary could be a problem but the communication I don't have problems.</i>

This question intended to explore if students know what a cultural activity is, then if they have some problems facing this activities due to the different cultural backgrounds they have in comparison with the English native speakers (Canada, U.S.A and England.) Student one, three and five agree that vocabulary is a problem while dealing with cultural activities. Student five says that he/she does not have any communication problem; but if there are vocabulary differences, taking into account semantics: cultural connotations and denotations, there might be a problem of communication due to the different cultural norms of communication.

It can be said that students know there are differences between languages and that these differences are bounded in some way to culture, but they are still unaware of the great importance that culture has in all levels of language use and usage.

Question 5: (Annex No. 2) what barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people?

According to the results, four from the five students said that the main problem is that they do not know some of the American expressions, or that they do not find the appropriate words to say and for this reason, it is difficult to keep a fluent and natural conversation with

them. Student two is aware of the different accents, which are part of different cultural backgrounds, and certainly this can be a socio-cultural barrier while communicating.

In other words, they know in an indirect way that culture is important when communicating with an English native speaker (from Canada, U.S.A and England), but they do not apply it in real situations.

These are the results: (See annex No. 4)

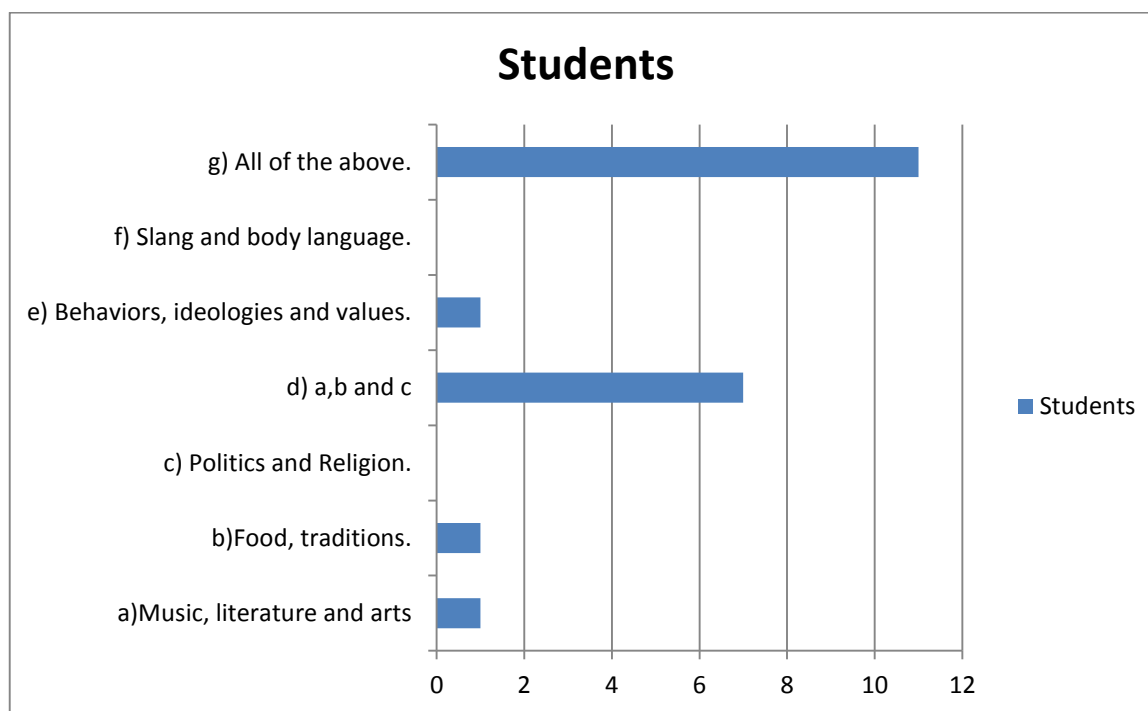
STUDENT	ANSWER
Student 1	<i>I've spoken to American, German, French people because I have to do them interviews, so it's very difficult because you don't find the appropriate words to speak.</i>
Student 2	<i>Barriers...cause they used to speak like if they were talking with a native speaker, and sometimes they have a different accent because they come from different place and sometimes you don't understand because we learn the standard English.</i>
Student 3	<i>Ahm, maybe when I don't find the correct words to say something.</i>
Student 4	<i>Barriers? Ahm, ok, I, I, ahm, I can't order my ideas...Yeah!</i>
Student 5	<i>Ahm, maybe if I don't know too much about the topic they are, ahm...speaking, ahm, I would be in trouble about the communication, but I, I have friends that live in the states, it's simple to communicate with them because they are young as me, we, we like the same.</i>

4.2 Survey Findings.

The results gathered through the survey are explained below. The multiple choice questions (See Appendix 4) and their interpretation are showed first and then the open-ended questions (See Appendix 5).

GRAPHIC 1. (See Appendix 4.)

Question 1.What does the word culture mean to you?

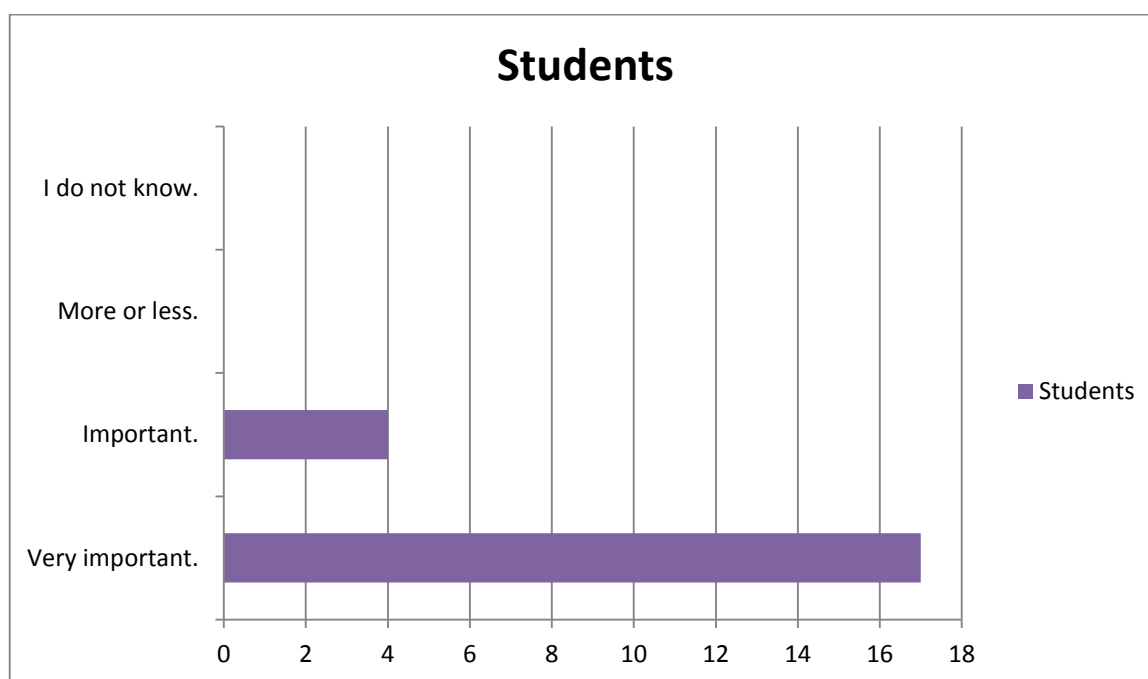


In comparison with the interview here the students seem to know a little bit more about what culture is, but in this case it was easier for them just to choose an answer than giving a definition with their own words. Nevertheless, more than half of the students chose the correct answer, which is *all of the above*; this definition includes the visible and the invisible features of culture. One of the students thinks that culture is just behaviors, ideologies and values, not being aware that culture is more than that; and nine students believe that culture is just having knowledge more than a way of language expression.

Culture is a pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, values, utterances, traditions, music, arts... and being aware of this can help understanding the language in a better way.

GRAPHIC 2. (See Appendix 4)

Question 2. How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?



It is interesting to emphasize in this part, that the 4 students that say English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning is important but not very important are students who chose as a definition of culture just the visible features of it: food, traditions, music, religion... I might say that this belief that culture is only the observable features of it influences in the importance that they give to culture in the process of acquiring a language. If they knew the correct definition of culture, they may be aware that there is no level of language which is not dependent on culture, as the rest of the students.

In conclusion it can be said that students know that culture is important while learning a language like they know learning vocabulary or reading is important but they are not aware of this inextricable relation.

*The next questions are the open-ended. The responses of the students that came closest to answering each question were chosen as an example, but for drawing the conclusion the 21 responses were taken into account. Responses are taken literally from the surveys. (See Appendix 5)

Question 3. Why is English cultural knowledge Important?

Student 1. *Culture is important because you understand better about the use of the language.*

Student 2. *Because you need to know how do they live the language, how to apply it in daily life.*

Student 4. *Because in this form you will be able to apply and understand certain expressions in real life situations and make yourself clear when expressing.*

Student 5. *Because it is an important tool to learn how to speak in certain situation.*

Student 6. *Because you understand the context in which you are speaking.*

Student 11. *Because when someone wants to interact with others, she/he has to know how speak, what to say and what not, what kind of words or comment are permitted to avoid misunderstandings.*

Student 15. *You have to know about the culture of the country of the language that you are learning*

Student 16. *It helps you with a better understanding of the language.*

It can be noticed that students are aware that culture influences in a certain way language, that if they do not have this cultural knowledge they will not be able to understand correctly the language. They think, according to their answers, that a language is not just a simple structure but a complex one that is formed with different characteristics or factors that helps understanding language in a better way; that helps in expressing correctly in real contexts. One of them says that culture is a tool that helps in behaving and expressing according to

the society in which you are; it can be said that more than a tool, culture is a bridge between language and people; culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable. In few words, students are aware of the importance of English cultural knowledge, but they are still not able to link language and culture, to comprehend the spoken language in real situations.

Question 4: What do you understand by *cultural activities* in class?

This question shows students' perspectives about what is a cultural activity in class. If they have culture teaching they might be aware of what cultural activities are. Likewise, this question intended to show if culture teaching in class influences somehow students' awareness about the importance of culture in English as a foreign language.

Cultural activities are those who give cultural understanding to learners, these must include not just the visible features but the invisible ones. According to the students' answers, it can be said that they focus more in the observable features of culture, these means just a part of culture. Only a few students mention behaviors, beliefs and ideologies, it means that they are aware of the importance that these factors have in communication, but they may still have these limitations due to the lack of access to the foreign language in their sociocultural life. Their answers are shown below.

Student 4. *Learning lifestyle from other countries.*

Student 7. *Activities that make students learn about unknown aspects such as traditions, history, etc.*

Student 9. *Activities related with one kind of culture that are performed in the class to learn about it.*

Student 10. *To implement readings or situational activities in which students can learn customs.*

Student 11. *Knowinf about famous places, traditions, people's behaviors.*

Student 12. *Teaching traditions, ideologies, etc from that country.*

Student 13. *Activities that use the cultural aspects of the country in an active way and not only to know them.*

Student 19. *Doing activities in class included music, literature, arts, food and tradition of a country.*

Question 5: Do you have culture in your English class?

Student 1. *No, I don't.*

Student 2. *In some cases, for example we saw something about culture of U.S.A.*

Student 3. *In some class.*

Student 4. *I don't think so.*

Student 7. *Yes we do.*

Student 9. *Yes, no all the time but yes.*

Student 10. *Not really.*

Student 14. *Sometimes.*

Importantly, 8 of the 20 students say that they do not have cultural activities in class; at the same time those students are aware that culture helps to understand the language better, to express in real situations, to understand the context and that cultural activities should be situational activities in which students can practice and not just learning data. Another 6 students say that sometimes they have culture in class, and their answers about cultural activities are related to the small “c” culture, finally the last 7 students confirm they have cultural activities, but they define those activities just in the big “C” culture, I mean cultural activities for them are traditions, customs, food, music and so on, and based on this they say that their English class has cultural activities. Rephrasing this, cultural activities in class are limited just to the visible features of culture. This probably makes students not to be aware that culture connects to language also in invisible aspects such as values, thoughts.... Culture is expressed through language, as it is the learnt behavior of a society.

Question 6: Have you had communication with foreign American people? If yes, what barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating?

Student 1. *Yes, some differences with the meaning of the words.*

Student 4. *Yes, expressions are not applied in the same way. Different pronunciation.*

Student 7. *To employ non formal language, slangs, etc. All the English words that are not formal or academic.*

Student 8. *Yes, sometimes they use different words like synonyms and contractions.*

Student 9. *Yes, sometimes in the stress in the words of course they understand but once someone told me that Mexicans' pronunciation is different.*

Student 13. *I use a word in English but this word is understandable (meaning) in Spanish, but in English it isn't.*

Student 17. *Yes, I think the most difficult part is when they don't really understand what you are trying to say.*

Student 20. *The pronunciation is completely different also attitudes that I can notice in their behavior.*

Student 21. *Many, because of the use of colloquial language rather in the university.*

In this part 8 students gave a negative answer, two did not answer, and the other 11 say that they have had communication with an American native speaker. Those who have not had communication with American native speakers are the students who focus more on invisible features of culture, those who think that language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior. And those who have had communication focus more in the visible features and most of them said they have had cultural activities in class. Similarly, all of these 11 students agree in the same barriers of communication, which are pronunciation and connotations – learners might know the denotation of one word, but connotations come rooted to culture, and if they have this lack of knowledge, understanding the meaning of what an American native speaker tries to say may be difficult. Besides, all this connotations are part of the informal English which is not taught in class. The Meta

Language class syllabus has no culture, and every topic is very academic or standardized English.

4.3 Conclusion.

In the results above, students show they are aware that learning a language requires more than the grammatical structure, that the ability to communicate successfully with native English speakers depends not only on language skills but also on comprehension of cultural aspects, the comprehension of these “aspects” are limited to the small “c” culture or to the big “C” culture, and not to both.

This cultural knowledge is not represented by means of documents and/or information bases, it is implicit in daily life expressions or situations in the language context, in this case English context (Canada, U.S.A or England.)

CHAPTER V:

Along this chapter, a summary of the results reached in this research project is given, as well as the implications, the limitations and the directions for further research.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings.

As it has been mentioned before, this project considered thinking about the situation that LEI students live everyday in their English language acquisition process within a cultural field. This research was intended to explore students' perspectives about culture and whether they are aware of the importance that it has in learning English as a foreign language.

For gathering this information a qualitative-quantitative research was used, in other words an interview adapted from the questionnaire of Chung Hong Zhou (2011) and a survey were applied.

Similarly, a correlation study was used to measure the degree of relationship between teaching culture and students' cultural awareness in the process of English learning.

The results obtained indicate that it is possible that teachers in charge of English classes need to pay more attention to developing cultural activities as part of the lessons in order to motivate students to expand their knowledge about English culture so that they be interested in looking further for information outside the classroom as a common part of their learning process and develop a greater cultural awareness.

5.2 Implications.

The results of this research imply that LEI learners have problems recognizing or being aware of what culture in its totally means (big and small culture.) Thus, this project intends to help teachers and students to be more conscious about this role of culture, in order to achieve a higher English level, communicate and behave correctly with native speakers. It is suggested to motivate teachers to take the decision of expanding their preparation to offer students the needed information to help them introduce themselves to the new context they are acquiring, this may be reached by attending conferences, reading books, doing some research, talking with native speakers, this can be possible nowadays using technology and its social networkings such as Skype, Facebook and more, and getting involved in the English culture. Moreover, culture can easily be identified and analyzed by watching British and American films. As well, it is also recommended for students to take an active role in class more than being passive learners during the process of acquiring a second language. Likewise, nowadays the internet has brought a great deal of information, available just with some typing here and a clicking there people can be in contact with other people from around the world.

The internet is a pretty good place and tool, if it is used wisely, that is always available for learners who are looking to improve their skills and their cultural knowledge.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Usually, some inconveniences were encountered through the development of this research. Some of the most important limitations faced were three. First, in the short

interview the data gathered was elicited by means of established questions and students' level of performance may have been different if a natural conversation had taken place. The second limitation is related to the number of participants in the study; not many teachers wanted to be interrupted or to allow their students to participate in the interview or in the survey, so as a result just one group from English IV took part in the research. Fortunately the inconveniences did not affect the research process.

5.4 Further Research

The main concern for developing this research project was to highlight the students' awareness about the relation that exists between culture and learning a foreign language, and how culture helps avoiding misunderstandings in communication with English native speakers (Canada, U.S.A and England.) The attention was focused on one group of English IV but there is still a lot of work to do related to this point in this field. The results of the present research open up the way for a further exploration in English V or graduates of LEI to discover if they are aware of the importance of cultural knowledge in the process of learning a language or maybe to make a deeper research to explore if LEI students from English IV develop their ICC – this can be done through a case study observing two groups from English IV. At the same time, continuing this research at Target Language V would be productive and useful, since according to the LEI course syllabus, these students are coming to reach B2 level after English IV; and according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages at this level the student can interact with a degree of fluency and

spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. It means that students must have enough cultural knowledge to make this type of interaction possible. Likewise, doing the research with graduates from LEI would be interesting too, since they have already taken some subjects such as Literature, and they are becoming English teachers.

Similarly, a more extensive study could include the participation of a larger number of students to take part in the interview and a larger number of groups to observe their English classes. Furthermore, going forwards, an observational research based on a comparison of the foreign and the mother culture and how the mother culture affects in the ICC process can be done.

5.5 Conclusion

Culture may denote all manner of features, including the values and beliefs you have grown up with, your national, regional and local customs and, in particular, attitudes and practices that affect the way you work, speak and behave. So, learning the culture of the language you are acquiring is part of the process! And in this process, as I said before, it is important that both teachers and students participate in an active way: teachers must promote motivation in students and facilitate their intercultural learning; they need to present to the students different sources of information using a combination of visual, audio and tactile materials. It is also likely to succeed in addressing the different learning styles of the students. English foreign language teachers must instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage, and also choose culturally appropriate teaching styles and

explore culture based on linguistic differences to promote understanding instead of misunderstandings or prejudices when speaking with native English speakers. As well, students should not wait just for the information to appear! They must participate as active learners and look for a deeper understanding in English culture; they should be looking for materials and/or sources that can help them to improve/develop their skills.

Being in the English class is just the beginning, as a foreign language student it is relevant to practice the language outside the classroom.

The results from Ch. IV show, in a certain way, that foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching (in its totality like big and small culture.) Every student and every teacher should be aware of this and make best use of it in order to sharpen learner's cultural awareness. It means, that this cultural approach to English as a foreign language is possible, but only when foreign language teachers are well informed of and alert to the cultural features and variables of the target language, and when students become responsible and aware of their own learning too. Thus, this cultural knowledge leads to a greater comprehension of cultural habits and expectations in some form or another.

When intercultural competence is an integral part of the language classroom, learners experience how to appropriately use language to build relationships and understandings with members of other cultures. Furthermore, it seems to help to create a learning environment that is more relevantly contextualized into English culture than just teaching grammar structures.

I mean, the cultural approach must be incorporated to teaching in this modern society in order to get students involved in this field. And in this way, students will feel confident and interested, and this interest will motivate them to start their own learning and to improve their skills.

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Appendix No. 1

Interview

***This interview was made in English.**

1. What does the word culture mean to you?
2. How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?
3. How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?
4. What are your problems/ difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in the class?
Why?
5. What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people?

Appendix No. 2

Survey Questions

Thank you for participating in this survey and assisting my research for my graduate thesis project. The questions below are about culture; please answer sincerely all of them. All surveys will be anonymous and confidential, unless you choose to have your name included.

1) What does the word culture mean to you?

- a) Music, literature and arts. b) Food, traditions. c) Politics and religion. d) A, b and c
d) Behaviors, ideologies and values. e) Slang and body language. g) All of the above.

2) How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?

- a) Very important. b) Important. c) More or less d) I don't know.

3) Why is it important?

4) What do you understand by *cultural activities in class*?

5) Do you have culture in your English class?

6) Have you had communication with foreign American people? If yes, what barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with them?

Appendix No. 3

Transcriptions

*The following transcriptions are taken literally from the interview which was recorded for a better understanding and analysis.

Student 1:

-*What does the word culture mean to you?*

-Culture is a very important word because it defines what we are as human beings and what our roots are made of.... (silence).

- *Is that all?*

-Yes.

- *Ok. So, how important is English culture knowledge in English classes?*

- Ahm! Is, is very important because we are not only learning the language, but we also are learning the culture, the traditions, the customs they have, also because we, when we are going to going abroad in a journey or maybe a study journey, we have to know what are they used to and what they are they not, what kind of food they eat, and what not; because as Mexicans we eat lots of food, of spicy food mostly and maybe they don't.

- *Ok. How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?*

- Vvvvery, not very low but it's undergraduate, I wish, I would have that knowledge, because I'm not used to read neither to watch news, so, so that's why I think is that, but I know a little about America's history, about the presidents. That's it.

-*What are your problems or difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in the class and why?*

- Ahm, maybe because when they are talking about a topic and I, and I don't know about it, it's very difficult because I don't know what to say, what to write or what, what to understand, or how the words are spoken.

-*OK. What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people?*

-Problems?

- *Don't you have problems when you speak with other people? native English speakers?*

-I've spoken to American, German, French people because I have to do them interviews, so it's very difficult because you don't find the appropriate words to speak, you don't know how to... (silence).

-*Express yourself?*

- Not, not to express, it's just like how are you going to say... you are not going to say "Hello, How are you", not, is like "May I ask you some questions? And... you know ...

-*Why do you think you don't know?*

- I just, (laughs) I don't know, it's just that I don't know (more laughs.)

Student 2

-What does the word culture mean to you?

-Culture?

-Yeah! Culture.

-In English?

-Yes, please.

-It's a, culture it's like an education that we learn since we are kids or fathers or family, or, or... (Silence.)

-Ok. How important is for you English cultural knowledge in classes?

-It's very important be...because if you want to learn, learn English you have to know about the culture to, if you want to travel to the places where they speak that language; you have to know because, could, sometimes there are word, words or something that you think that is good, but if you say it in that country is bad. (Laugh).

- Ok. How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?

-English cultural knowledge?

-Yeah! As good, bad, very bad...?

-Underground? Haha... medium.

-What are your problems or difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in class and why?

-Cultural activities in class.... No, I don't have problems.

-OK. What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people?

-Barriers... 'Cause they used to speak like if they were talking with a native speaker, and sometimes they have a different accent because they come from different places and sometimes you don't understand because we learn the Standard English.

-Ok. So, do you think the accent is the reason why you don't understand?

- Yes. Sometimes slangs too.

-And when you want to express your ideas or feelings? Can you?

-It's different from, if you speak in Spanish, because you don't feel the same when you are talking to an English man, for example when you say "I'm sad" you don't really feel it.

Student 3:

-What does the Word culture mean to you?

-Culture...ahm... a little bit of... about Japan.

-Well, but I asked about what does the word culture mean to you... (Spanish translation).

-Oh! Mmm... I don't know, maybe it's about customs, mmm maybe about the meals, traditions, something like that.

-Ok, *How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?*

-Ahm, for me is important because when you travel to another country you have to know that customs to know how is, how will be your, bueno your act, your...

-Behavior?

-No, no, ahm is most like, how to express with the person...

- *How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?*

-I think that, mm medium.

- *What are your problems or difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in class and why?*

-Cultural activities?

-In the class.

-Mmm, I don't know.

- *What kind of problems do you face?*

- Maybe... But, about what? About abilities? Or...

-No, about the cultural activities.

-But to do what?

- *When you have problems at speaking, or vocabulary...*

-I can... ahm... maybe when speaking, or a lot, a little bit with vocabulary that I don't have.

- *What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people? When you speak with foreign American people what problems do you have?*

-Ahm... maybe when I don't find the correct words to say something.

Student 4:

- *What does the word culture mean to you?*

-Culture?

-Yes.

-The word culture? Ahm... I'm sorry could you repeat?

-Yes, *what does the word culture mean to you?*

-Means... ehm... maybe ahm... ahm... big... Yeah! It's the...ahm... the habits that, the, ahm, in the, centrally we have... (Laughs).

-Ok, *don't worry...how important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?*

-Well, ahm, yes... I think is more important, because, ahm, the, the English is ahm, is a universal language... I'm thinking. And...and is important to communicate the cultural to another kind of people.

- *What are your problems or difficulties when you deal with cultural activities in class?*
- The different opinions, and maybe ahm, the religions, and sometimes ahm the classmates have ahm, ahm, strict rules, and they can't do what they really want to do.
- How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?*
- I, ahm, no, it's low!
- What barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign American people?*
- Barriers? Ahm, ok, I, I, ahm, I can't order my ideas.... Yeah!

Student 5:

What does the word culture mean to you?

- Ahm, culture I think it is ahm, ahm is a big word in aspect of a, many aspects of a, of a society, and also ahm, kind of knowledge that people should have.
- How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?*
- Well, ahm, I think if you're gonna be an English teacher, you should know the culture of, ahm the, of both! Of both countries, in this case of England and the United States, and it's important because you can work, with ahm with, ahm... with examples and, and, I don't know, maybe... maybe you can acquire knowledge about how teaching that cultures and, and mix with a teaching in Spanish... I don't know...
- How do you evaluate your own American English cultural knowledge?*
- Mmm, I've never think of that, but ahm... I think with an historic exam could be a nice evaluation and ...
- With a history test?*
- Ahm yeah! You asked me for ahm...
- Your own cultural knowledge...*
- Your own cultural knowledge, yeah! And obviously how much I know about the, the language.
- So, you think that culture is about history?*
- Yes, like, as I, like I told you in the, at the first question; culture is a... big, is a big word, so you cannot say that culture is or ahm, is for only history or society, it's, it's a big word.
- ...and that word in the context of language?*
- Ah! Ahm... in language...ok...Mmm... maybe ahm, it could be like, a many kind of ways to speak the, the English; in this case the English like a, how the, the, the ,Mmm, the, the United States citizens.. Ahm, change their lang... their English speaking between the countries.

- What are your problems when you deal with cultural activities in class and why?*
- Mmm, cultural activities, ahm like what?
- Like...*
- Could you give me an example?
- Yeah! For examples videos, conversations...*

-...Ah! Ok, ok, ok. Osea, like, yeah! Yeah! ...Mmm...No, I don't have any problem... maybe ahm, in the way of grammar and vocabulary could be a problem but the communication I don't have problems.

-Ok, and what barriers, difficulties or problems have you encountered in the process of communicating with foreign -American people?

-Ahm, maybe if I don't know too much about the topic they are, ahm...speaking, ahm, I would be in trouble about the communication, but I, I have friends that live in the states, it's simple to communicate with them because they are young as me, we, we like the same.

-Can you communicate your feelings? Ideas?

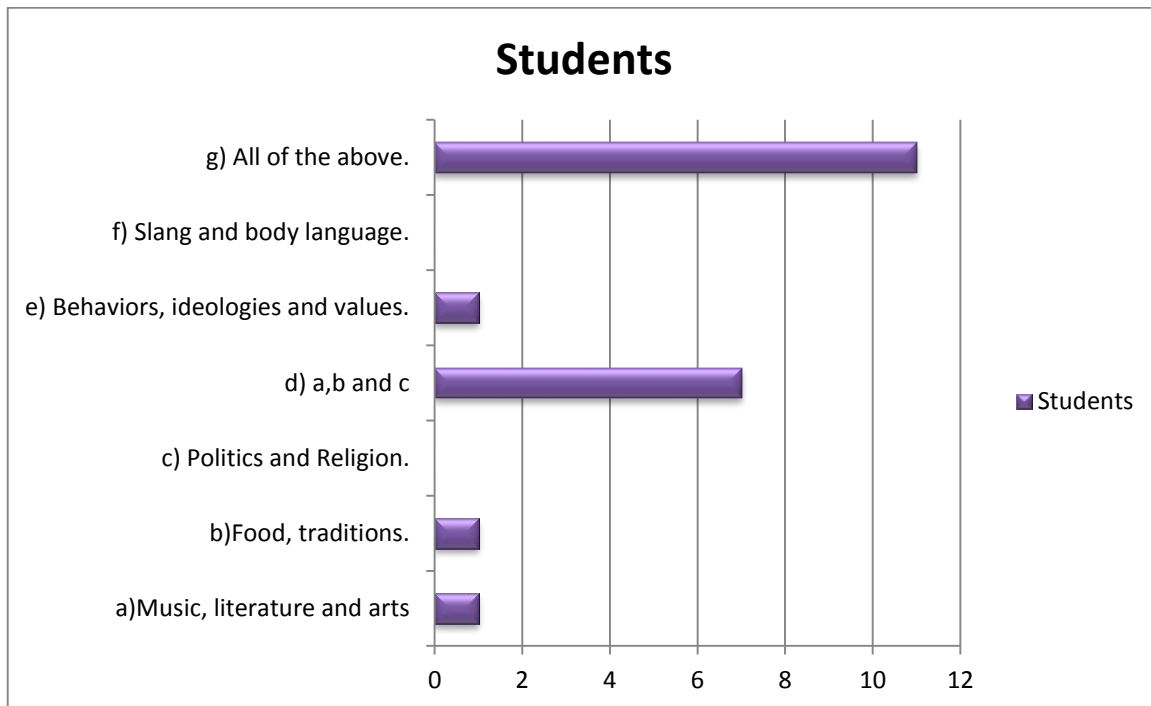
-Ahm, yeah! Could be, no in a fancy way, but yeah! I can do it.

Appendix No. 4

Graphics from the survey.

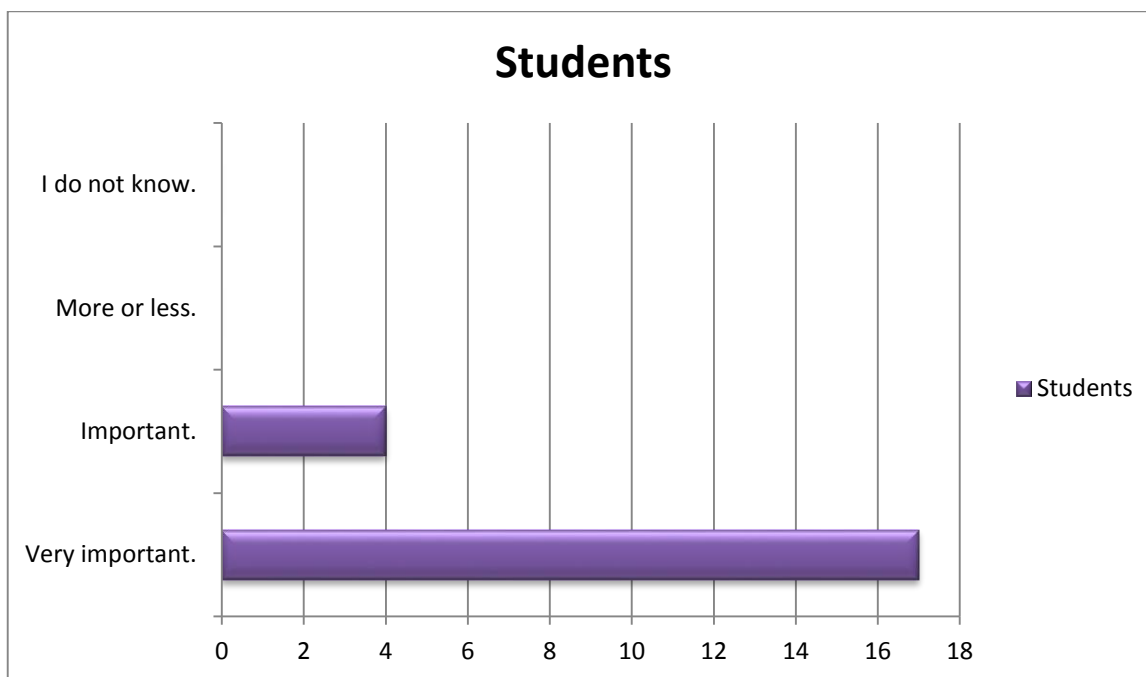
GRAPHIC 1.

1.What does the word culture mean to you?



GRAPHIC 2.

2. How important is English cultural knowledge in English teaching and learning?



Appendix No. 5

Open-Ended questions from the survey.

**Each question has all the students' responses; you can see the complete questionnaire in appendix 3.*

*** All answers are literally taken from the students' answers.*

Question 3: Why is English cultural knowledge important?

Student 1. Culture is important because you understand better about the use of the language.

Student 2. Because you need to know how do they live the language, how to apply it in daily life.

Student 3. Because you have more knowledge about other cultures and you learn them.

Student 4. Because in this form you will be able to apply and understand certain expressions in real life situations and make yourself clear when expressing.

Student 5. Because it is an important tool to learn how to speak in certain situation.

Student 6. Because you understand the context in which you are speaking.

Student 7. Due to acquiring a language or learning a language is also getting cultural knowledge.

Student 8. Because we are acquisition a second language and is important to know all the characteristics of English culture.

Student 9. To understand the language. You can't not learn a language if you don't learn the culture.

Student 10. Learning a new language implies learn its culture.

Student 11. Because when someone wants to interact with others, she/he has to know how speak, what to say and what not, what kind of words or comment are permitted to avoid misunderstandings.

Student 12. Because we as teachers need to know about culture to teach in a correctly way.

Student 13. To understand the way the think and why, also to understand the speaking way and other forms of communication.

Student 14. Because if you want to teaching a second language you have to know about English cultural knowledge to understand the ways to teach English.

Student 15. You have to know about the culture of the country of the language that you are learning.

Student 16. I t helps you with a better understanding of the language.

Student 17. Because we are learning and teaching something really related with the culture from another country. Something that represents the country.

Student 18. Because you have to know all parts (cultural things) to teaching to other people and it's important know how think the English people.

Student 19. Because you can teaching and learning throught the culture and know and understand the language.

Student 20. Because in this way we can know to inform about certain aspects of an another culture.

Student 21. Because it is important to know all the factors about language.

Question 4: What do you understand by *cultural activities* in class?

Student 1. Vocabulary.

Student 2. Activity related with some tradition or maybe food about the country.

Student 3. Are practice about different class or topic.

Student 4. Learning lifestyle from other countries.

Student 5. Talk about traditions and daily life.

Student 6. Watching videos, listening to music.

Student 7. Activities that make students learn about unknown aspects such as traditions, history, etc.

Student 8. Activities that develop some aspects for any English country.

Student 9. Activities related with one kind of culture that are performed in the class to learn about it.

Student 10. To implement readings or situational activities in which students can learn customs.

Student 11. Know about famous places, traditions, people's behaviors.

Student 12. Teach traditions, ideologies, etc from that country.

Student 13. Activities that use the cultural aspects of the country in an active way and not only to know them.

Student 14. Relate with thinking of way in another country. How they think, how is their culture? Etc.

Student 15. To teach the students about things that people in that country use to do.

Student 16. Activities that helps you understand the culture.

Student 17. When we talk or see something related with traditions, food, etc from a country or more.

Student 18. Cultural activities in class are homeworks that give students information about cultural things and that way could be more active.

Student 19. Doing activities in class included music, literature, arts, food and tradition of a country.

Student 20. Are exercises about other countries information.

Student 21. Learning about foreign countries, traditions, etc.

Question 5: Do you have culture in your English class?

Student 1. No, I don't.

Student 2. In some cases, for example we saw something about culture of U.S.A.

Student 3. In some class.

Student 4. I don't think so.

Student 5. No.

Student 6. No.

Student 7. Yes we do.

Student 8. No.

Student 9. Yes, no all the time but yes.

Student 10. Not really.

Student 11. Yes, I think culture class is not in a direct way but it is implicit.

Student 12. Not always.

Student 13. Yes.

Student 14. Sometimes.

Student 15. Yes.

Student 16. Yes.

Student 17. Yes.

Student 18. Sometimes.

Student 19. Sometimes.

Student 20. Sometimes not always.

Student 21. Yes.

Question 6: Have you had communication with foreign American people? If yes, what barriers have you encountered in the process of communicating?

Student 1. Yes, some differences with the meaning of the words.

Student 2. No, I haven't.

Student 3. No.

Student 4. Yes, expressions are not applied in the same way. Different pronunciation.

Student 5. Yes, the language.

Student 6. No.

Student 7. To employ non formal language, slangs, etc. All the English words that are not formal or academic.

Student 8. Yes, sometimes they use different words like synonyms and contractions,

Student 9. Yes, sometimes in the stress in the words of course they understand but once someone told me that Mexicans' pronunciation is different.

Student 10. Yes, I don't understand them.

Student 11. No.

Student 12. I never had communication with foreign American people.

Student 13. I use a word in English but this word is understandable (meaning) in Spanish, but in English it isn't.

Student 14. No.

Student 15. No.

Student 16. No.

Student 17. Yes, I think the most difficult part is when they don't really understand what you are trying to say.

Student 18. *No answer.*

Student 19. No.

Student 20. The pronunciation is completely different also attitudes that I can notice in their behavior.

Student 21. Many, because of the use of colloquial language rather in the university.