

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA



TESIS DOCTORAL

Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence among Colombian Pre-Service EFL Teachers: exploring the Impact of a Pedagogical Intervention via Lesson Study

Desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa intercultural entre profesores colombianos de EFL en formación: Impacto de una intervención pedagógica a través de *Lesson Study*

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

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PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO EN LINGÜÍSTICA INGLESA



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Madrid, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to thank my thesis directors, Carmen and Ari. Two women I deeply admire, not only for their vast knowledge but also for their kindness, their support, their vibe. They introduced me to new areas; they made me expand my horizons; they made this process so much easier than it would have been without them. Thanks for being with me during my stays in Madrid, around Spain, and while in Colombia. You are exceptional human beings and academics.

I want to thank the then Director and the Committee of the Linguistics and Languages Department at the University of Nariño. Thanks for allowing me to carry out my study. Thanks for all the help I received and for making things run smoothly. Thanks also to the students that made part of this study, actually, without you, nothing had been possible.

Special thanks to my parents, momma for your love, patience, and unconditional support during this process and my entire life. Without her, none of my projects and dreams had become true. Ma, you are a unique and wonderful human being! Daddy, you only got to see the beginning of this all, and even though you are no longer with us, you are a big, big part of this. You planted the seed of curiosity, of that eagerness to see the world, to experience, to learn, to LIVE. Both of you, momma and papa have inspired me always and have been my example to follow. You are and will always be my backbone together with my brother and sisi.

Gracias especiales a mis padres. A mi madre por su amor, paciencia, apoyo incondicional durante este proceso y durante mi vida entera. Sin ella, sin su compañía, su complicidad, ninguno de mis proyectos se habría cristalizado. Ma, ¡eres un ser único y maravilloso! Pa, solo pudiste presenciar el comienzo de mi doctorado, y aunque ya no estás con nosotros, eres una gran parte de todo esto. Tu sembraste la semilla de la curiosidad, de ese deseo de ver el mundo, de experimentar, de aprender, de VIVIR. Los dos, mami y papi me han

inspirado siempre y han sido un ejemplo a seguir. Ustedes, junto con mi hermano y hermana son y siempre serán mi soporte.

This PhD is also the result of different people who have positively impacted my life. Thanks, Gabriel Obando. If you had not given me the push, this would simply have not happened. You know what I mean. Thanks, Helda Alicia; you made me realize that I am capable of many things I never thought I could do. You guided me until I learned, and I could continue walking the path by myself. Thanks, Silvy! For listening to me, for celebrating my happy moments and being with me when I felt frustrated and sad. You truly are an amazing friend, an incredible person that gave me strength when I felt I had none left; I am truly blessed you are part of my life.

Last but not least, thanks, dear Diego!!! My partner in crime! We went through this together, ever since the search for my PhD program started. Thanks for sharing the day-to-day, for listening to me, for sharing when we felt bright and no so bright! Thanks for your unconditional support, your friendship, your love, and for helping me get up when I was at my lowest of lows. I am lucky you came to my life.

This stage is almost over. Contrary to what I thought, it was a beautiful adventure.

Esta tesis está dedicada a mis padres. Mi madre, mi apoyo incondicional siempre, en cada momento. Mi padre, quien me dio fuerza, ahora eres polvo de estrellas y sigues brillando a mi lado.

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) can be defined as knowing how to use a language to achieve a communicative purpose bearing in mind the culture-laden interactional styles of the interactants (Corbett, 2014). ICC has been broadly discussed; in the field of linguistics, ICC is said to resemble metapragmatic awareness, which is referred to as the individuals' ability to use their knowledge of languages and cultures to make the correct choices as for the language they use and to interpret the language they are exposed to (McConachy, 2019). To do so, individuals need to develop pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). Following these ideas, it can be said that metapragmatic awareness and ICC share some common ground, as both indicate an individual's capacity to interact appropriately in different scenarios despite cultural differences. This is one of the core perspectives in this dissertation.

ICC has become a priority in educational systems worldwide, including Colombia, and it seems that the responsibility for its development has mostly fallen on foreign language teachers. However, ICC is probably easier to define than it is to materialize. Studies worldwide have revealed that some teachers do not fully understand what ICC is; others, although familiar with the concept, do not know how to integrate it in their teaching practices. In this vein and considering that tackling the issue from the onset is of paramount importance, the purpose of the present study was to explore to what extent a 12-week intervention consisting of a training course and *Lesson Study* (LS) impact the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. To examine the effects of the intervention, it was necessary to work with an experimental group which took part in it and a control group that did not. To track their process, both groups completed a pre-test and a post-test based on the INCA project, the analysis of critical intercultural incidents, and questions created by the researcher.

The pre-test suggested that both groups had similar initial characteristics. However, the results of the post-test indicated gains by the experimental group in terms of behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, empathy, and intercultural adaptability. In contrast, the control group did not show any progress and had a setback concerning behavioral flexibility. As for teaching practices after the intervention, the experimental group first displayed changes regarding their perception of culture, moving from a traditional view to one that was more in line with ICC. Second, they could provide in-class activities that went beyond presenting factual information and comparing shallow aspects, generally between dominant cultures and their own. Third, they could elaborate on the concept of ICC. None of these three changes was seen in the control group. Additionally, after engaging in LS, the experimental group was able to design lesson plans integrating tasks that promoted critical thinking, self-awareness, values, reflection, ability to assess situations from different perspectives, and pragmatic awareness.

In all, it can be concluded that the experimental group benefited from the intervention in terms of their ICC level and their ability to transfer their ICC knowledge to tangible actions. There is still work to do to generate possible advancements regarding the other dimensions and components of the competence (tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness). On this basis, it can be affirmed that if ICC becomes a systematic part of foreign language teaching programs, it may no longer be a somewhat abstract concept but the enabling conditions to get around effectively and appropriately in an intercultural world.

RESUMEN

La competencia comunicativa intercultural (CCI) puede definirse como el saber utilizar una lengua para lograr un propósito comunicativo teniendo en cuenta cómo la cultura influye en la manera de interactuar (Corbett, 2014). La CCI se ha debatido ampliamente; en el campo de la lingüística, se dice que la CCI se asemeja a la conciencia metapragmática, conocida como la capacidad de los individuos de utilizar su conocimiento de las lenguas y las culturas para tomar las decisiones correctas en cuanto a cómo utilizan e interpretan la lengua a la que están expuestos (McConachy, 2019). Esto requiere desarrollar una conciencia pragmalingüística y sociopragmática y adaptabilidad intercultural (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). En este sentido, se puede decir que la conciencia metapragmática y la CCI tienen puntos en común, ya que ambas indican la capacidad de un individuo para interactuar adecuadamente en diferentes escenarios a pesar de las diferencias culturales. Esta es una de las perspectivas centrales de esta tesis.

La CCI se ha convertido en una prioridad en los sistemas educativos de todo el mundo, incluido Colombia, y parece que la responsabilidad de su desarrollo ha recaído sobre todo en los profesores de lenguas extranjeras. Sin embargo, la CCI es más fácil de definir que de materializar. Estudios han revelado que muchos profesores no tienen claro qué es la CCI; otros, aunque conocen el concepto, no saben cómo integrarlo en su enseñanza. En este orden de ideas y considerando que abordar el tema desde el inicio es de suma importancia, el propósito de este estudio fue explorar en qué medida una intervención de 12 semanas que consistió en un curso de capacitación y LS impacta el desarrollo de la ICC y las prácticas de enseñanza de un grupo colombiano de profesores de inglés en formación. Para ello fue necesario trabajar con un grupo experimental y un grupo de control, quienes completaron un pre-test y un post-test basados en el proyecto INCA, el análisis de incidentes interculturales críticos y preguntas creadas por el investigador.

El pre-test indicó que ambos grupos tenían características iniciales similares. Sin embargo, los resultados del post-test revelaron que el grupo experimental había progresado en flexibilidad, respeto por el otro, empatía y adaptabilidad intercultural. Por el contrario, el grupo de control no mostró ningún avance y tuvo un retroceso en lo que respecta a flexibilidad. En cuanto a las prácticas docentes tras la intervención, el grupo experimental mostró, en primer lugar, cambios relativos a su percepción de la cultura, pasando de una visión tradicional a otra más acorde con la CCI. En segundo lugar, propusieron actividades que iban más allá de la presentación de información y la comparación de aspectos superficiales, generalmente entre las culturas dominantes y la propia. En tercer lugar, pudieron profundizar en el concepto de la CCI. Ninguno de estos cambios se observó en el grupo de control. Además, tras participar en LS, el grupo experimental fue capaz de diseñar planes de clase que integraban tareas que fomentan el pensamiento crítico, la autoconciencia, los valores, la reflexión, la capacidad de evaluar situaciones desde diferentes perspectivas y la conciencia pragmática.

Se puede concluir que el grupo experimental se benefició de la intervención en cuanto a su nivel de CCI y su capacidad para transferir sus conocimientos de CCI a acciones tangibles. Aún queda trabajo por hacer para generar avances en relación con las demás dimensiones y componentes de la competencia (tolerancia a la ambigüedad, descubrimiento de conocimientos, conciencia pragmalingüística y sociopragmática). Así, se puede afirmar que, si la CCI es parte sistemática de los programas de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, puede dejar de ser un concepto un tanto abstracto para convertirse en una herramienta que permita desenvolverse de forma eficaz y adecuada en un mundo intercultural.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIC:	Assessment of Intercultural Competence
ALD:	Assessment of Language Development
ACUN:	Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (Colombian Association of Universities)
ASLPR:	Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings
BASIC:	Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication
BLRs:	Basic Learning Rights
CB:	Colombia Bilingüe (Bilingual Colombia)
CCA:	Cross-Cultural Assessor
CCAI:	Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory
CCILL:	Critical Comparative Intercultural Language Learning
CCSAQ:	Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire
CCSS:	Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Scale
CCYK:	Colombia Challenge Your Knowledge
CEFR:	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
COFE:	Colombian Framework for English
COI:	Cultural Orientations Indicator®
DMIS:	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ELP:	European Language Portfolio
EMI:	English as a Medium of instruction
FLE:	Foreign Language Learning
GAP Test:	Global Awareness Profile
GMI:	Global Mindset Inventory

GMS:	Global Mindedness Scale
GRDA:	Global Readiness Development Assessment
GSP:	GlobeSmart Profile
GTP:	Global Team Process Questionnaire
IA:	Intercultural Adaptability
IC:	Intercultural Competence
ICAPS:	Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale
ICC:	Intercultural Communicative Competence
ICSI:	Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory
IDI:	Intercultural Development Inventory
ILL-P:	Intercultural Language Learning Profiler
ILWI:	Intercultural Living and Working Inventory
IMA:	International Mobility Assessment
INCA:	Intercultural Competence Assessment
IRC:	Intercultural Readiness Check
IU:	Intercultural Understanding
LS:	Lesson Study
MBTI:	Myers–Briggs’ Type Indicator
MEN:	Ministerio de Educación Nacional (National Ministry of Education)
ORI:	Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales (International Relations Office)
PCAT:	Peterson Cultural Awareness Test
PCSI:	Peterson Cultural Style Indicator TM
PEI:	Proyecto Educativo Institucional (Institutional Educational Project)
PEP:	Proyecto Educativo del Programa (Program Educational Project)

PFDCLC:	Programa para el Fortalecimiento y Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras (Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages)
PL:	Pragmalinguistic
PNI:	Plan Nacional de Inglés (National Plan of English)
POI:	Personal Orientation Inventory
RCI:	Red Colombiana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior (Colombian Network for Internationalization of Higher Education)
SP:	Sociopragmatic
TKT:	Teaching Knowledge Test

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The global economic, political, social, and technological shifts experienced in the last few decades have resulted in increased face-to-face and online interactions among people worldwide. This scenario has generated newly born demands which need to be accounted for. One of them is the necessity to educate individuals capable of establishing effective and appropriate communication with people from other cultural backgrounds in spite of the possible differences in terms of perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, values, and language. A mediator in this process is what has come to be known as intercultural competence (IC), and more specifically, in the case of foreign language teaching, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), two constructs that will be discussed next.

IC is defined as “the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to improve interactions across differences whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders” (Deardorff, 2020, p. i). On this basis, Risager (2000) argues that IC should not be exclusive to a specific group but inherent to all human beings in order to coexist harmoniously. ICC does not differ greatly from IC; the difference lies in the fact that ICC involves interactions between individuals while using a foreign language. That is, in ICC, communicative competence in a foreign language and IC converge (Byram, 2021). This study took place in a foreign language teaching program, in which the participants were in the process of developing communicative competence in English and IC concomitantly. On this basis, ICC is the terminology adopted in this dissertation¹.

¹ To avoid discrepancies, it is necessary to acknowledge that ICC may be conceived differently by other authors. However, in this dissertation, ICC is viewed from Byram’s stance.

In addition to the conceptualization of ICC above, this dissertation highlights the connection between language and ICC, which Maíz-Arévalo and Orduna-Nocito (2021) define as an unarguable relationship. In fact, the authors state that language is a structural component of the competence and a requirement for the realization of any communicative act. Following these lines, Fantini (2009) argues that proficiency in a foreign language boosts the development of ICC. This implies that they should be integrated in foreign language learning instead of being treated as separate constructs, which is what generally happens in the language classroom. The question then is to find the bridge between the two. In this respect, Harbon and Moloney (2013) state that such interconnectedness may be better explained by pragmatics, a field in which language and ICC intersect.

In broad terms, pragmatics encompasses two areas: *pragmalinguistics*, which refers to particular linguistic resources to perform specific speech acts, and *sociopragmatics*, which deals with influence of the social context on the choice of linguistic resources (Leech, 1983). More recently, authors such as Taguchi (2019) put forward two additional components of pragmatics: *adaptability* and *agency*. The former is related to individuals' ability to adjust their pragmatic knowledge to the context where the interaction takes place (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). The latter has to do with individuals' purposeful use of their sociopragmatic knowledge to make the right pragmalinguistic choices (van Compernelle, 2014). Considering the four components, it is possible to infer that an individual who develops pragmatic competence is capable of making the correct linguistic choices to communicate effectively considering the context where the interaction happens and the cultural variables that are immersed (Nguyen & Le, 2019).

It should be noted that pragmatics cannot be considered as static form-function-context mappings. There is not a set of unchanging pragmatic rules for a specific language (McConachy, 2019); probably the components of adaptability and agency suggest so.

Pragmatic norms are the result of interpersonal evaluation, in which the interactants' cultural assumptions determine what is appropriate and what is not (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). In this regard, McConachy (2019) affirms that effective and appropriate communication during intercultural interactions, which is one of the aims of ICC, is the result of the successful interplay of linguistic forms, pragmatic rules, and cultural meanings. As a matter of fact, culture affects the delivery, interpretation, and assessment of speech acts and behavior (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). Elaborating on the connection between ICC and pragmatic competence and bearing in mind that pragmatic norms are not simply declarative knowledge, McConachy (2013) and McConachy and Liddicoat (2016) argue that the driving factors that help individuals understand the role of language and culture in effective intercultural interactions are pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness.

On the one hand, pragmatic awareness is defined as the learner's conscious knowledge of the appropriateness of linguistic forms in a given context and the sociocultural variables immersed in successful communication (Takahashi, 2012). Metapragmatic awareness, on the other hand, is the ability of learners to use their knowledge of languages and cultures in order to make choices as for the language they use and to interpret the language they are exposed to (McConachy, 2019). This construct is deemed to be closely interrelated with ICC because it informs about an individual's capacity to interact appropriately in different settings and comprises the different areas that communication involves. In addition, for McConachy and Liddicoat (2016), metapragmatic awareness resembles ICC in that both enable individuals to establish effective communication, even when they have different cultural backgrounds, a factor that at times may interfere with proper understanding. Bearing this in mind, McConachy (2022) adds that metapragmatic awareness is an integral part of ICC and could contribute to its development. These conceptual considerations are a pivotal part of this research, as they

establish the stance that this dissertation takes in terms of how ICC is conceived and will later be reflected in how the competence is addressed and also assessed.

At this point, having discussed the theoretical basis this dissertation has adopted, it is possible to address the place that ICC has in the Colombian education system, what is being done to realize it, and the challenges that teachers face in this endeavor. To begin with, it could be said that ICC is an enabling condition to strive in today's globalized world, and it seems that foreign language teachers are now deemed responsible for ensuring that learners become not only proficient in the target language but also interculturally competent. This is a reality that has permeated educational systems internationally, and Colombia, where this study took place, is not the exception. In fact, this nation aligns with the international demands in this respect, and this can be evidenced in official documents such as the Suggested Curriculum of English (Colombian Ministry of Education [MEN], 2016b), which started being implemented in primary and secondary school in 2016. In higher education, ICC is immersed in internationalization, a process that, in broad terms, can be defined as the integration of an international and intercultural dimension into this educational level (Knight, 2006). Supporting this view, Maringe and Foskett (2010) state that internationalization involves inserting elements of interculturality into the three main processes within the institution, namely, teaching, research and service functions. In Jenkins' words, "internationalization is the key strategy by which universities are responding to globalization" (2017, p. 2).

From the above, it can be affirmed that Colombia is in line with current educational trends, at least when it comes to the formulation of national guidelines and policies in which the importance of ICC is underscored. The country shares a common objective with other nations, but not only that, a series of studies indicate that Colombia also shares the same challenges. For instance, it is assumed that foreign language teachers, including pre-service teachers, are interculturally competent. However, there is evidence suggesting that, to start

with, they may not have a clear idea of what ICC is (see Atmojo & Putra,, 2022; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018). In addition, it has been difficult for language teachers to implement concrete actions conducive to the development of ICC in the language classroom (e.g., Faustino-Ruíz & Patiño-Rojas, 2021; Kulich & Weng, 2015; Moloney et al., 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). On this basis, it is necessary to ensure, on the one hand, that language teachers, especially pre-service language teachers, themselves develop ICC. On the other hand, it is imperative that this particular population is guided to operationalize the competence in their teaching practice.

Several reasons may account for foreign language teachers' difficulty to materialize ICC in Colombia and other countries even if they are interculturally competent individuals. To begin, it can be that, generally, cultural aspects, which are the foundations of ICC, are not within the scope of language teaching and learning (Gönen & Sağlam, 2012). As Onalan (2005) points out, teachers tend to favor the practical aspects of communication over culture and intercultural communication. The issue at heart, as Barletta (2009) claims, may have to do with the deep-rooted detachment of language and culture. Another reason could be the fact that teachers may not even be aware of the relevance of culture and intercultural interactions and their connection to language teaching. Therefore, they would not even attempt to integrate them in their lessons (Garrett-Rucks, 2018; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). Another cause could be the way in which culture is conceived. Generally, most language teachers link culture to a specific country (essentialist view) and its particular manifestations such as festivals, music, food, and other superficial aspects. Other cultural elements such as values, behaviors, and attitudes are not considered as part of a culture and usually go unnoticed. This essentialist and superficial view of culture is commonplace in language lessons, in which teachers equate teaching about culture to the transmission of facts about a country. However,

this does not other than simplify the complexities of a culture and promote stereotypes, something that ICC intends to avoid.

Focusing on the Colombian context, it is common to find that documents issued by the Ministry of Education provide perfect pathways to lead the country to competitiveness, but what happens in reality suggests otherwise. It is important to acknowledge that the government has offered a number of professional development programs and qualification opportunities for teachers in order to reach the goals in terms of foreign language education and more recently internationalization, but generally they do not reach as far as it is desired, or at least that is what has happened in the past (e.g., COFE program, Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages, Colombia Very Well, Bilingual Colombia). Then, most teachers are left to juggle things the best they can without being properly qualified. The void that exists among language teachers could be seen as a chain reaction. That is, what foreign language teacher educators lack is passed down to the pre-service teachers they educate. Once they start their professional practice, they will be the ones in charge of implementing the national policies in schools, but the problem will persist. For this reason, pre-service teachers should receive scaffolding in matters as complex as ICC, so that their practices are intervened at an early stage. In fact, several studies involving this particular population (e.g., Carreño, 2018; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015, 2018; Ramos-Holguín, 2013) suggest that despite the burdens that ICC represents at times, it is possible to develop it if proper training is offered.

Considering the scenario described above, it can be said that today, the challenge goes beyond theorizing ICC and formulating policies. It involves designing strategies that aim to develop ICC among pre-service teachers. It also implies providing this particular population with the tools required for them to develop the competence among their learners as well. In this vein and bearing in mind the scarce opportunities for professional development in Colombia, it is necessary to resort to alternatives that go in line with the objectives of

professional development programs but can be advanced at the institutional level. One of those alternatives, which is a core part of this research, is LS. LS is conceived as a pedagogical approach in which small groups of teachers work collaboratively and engage in a cyclic process of planning, designing, teaching, and evaluating lessons (Dudley, 2014) (see Chapter 3 for full description of LS). The feedback the members of the group give to each other is meant to be integrated into the next lesson, with which the cycle repeats. LS fosters cooperation and is said to promote reflection and critical thinking at the individual and group level. As a result, teachers increase their awareness regarding their practices and their effects on learning (Armstrong, 2011; Norton, 1997; Schön, 1987).

This pedagogical approach can be implemented with two different purposes. The first one is to improve teaching practices focused on helping specific students overcome the difficulties they have with a particular topic. The second one is to serve as a sort of training program that can help experienced and inexperienced teachers acquire expertise, especially in areas that may be troublesome. Given these characteristics, it could be affirmed that LS could be a suitable approach to address the challenge of developing ICC in foreign language settings such as the one where the present study took place. It could fill the existing void that the lack of professional development programs has left, and it can be an opportunity for teachers, and more specifically pre-service teachers, to work cooperatively in the design of lessons that incorporate practices that materialize ICC in spite of its complexities.

Hitherto, two main issues have been discussed, namely, the intricacies immersed in ICC and the scant support that teachers have received to integrate this competence in their practices. Both, together with the researcher's observation of the same problems among her students, a group of foreign language pre-service teachers, motivated this research. Given these

particularities, this study can be framed within *action research*², which originates from the teacher's own initiative to solve pedagogical problems that have been detected in the classroom or school (Mackey & Gass, 2022). In this investigation, the potentialities of action research may be reflected in the pre-service teachers' progress as interculturally competent individuals and also as professionals capable of disseminating their knowledge of ICC.

In line with the above, this research revolves around the implementation of an intervention that combines a training course aimed at fostering ICC among the participants and LS as a mediator between their theoretical knowledge and their teaching practices. The bases of the training course were drawn from different frameworks and proposals which have similar thinking processes as common ground to build the basis of ICC: awareness, reflection, critical thinking, and metapragmatic awareness (e.g., Liddicoat, 2004; Liddicoat et al., 2003; McConachy, 2013; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Peyman et. al., 2016; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Taguchi, 2015). LS was chosen because the pre-service teachers that took part in the study needed not only to develop ICC themselves; they also required assistance in the design of lessons including the principles of ICC to implement them later in their professional practice. Such support would come from the collegiate work that working in LS groups provides.

Having addressed the major underpinnings of this research, it is pertinent to now focus on its purpose. It consisted in examining the impact of an intervention, combining an ICC training course and LS, on the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. The purpose of this study suggests tracking the participants' progress from the onset of the intervention up until its completion. The participants' development was measured in terms of their ICC level and also the characteristics of their teaching practices, which were expected to be more in line with the principles of ICC.

² Action research is generally conducted by a teacher and stems from a problem that he/she has identified during his/her teaching practice. This type of research can be conducted by one or more teachers. It is a cyclical process that usually involves five stages: observe/reflect, explore solutions, try out possible solutions, collect and analyse data, and make adjustments (Creswell, 2012).

To meet this objective, let us turn to the participants that were part of the study and the way in which their advances were assessed. In the first place, this study involved a group of 40 pre-service teachers enrolled in the last semesters of a foreign language teaching program at a public university in the south of Colombia. The 40 participants were assigned, on the basis of convenience, to an experimental group and a control group, resulting in 22 and 18 in each group respectively. In this vein, this study consisted of three phases: 1) The administration of the pre-test to determine the participants' initial level of ICC and type of teaching practices. 2) The implementation of a 12-week intervention that comprised a training course on ICC and LS. 3) The administration of the post-test to establish the participants' ICC level and type of teaching practices after the intervention.

With regard to the pre-test and post-test, both instruments comprised five parts: a) A set of questions exploring the participants' views of culture, ICC, and practices. b) A Likert scale in which they had to rate, according to their importance, eight elements that are generally part of foreign language lessons (grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, culture, and pronunciation). c) The intercultural profile questionnaire, adapted from the INCA project (INCA Project Team, 2004), to measure general ICC. d) Five scenarios, taken from the INCA project, to measure the dimensions of ICC individually. e) Five critical incidents to assess metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021).

Concerning the intervention, it lasted 12 weeks, and it consisted of two stages. The first one took place during nine weeks, which were devoted to ICC training. During these nine sessions, the participants of the experimental group were familiarized with the principles of the competence. They were given some theoretical foundations and also taught practical ways to integrate ICC in their teaching. The second stage, which took place during the remaining three weeks, had to do with the implementation of LS. The aim was to provide the participants with

additional support to design lesson plans that included the principles of ICC. In sum, it could be said that the intervention aimed at leading the participants towards becoming interculturally competent individuals and also at helping them reflect their ICC knowledge in lesson plans that they will likely implement in their future practice. Finally, it is important to note that the lesson plans the participants designed were assessed in terms of their content, which should integrate the principles of ICC. The data collected from the lesson plans were also considered to examine if the participants of the experimental group displayed any changes when it comes to the materialization of ICC.

In order to address the purpose of this research, four research questions were formulated:

1. How does a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers perceive ICC?
2. What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?
3. To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?
4. To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?

Even though this investigation was carried out to address a particular problem that was seen in a specific population, its results are meant to be shared with the academic community, initially, at the university where this study took place. Doing so can be beneficial, in the first place, for the foreign language teacher-educators and pre-service teachers who struggle with operationalizing ICC. They can take the training course as a starting point to progressively integrate strategies to develop ICC in their lessons. Furthermore, they can become familiarized with LS, a practice that is not widely known among foreign language teachers in Colombia and can be an option when professional development programs or support are scarce. In addition, considering the conceptual approach of this work, it is possible that pragmatics gains more

relevance among foreign language teachers. It could be that raising awareness on the importance of pragmatic training could lead teachers to investigate on how to adjust their practices and make room for this field that is at times neglected, especially in the EFL context (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). In this way, they would enrich their work and at the same time, their practices would be more coherent with the goals set in the national and international realm. It is worth mentioning that this is the first step; the ideal scenario would be to integrate tangible practices for the development of ICC in the curriculum of the foreign language teaching program so that they become a systematic part of the educational process. Finally, it could be said that in the long-run, the advances made by pre-service teachers in terms of ICC would be reflected in their future practices, and changes would start taking place.

After this succinct account of the theoretical and methodological components of this dissertation, the parts in which it was organized will be described. This work is divided into seven chapters that will be summarized next.

1.2. Rationale of the Study

In order to better understand the rationale of this study, it is worth mentioning the details of its origin up to its completion. It can be said that what spurred its development was the author's personal experience as well as the evidence provided by a series of studies conducted in the area, which will be discussed throughout this dissertation. In this vein, the first aspect to mention is the researcher's interest to have an impact through her teaching practice and assist the future language teachers the researcher was responsible for in being better equipped to face the demands of today's global education. Following these lines, while in charge of a reading and writing course in 2021, which 24 pre-service teachers in 6th semester of an English as a foreign language teaching program attended, the researcher found the way in which students reacted to tasks involving interculturality particularly controversial. One of them was a debate on the book *I am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai, in which learners' judgmental and shallow

remarks about the culture portrayed in the book prevailed. Learners even boasted about the aspects of their culture that made them “better” than the others. Although revealing, this could be considered an unofficial part of the research. The experience was eye-opening and together with the fact that the university where the study took place was working on its Development Plan³, in which interculturality was immersed in different sections of the document, as it is in national guidelines, the scenario was seen as a good opportunity to contribute to both students, who in this case were pre-service teachers, and the policies the University was trying to implement.

In terms of the research-based reasons that motivated this study, it could be said that it was the fact that culture, and more specifically ICC, has been constantly downplayed in foreign language teaching process in spite of its paramount role (Barletta, 2009; Dervin et al., 2020; Peña-Dix, 2018; Rojas-Barreto, 2019). As described in section 2.2, in any interaction, individuals’ culture-loaded mindsets are present and influence their interpretation (positive or negative) of the entire act, thus the importance of developing ICC as a facilitator or a mediator in communication. This issue is not unique to Colombia; in fact, the results of studies conducted in the country are in line with those obtained in other parts of the world (see Chao, 2016; Moloney et al., 2020; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018; Ramos-Holguín et al., 2019; Rojas-Barreto, 2019; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). Generally, the participants display positive attitudes towards the incorporation of culture as well as ICC in the EFL classroom, but at the same time express their inability to materialize ICC in the classroom. In this vein, the findings indicate common core problems that can explain the issue; these include teachers’ vague knowledge or conceptualization of ICC, the long-lived detachment of language and culture, the prevalence of superficial over deep cultural elements in foreign

³ Plan de Desarrollo Institucional - Universidad de Nariño. Available at <https://www.udenar.edu.co/documentos/PDI-UDENAR-2020.pdf>

language lessons, and the lack of coordinated actions between policy makers, school administrators, and teachers so that ICC is brought to practice.

In order to assist teachers, and in this particular case, pre-service foreign language teachers, in the operationalization of ICC, this research resorted to the results of various studies suggesting that despite the complexities surrounding ICC, it is possible to develop this competence as part of foreign language lessons if proper training is offered (see Careño, 2018; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Ramos-Holguín, 2013). To do so, in the first place, it is imperative that teachers have a clear understanding of what ICC is and involves. Second, teachers should develop the ability to transform theoretical knowledge into concrete actions. Both conditions are addressed in this dissertation by means of a training course that provides participant pre-service teachers with the grounding principles of ICC and then LS, which has showed to be a bridge between theory and practice, thus, enabling pre-service teachers to incorporate ICC in the foreign language lessons they create for their future students.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The current chapter (Chapter 1) is divided into two sections. The first section introduces this thesis and provides a general overview of the study. It broadly taps into the theoretical grounds of this research, how it connects to the current demands of educational systems worldwide and more specifically the Colombian educational system. The first section moves on to describing the methodological intricacies of the study and addresses the purpose and research questions. Then, it takes the reader through the structure of the thesis, which is divided into seven chapters. The second section of Chapter 1 comprises the rationale of the study, describing the different reasons that motivated it.

Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical foundations adopted in this dissertation, research findings that indicate a gap between ICC theory and practice, and alternatives to fill that gap. Initially, it discusses various definitions of IC and ICC that have been put forward throughout

the years (e.g., Byram, 1997, 2000, 2021; Byram & Zarate, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006b, 2011; Dypedahl, 2018; Hammer, 2015) and explains why ICC is the most accurate term to be used in this dissertation. In order to understand ICC further, the most representative ICC models and its constituents are presented. Subsequently, the connection between ICC and metapragmatic awareness is addressed, highlighting the importance of the link between language, culture, and ICC. Once the conceptual underpinnings are presented, the chapter provides an account of the most common instruments used to assess ICC to finally focus on the two that were used in the study: the INCA project (The INCA Project Team, 2004) and the Metapragmatic and intercultural adaptability rubric (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). Then, the chapter shifts towards examining the underlying issues related to development of ICC. To do so, a series of studies conducted in different countries are reported; together, they point out the reasons behind foreign language teachers' difficulties to materialize ICC. The chapter ends with a synthesis of the core principles and techniques that are said to foster ICC.

Chapter 3 addresses LS, a pedagogical approach that could serve the purpose of professional development programs in settings where these are scant. LS was integrated in the intervention along with the training course due to its potential to bridge theory and practice and to cope with the limited support foreign language teachers have received to realize ICC in their practice. Following these lines, Chapter 3 provides a general description of the origin, characteristics, and stages of LS. Then a compilation of studies that involve its implementation in foreign language teaching are presented; the results are meant to shed light on the benefits and limitations of the approach.

Chapter 4 delves into the Colombian context, how its educational system started making room for ICC, and the existing burdens that hamper the actual implementation of practices leading to the development of ICC. In this vein, this chapter examines the most

prominent Colombian policies and projects promoting bilingualism in the country. These are discussed for two main reasons; first, to understand how ICC started to be progressively included in foreign language education; second, to underline the historical inconsistencies of the government initiatives, which, more recently, have resulted in failed efforts to make ICC a tangible goal in foreign language education in the country. Having a brief historical outlook, Chapter 4 deals with the current policies regarding foreign language education in primary and secondary school and the generalities of internationalization of higher education in Colombia. This review provides the context and conditions in which foreign language educators and pre-service teachers are expected to develop ICC and the limitations they face to do so. This situation is supported by evidence gathered from studies examining ICC knowledge and practices of pre-service and in-service teachers in Colombia. Lastly, Chapter 4 focuses on the results of pedagogical experiences in Colombia, which report on how specific groups of foreign language teachers and pre-services teachers respond to strategies for the development of ICC.

Chapter 5 involves the methodological part of this work and its intricacies. It starts by listing the research questions and their corresponding hypotheses followed by the rationale of the study. It then turns to stating the type of research this investigation falls into and explains why it is considered action research, why a mixed-methods design was chosen as the best fit, and why the research was deemed a quasi-experiment. Subsequently, the setting where the study took place is described, and the characteristics of the participants: 22 in the experimental group and 18 in the control group, are summarized as well. The chapter goes on to detail the data collection instruments. As mentioned earlier, these include the pre-test, the post-test, and the rubric used to assess the lesson plans that were designed by the experimental group as part of the intervention. Upon reviewing the instruments, the data collection process is described. Then, the data coding and analysis is presented, addressing the analysis of quantitative data

first, followed by that of qualitative data. The last section of the chapter describes how the quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated.

In Chapter 6, the results of the study are reported and the findings discussed. The chapter is organized following the sequence in which the four research questions were formulated. For each question, first, the quantitative and then the qualitative data of the experimental and control groups are analyzed. Regarding research questions 1 and 2, the results of the pre-test are reported, analyzed, and the findings of the experimental and control groups are compared. As for research questions 3 and 4, which focus on examining the changes in the experimental group, the data concerning the post-test for both groups are presented. Subsequently, the findings obtained from the experimental and control groups are contrasted, and then the results of the pre-test and post-test for each group are compared as well. Furthermore, upon the analysis, for each question there is a section in which the findings are discussed.

Chapter 7 closes this study. It begins by summarizing the main findings related to the four research questions, focusing on the results and changes displayed by the experimental group. In addition, it presents the pedagogical and curricular implications that the study has. These emphasize the need to make ICC explicit in the curriculum, the adjustments that teacher educators can make to their practices, and the additional scaffolding that pre-service teachers require when dealing with complex concepts such as ICC. Lastly, the chapter discusses the main limitations of the study and provides suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

THEORY AND PRACTICE

This chapter is divided into six sections. Initially, it intends to elucidate what ICC is and entails by addressing several conceptualizations that have been proposed throughout the years and have contributed to the enrichment of the construct. In a similar fashion, it will discuss the most prominent models that have been put forward to explain the constituents of ICC, thus setting the ground to review some of the most relevant instruments that have been designed to assess the competence. Upon the presentation of the basic theoretical foundations, the parallelism between ICC and metapragmatic awareness will be dealt with and will serve as a basis to understand the decisions made in this study regarding the instruments chosen for the assessment of ICC and also the design of the training course that was part of the intervention.

As the chapter progresses, a key issue, which is at the heart of this dissertation, will be addressed; it has to do with the fact that despite the sound conceptualizations that support ICC as a construct and that also back up its implementation in foreign language teaching, its actual realization has proved to be problematic. In other words, it has been difficult to translate theory into practice, a phenomenon that has become commonplace in several nations worldwide, including Colombia, which is the setting where this study was carried out. In this regard, various reasons that account for the challenges of materializing ICC are brought to discussion, but undoubtedly, the lack of synergy between theoreticians, researchers, and teachers is the one that predominates.

On this basis and in order to create a smooth transition between theory and practice, the last section of this chapter reviews different ICC principles and proposals that are recurrent in the literature that can be transformed into more concrete actions conducive to the development of ICC in the foreign language classroom. The principles discussed in this section constitute

the foundations for the training course that will be subsequently proposed to ultimately bring ICC theory to practice.

2.1. Intercultural Competence (IC) or Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC): Some Conceptualizations

The concept of IC has been long theorized about in different areas such as psychology, sociology, education, and language education (e.g., Byram, 1997, 2000, 2021; Byram & Zarate, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006b, 2011; Dypedahl, 2018; Fantini, 2000; Hammer et al., 2003). This diversity of fields, which are closely intertwined, may account for the lack of agreement when it comes to terminology to identify it. In this regard, IC has also been referred to as “intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural effectiveness, intercultural skills, cross-cultural adaptation, global competence, multicultural competence, cross-cultural relations, cultural proficiency, intercultural agility, and even the misnomer cultural intelligence” (Hammer, 2015, p. 483). To explore this matter, Fantini (2007) took a stock on publications related to IC and compiled an extensive list of terms among which he found intercultural competence, cross-cultural awareness, global competitive intelligence, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, ethno-relativity, international competence, intercultural interaction, biculturalism, and multiculturalism. All of these, according to the author, aim to define what happens during an intercultural encounter, but they defer from one another in the type of abilities each one considers an intercultural encounter involves, and many of them only succeed in partially conceptualizing it (Fantini, 2007).

Similarly, there are as many definitions as there are terms to refer to IC (Deardorff, 2011). Nonetheless, all of them seem to agree that IC is an ability to effectively and appropriately communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Early definitions such as that by Spitzberg (1989) refer to IC as the capability to effectively interact with

individuals whose beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors differ from one's own. For the author, intercultural interaction equals intergroup interaction, yet it must be considered that individuals are the ones that interact; that is, each person may have a group affiliation, but still have his/her own particularities. This perspective can be considered as non-essentialist in that it acknowledges the idea that individuals should not be pigeonholed into a national culture, as that would lead to overgeneralizations, disregard of individual identities, and the promotion of stereotypes. An essentialist view, which in practice tends to overpower the former, would do the opposite by emphasizing a static view of culture and usually assigning specific stereotypical features to a country, hence, considering individuals from that particular nation as homogeneous beings.

Alternative conceptualizations of IC deal with the fact that it refers to the capability of individuals who do not share the same cultural mindset to analyze and understand each other's point of view for the benefit of successful communication. Chen and Starosta (1996), for instance, assert that IC is the ability of individuals from different cultural backgrounds to negotiate their identities for the sake of proper and effective interaction. Similarly, Hammer (2015) affirms that IC is the capability to adapt and to avoid being judgmental when facing a culturally different situation or when interacting with an individual whose beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors differ from one's own. The author claims that IC requires the conscious analysis and interpretation of one's own culture and the ability to understand how the other (from a different cultural background) perceives the cultural differences. These two combined will permit the "successful navigation of cultural differences, defined as those experiences, values, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors that differ between people and are learned and internalized from the groups one belongs to" (Hammer, 2015, p. 483). In a similar vein, Bennett (2015) addresses the dimensions that make part of IC. The author claims that IC comprises cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that, in tandem, facilitate interaction between

individuals from different cultures. This implies that IC goes beyond the knowledge of a culture; it requires, in addition, elements that involve respect for the other's beliefs, behaviors, and norms that make the interaction effective and appropriate.

Since most definitions may lead to the misconception that one's culture is inexorably linked to one's nation, a more explicit definition that steps aside from essentialism states that IC is "the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to improve interactions across differences whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders" (Deardorff, 2020, p. i).

In foreign language education, which is the scope of this study, a number of authors have also elaborated around the construct, making language abilities a central point. In this regard, IC is described as "the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini, 2005, p. 1). Fantini goes on to explain that the purpose of IC is to get language learners to engage in effective communication by taking a more neutral place in which they do not abandon their cultural background and assimilate another, nor do they judge theirs or the other on the basis of their differences. The call is for them to mediate across cultures to find a common ground, going beyond the boundaries imposed by national languages and national cultures (Kramsch, 2011).

Byram (1997, 2000, 2021) makes a distinction between *intercultural competence (IC)* and *intercultural communicative competence (ICC)*. According to the author, the former is defined as "the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one's own" (Byram, 2000, p. 297), an action that requires proper use of one's attitudes, knowledge, and skills to discover, interpret, and relate to both one's own culture and others. The author highlights that, in this case, the interaction occurs between individuals using their native language with individuals from another culture. In such interaction, native speakers make use

of their knowledge and skills, which are part of their intercultural competence, to effectively communicate with the other and “enjoy intercultural contact” (Byram, 2021, p. 101).

As for ICC, Byram (2021) describes it as the composite of communicative competence and IC, and as a result, ICC emphasizes the interaction with people from a different culture or social group in a language other than their own, that is to say, a common language or *lingua franca*. In this scenario, individuals need to resort to their knowledge and skills to interact in a way that caters to both parties (Byram, 1997, 2021). Corbett (2003) affirms that ICC is an extension of communicative competence in that learners develop cultural skills as they develop proficiency in the target language or *lingua franca*. The author claims that ICC involves knowing how to use a language to achieve a communicative purpose taking into account the culture-laden interactional styles of the participants (Corbett, 2014, para. 3). Similarly, Lindholm and Mednick (2019) highlight that when learning a foreign or a second language, it is essential to learn its linguistic features, but at the same time, it is necessary to consider that the linguistic system can be subject to multiple interpretations of those involved in communication. Forms and other linguistic features are only one part of what communication requires and are to be used in various ways according to the sociocultural context. When learners are aware of this variability, they start taking the necessary steps to develop IC (Crichton & Scarino, 2007). Based on these assertions, it can be said that linguistic knowledge, among other elements, affects intercultural interactions (González-Plasencia, 2019), and it can be inferred that for interaction to happen, participants must use the same linguistic code, or *lingua franca*. In this sense, Maíz-Arévalo and Orduna-Nocito (2021) point out that using a shared language is a requirement in ICC, and the act of communication itself can only be realized if a common language is used; as a result, ICC should be the term to be used.

Having discussed the multiplicity of terms and definitions, it is important to clarify which one(s) this dissertation adheres to. Firstly, based on the theoretical underpinnings and

considering that this study was conducted in a setting where the participants interacted in a foreign language, the term *intercultural communicative competence (ICC)* will be adopted throughout this document. Secondly, when it comes to a definition of the intercultural component of the competence, although all of the above are highly valid and share a common ground, this study draws onto the one proposed by Deardorff (2011), broadened by Deardorff (2020).

Initially, the author claims that ICC involves effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2011); that is, the communicative purpose is achieved, and social conventions belonging to both cultures are taken into account (Deardorff, 2011). Later, Deardorff (2020) taps into a key issue; one can identify oneself as belonging to a group with which one shares a number of values, behaviors, and attitudes, namely a country or another social group. However, one also has particular features that are the product of other factors, events, situations, and socialization processes that take place throughout one's lifetime. From this perspective, when an individual develops ICC, it is possible to effectively interact across differences which are not necessarily tied to a nationality.

This approach is of great relevance in this study for a number of reasons; first, it encourages foreign language teachers to address differences other than those between local and target cultures (generally American or British⁴ in the case of English). In this way, it is possible to avoid stereotypes and shallow judgements. Second, the foreign language learning classroom can be the bedrock for learners to develop ICC and then be able to transfer the skills they have learned to other scenarios that involve interactions between individuals who do not have the same mindset. Put in a different way, ICC is not exclusive of foreign language learning, nor is it meant to be used only in such a context; it is a matter of developing skills for life, which

⁴ In Colombia, "American culture" and "British culture" generally refer to people from the United States and England, respectively. Even though both comprise more than the USA or England, the two countries are wrongly thought of almost by default. These terms are commonly found in articles, books issued by the Ministry of Education, and also courses offered by language teaching programs.

individuals can use to effectively handle a wide range of situations, most of which are unpredictable. Third, it supports the importance of developing ICC among the participants of this study, many of whom have not yet had an experience abroad or interacted with people from another country or a different linguistic background.

2.1.1. Models of Intercultural Communicative Competence

As discussed earlier, several disciplines have contributed to the conceptualization of ICC (Reid, 2013); these have provided a comprehensive view but have also added some degree of complexity as to what it clearly involves, how it can be developed, and how it can be assessed. In a bid to better understand what ICC entails, over 30 models of ICC have been proposed through the years to describe its components and how they add to its development. These models have been classified into five distinct groups: componential or compositional, co-orientational, developmental, causal path, and adaptational (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

1. Componential or compositional models conceive ICC as the composite of cognitive, affective, or behavioral abilities or traits that intervene in successful intercultural interaction. However, they do not detail the connection between the components nor their relationships. These models are useful in defining core contents determining ICC and what an interculturally competent individual should acquire (Byram, 1997; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Following these lines, Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) proposed a model that comprises three main strands divided into three subcomponents: attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The first one, *attitudes*, includes awareness (values own group and group equality), understanding (devalues discrimination and ethnocentric assumptions), and appreciation (values risk taking and life enhancing role of cross-cultural interactions). *Knowledge* includes awareness (knowledge of self and of similarities and differences across cultures), understanding (knowledge of oppressions and intersecting oppressions), and appreciation (knowledge of elements of

social change and effects of cultural differences in communication). Lastly, *skills* involves awareness (ability to engage in self-reflection and identify and articulate cultural similarities and differences), understanding (ability to take multiple perspectives and understand differences in multiple contexts), and appreciation (ability to challenge discriminatory acts and communicate cross-culturally) (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). In this model, the components are listed, and each strand is meant to complement each other, but their interaction is not made explicit.

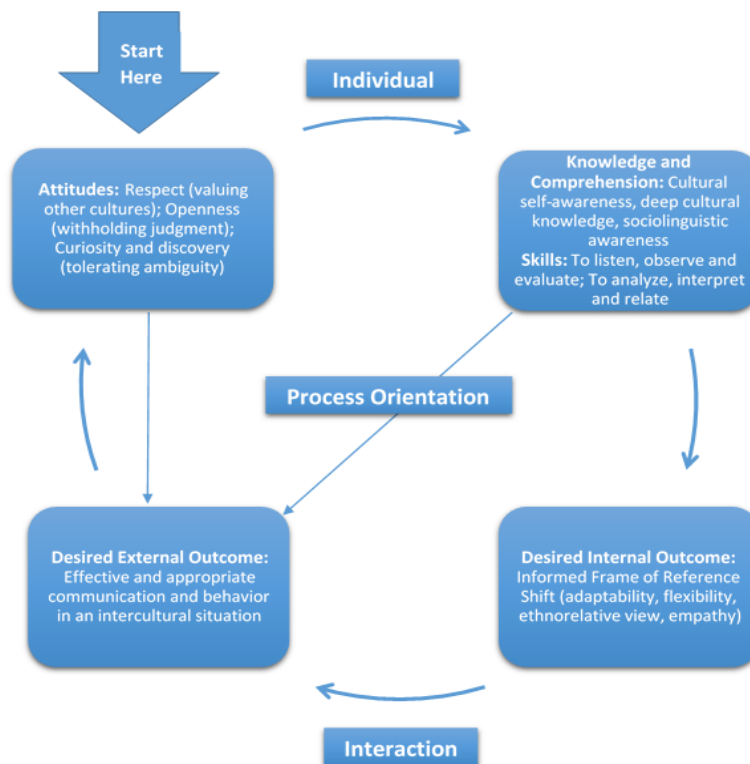
2. Co-orientational models of ICC emphasize how interlocutors negotiate perceptions and meaning to achieve mutual understanding in intercultural interactions (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Fantini (2005) states that developing cognitive, affective, and behavioral traits such as flexibility, humor, patience, openness, interest, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, suspending judgment, etc. will ease the process of intercultural interaction. An example of models in this group, according to Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), is the Intercultural Interlocutor Competence Model by Fantini (1995), which includes four dimensions of IC: knowledge, positive attitudes/affect, skills, and awareness. Another very influential model, which has served as a basis for the creation of different assessment tools is Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model (1997, 2021). Byram's proposal comprises four components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and intercultural competence. Each of the four components is made up of competences that interact and serve as culture mediators. As for the component regarding intercultural competence, it comprises five dimensions or *savoirs*: knowledge of the self and of the others; skills of interpreting and relating; skills of discovery and interaction; attitudes and openness towards others' values and beliefs; and critical cultural awareness.

3. Developmental models take into account the role of time in the development of ICC; thus, they suggest the stages of progression of ICC from incipient to more advanced (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The most prominent models in this category are the Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity by King and Baxter Magolda (2005), which includes three interconnected dimensions of development: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. It also indicates the initial, intermediate, and mature level of intercultural development. Another model in this category is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Bennett (1993), which depicts six stages (denial, defense, reversal, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration) that describes how individuals transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism⁵ through intercultural encounters and learning. Finally, Deardorff's (2006b) Developmental Model of Intercultural Competence, which comprises the same elements as her pyramid model, illustrates a more interactional relation among its components that also includes a number of causal paths (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Such interplay of the different components of the model is depicted in Figure 1.

⁵ Ethnocentrism refers to the idea that one's culture is the norm and the one that adjusts to reality. Ethnorelativism, by contrast, conceives one's culture and the beliefs and behaviors immersed as just one interpretation of reality among many others (Bennett, 2004).

Figure 1

Process cycle - ICC model



Note. From 'Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization, by D. Deardorff, 2006a, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10, p. 88.

Deardorff's (2006a) Developmental Model of Intercultural Competence, in Figure 1, features a cyclical process in which attitudes represent the starting point for the development of ICC, and each of the components in the model can affect the others directly. Deardorff (2006a) asserts that attitudes are essential to acquire the knowledge and skills that will then result in changes in the individual's behavior towards being interculturally competent.

4. Causal-path models represent ICC as a linear system and specify the causal relationships between its different components (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The most widely known model of this kind is the Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005). This model describes five variables

that have a direct or indirect causal relationship in ICC; they are experience, motivation, positive attitude toward other cultures, active listening, and empathy.

5. Adaptational models focus on how individuals adapt their attitudes, understandings, and behaviors during intercultural encounters to a point that they are able to shift from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative perspective. According to these models, the process of adaptation constitutes an indicator of ICC. There are two central features to adaptational models; first, they assume the presence of two or more interactants. Second, they describe the process of mutual or collective adjustment of interactants (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Adaptational models can be represented by Berry's (1997) Attitude Acculturation Model. In this model, there are two independent dimensions: receiving-culture acquisition and heritage-culture retention. These two intersect and lead to four acculturation categories: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Schwartz et al., 2010).

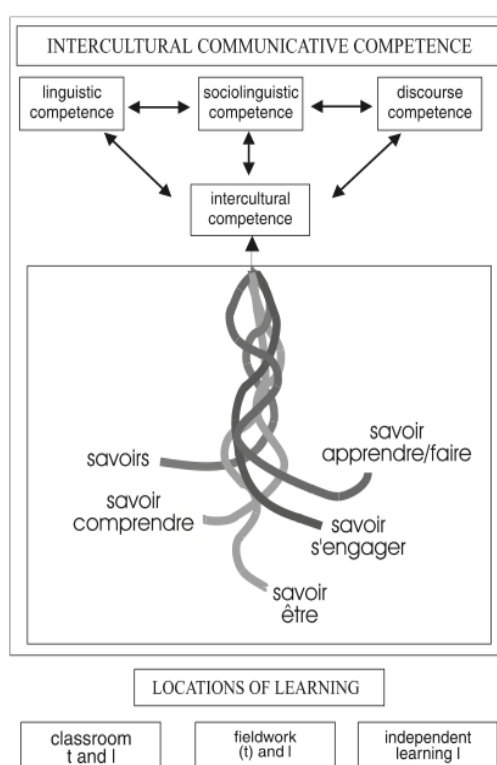
It can be said that these frameworks can serve as a guide to better understand the complexities of ICC and how it can be addressed, developed, and assessed. However, they are not definite and can be subject to scrutiny (Borghetti, 2017). As Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) remark, one model does not necessarily exclude another. In fact, they even overlap at some point; for instance, both compositional and co-orientational models give an account of the elements that are part of ICC without clearly indicating their interconnectedness; they are different in that the latter prioritize communication and language skills. As for adaptational models, they converge, in many ways, with developmental models; both indicate how an individual moves from an ethnocentric to a more ethnorelative stage. Under these circumstances and considering that there is definitely room for alternative typologies (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), this dissertation will consider two broad types of models: compositional and developmental as umbrella terms that include the others. In this regard, even

though componential models have been criticized for not making the interrelation among their components clear, they are useful to describe the different elements that a theory of ICC must include (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Besides, they are deemed suitable to assess ICC at the individual level, as is the case of this study. In addition, the components in a compositional model such as that of Byram's are more likely to be transformed into more measurable objectives that may ease ICC assessment and implementation (Byram, 1997).

In this sense, and in line with the objectives of this research, Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model (2021) was chosen to be further discussed, as it can be implemented in contexts such as foreign language education. Figure 2 illustrates how ICC is represented in Byram's (2021) model.

Figure 2

Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence



Note. From 'Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence', by M. Byram, 2021, p. 98.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the model includes four main elements: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. With respect to linguistic competence, it refers to grammatical (lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological elements) and linguistic knowledge that enable an individual to interpret and produce spoken and written language (Byram, 2021). As for sociolinguistic competence, Byram (2021) defines it as the ability to use language appropriately according to the sociocultural context where the interaction takes place. Regarding discourse competence, it is the ability to coherently connect ideas to produce meaningful spoken or written texts. In addition, discourse competence comprises the ability to negotiate meaning (Byram, 2021).

When it comes to IC, Byram (1997, 2021) conceives it as a unit made up of five dimensions or ‘savoirs’: *savoir être* (attitudes), *savoir* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir apprendre / faire* (skills of discovery and interaction), and *savoir s’engager* (critical cultural awareness). These *savoirs* or dimensions have particular characteristics that will be addressed next.

Savoir être - attitudes: curiosity and openness. It refers to the ability one has to “decenter” and not assume that one’s values, beliefs, and behaviors are worthy and more valid than those of others⁶; instead, individuals should be able to analyze how others, with different cultural mindsets, perceive them (Byram et al., 2002). It is also a matter of tolerance towards others whose cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors may be different from one’s own. The important thing in this regard is to treat such traits without prejudice, as this could interfere with successful intercultural communication (Byram, 2021). This dimension and the dimensions of knowledge and critical cultural awareness are intertwined. Byram (2021) explains that, to promote proper attitudes towards others, it is necessary to know about the

⁶ The assumption that one’s values, beliefs, and behaviors are the norm would be in line with an ethnocentric view.

stereotypes and prejudices about a culture and their origin. Having that knowledge, it is then necessary to look at one's own stereotypes through cultural critical awareness, which could be described as the ability to consciously analyze the way one thinks and acts as a result of one's cultural influence.

Savoir - knowledge. On the one hand, it has to do with “knowledge about one's own social groups and cultures and similar knowledge of those of interlocutors” (Byram, 2021, p. 46). This type of knowledge comprises all the information about the place and social group where the interlocutor comes from and can be acquired through socialization or various media sources; the risk is to acquire knowledge that could be biased or stereotyped. On the other hand, this dimension also comprises knowledge about one's and the other's processes of interaction as individuals and as part of a social group, an aspect in which they display their preconceived values, beliefs, and behaviors. At this point, it is worth highlighting that it is impossible to predict or acquire this type of knowledge about all the individuals one is likely to interact with; hence, one needs to develop skills (Byram et al., 2002), as we shall see next.

Savoir comprendre - skills of interpreting and relating. It is the ability to analyze and explain a document or event from another culture and relate it to one's own; it is highly dependent on one's existing knowledge. What sets this skill apart from others is that it does not necessarily involve an interlocutor; it can be brought to practice when reading documents (Byram, 2021).

Savoir apprendre / faire - skills of discovery and interaction. Discovery comes to play a role when the individual has limited or no knowledge about a culture or cultural practices. This skill deals with the capacity to “build knowledge as well as an understanding of the meanings, beliefs, values and behaviors that are inherent in particular phenomena, whether documents or interactions” (Byram, 2021, p. 49). Skills of interaction, on the other hand, refer

to the individual's ability to "operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 8)

Savoir s'engager / faire - critical cultural awareness. It can be defined as the ability to consciously analyze and evaluate one's and others' way of thinking and behaving as a result of cultural influence. That is to say, it is the understanding of the influence culture has on the various aspects of life (Borghetti, 2011).

For Byram (2021), an individual who develops ICC is able not only to establish successful communication but also to create and maintain social relationships. Initially, this depends on two main factors: attitudes and knowledge. On the one hand, interlocutors must be willing to accept criticism regarding the way they think and behave due to their cultural background, and at the same time, they must be tolerant towards the differences that others may display in these areas. On the other hand, it is important that individuals have some knowledge about the interlocutor's background and his/her interactional patterns. Between attitudes and knowledge, there exists a relationship of "mutual causality" (Byram, 2021, p. 43), and although they are preconditions for effective communication, their development depends on a set of skills that the individual brings to the interaction, namely, relating, interpreting, discovering, and interaction. As Byram (2021) puts it, an individual is capable of acquiring knowledge and developing attitudes and skills from experience; however, this process is sometimes in the hands of a teacher. In this case, Byram (2021) advises the integration of critical cultural awareness into the teaching practice as the basis to cause transformation in learners and assist them toward the development of ICC.

Byram's can be considered as one of the most influential ICC models and has served as a basis to develop other ICC proposals and assessment instruments. Even though his intention has never been to present a definite set of ICC components, as stated earlier, they can

be transformed into more tangible pedagogical objectives to be used by language teachers in their planning and assessment (Byram, 1997).

2.1.2. Components of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The five models described in the previous section show the varied ways to approach ICC and explain how it is structured and how, if applicable, its components relate. Despite this range of options and apparent divergence in perspectives, there seems to be agreement in terms of the underlying components of ICC. In this regard, four main constituents have been identified in research (Barrett, 2011; Deardorff, 2006b; Perry & Southwell, 2011); they are knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors.

- *Knowledge* involves cultural and communicative awareness. The former refers to general cultural knowledge and awareness about the dynamics of one's and other cultural groups. The latter deals with being aware of different linguistic communicative conventions across and within cultural groups (Barrett, 2011; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Knowledge is of primary importance, but certainly not enough to lead to intercultural understanding (Hill, 2006).
- *Attitudes* are related to acknowledging the validity of one's values and those of others. This component also refers to the way in which individuals react towards cultural diversity. In this part, respect, curiosity, tolerance, openness, and willingness to learn about others are paramount (Barrett, 2011; Perry & Southwell, 2011).
- *Skills* refer to the ability of individuals to interact with people with a different cultural background and adapt to a different cultural setting. This component encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and compensation skills. In addition, this component has to do with the ability to discover and interpret information about other cultures and act with flexibility when faced with different perspectives and practices (Barrett, 2011).

- *Behaviors* refer to acting appropriately by listening and getting meaning across both verbally and non-verbally during intercultural encounters. This dimension includes flexibility in cultural and communicative behavior, avoiding prejudice and discrimination (Barrett, 2011).

As Barrett (2011) states, there is consensus among scholars regarding the dimensions of ICC, and knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors are definitely recurrent elements in the literature. This does not mean that no others can be considered or that these constituents cannot be refuted. As a matter of fact, considering the intricacies of ICC, there are endless aspects to be taken into account; some of them are, at times, mentioned but not much is elaborated around them. One of them is the role of language in ICC and how approaching the competence from a metapragmatic perspective can shed light on its development.

2.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence and Metapragmatic Awareness

Earlier in this dissertation, several definitions of ICC were presented; some of them with more nuanced conceptualizations than others, but all pointing toward the same direction: the idea that ICC is the ability to establish effective and appropriate communication despite the barriers that one's culture-influenced mindset may pose at times. Maíz-Arévalo and Orduna-Nocito (2021) make an important point when they say that sharing a common language is a requirement for the realization of any communicative act, and thus a language is an inherent component of ICC. Although language is a core feature of ICC, their seemingly obvious relationship is rarely addressed in the literature (Fantini, 2009), and if it is, the tendency is to theorize each construct separately (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). Language, and in particular, a foreign language should be given a central role, as it is the basis to enhance the development of ICC (Fantini, 2009); proficiency in a foreign language either enables individuals to express, behave, and interact or prevents them from doing so if it is not satisfactory (González-Plasencia, 2019).

It is true that second and foreign language learning has experienced a shift from structuralist towards communicative approaches since the early 70's (see Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2008; Hymes, 1972). This transition has brought the incorporation of areas other than grammar to the picture, including pragmatics. In broad terms, pragmatics is referred to as the study of the meaning and function that linguistic forms and paralinguistic behaviors have in a given social context (Taguchi & Caprario, 2023). Its role in the language teaching/learning process has been acknowledged and made explicit in documents such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). What is more, some authors maintain that pragmatics is what most clearly shows the interconnectedness of language, culture, and their role in intercultural interactions (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; Escandell-Vidal, 2004; Hernández-Sacristán, 1999). Nevertheless, pragmatics tends to be a neglected area (Harbon & Moloney, 2013; Taguchi & Roever, 2017), probably due to the fact that teaching communicative and social functions of the language is far more difficult than teaching grammar.

Pragmatics comprises two major areas: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983). The former refers to particular linguistic resources to perform specific illocutionary acts (Leech, 1983); in other words, it deals with linguistic aspects of the language, namely language forms and how these connect to linguistic functions (Nguyen & Le, 2019). The latter has to do with how the social context affects the choice of linguistic resources (Leech, 1983). In this regard, Roever adds, "sociopragmatics is concerned with the rules and conventions of situationally, culturally, and socially appropriate and acceptable language use" (2006, p. 230). It is linked to "perceptions of social power, social distance, social rules, and norms of appropriateness that influence individuals' choice of particular linguistic forms in particular contexts" (Nguyen & Le, 2019, p. 4).

Considering the role that pragmatics and its two components play in the proper use of a language and therefore effective communication, developing pragmatic competence should also be a goal in language learning and teaching. In general terms, this competence is defined as the speaker's ability to use the linguistic resources in a given language to appropriately perform communicative functions and understand language in the context where the interaction takes place (Thomas, 1983). In line with the two pragmatic domains, pragmatic competence involves pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. An individual that develops these two is able to make the correct linguistic choices to convey an intended meaning in accordance with the context where the communicative interaction takes place. As a result, an individual who is competent in the sociopragmatic areas should be aware of culturally accepted behavior taking into account variables such as age, gender, age, social status, work relationship, etc. (Nguyen & Le, 2019).

In addition, given that pragmatic norms are inferred by speakers from the context where the interaction takes place, recently, two additional components were proposed as part of pragmatic competence; these are adaptability and agency (Taguchi, 2019). Adaptability refers to an individual's capacity to communicate effectively in any given context, which involves being able to use one's pragmatic knowledge in a flexible manner (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). Agency, in broad terms, is defined as the individual's capacity to make educated decisions based on his/her intentions and purposes. When it comes to pragmatic competence, agency involves the ability to draw on one's sociopragmatic knowledge to make the right pragmalinguistic choices and establish effective communication (van Compernelle, 2014).

Taking the considerations above as a basis and to gain a better grasp of the interconnectedness between language, culture, and ICC, it is necessary to make a careful revision of what pragmatics involves (McConachy, 2022). This implies stepping aside, first,

from the conception of pragmatics as the mapping between a set of linguistic norms in a language and their corresponding functions; second, from the idea that there exist enclosed sociopragmatic norms that are appropriate or inappropriate in relation to variables such as age, relation, power distance, or gender, among others (Félix-Brasdefer, 2017). Under this long held perception of pragmatics, native speakers would still be the norm bearers and the benchmark that second or foreign language learners are compared against.

McConachy (2019) argues that pragmatics goes beyond the view of language as form-function-context mappings that are assessed against a standardized criterion of appropriateness. In this sense, it is first necessary to consider that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between a set of pragmatic rules and a given language. Second, the context where speech acts are realized is not static but dynamic. If it were static, it would be possible to determine which set of pragmatic norms will be deemed appropriate in a given context, but that does not happen in practice. Instead, the notion of appropriateness or inappropriateness of pragmatic norms is the product of interpersonal evaluation, and in that process, individuals inevitably bring with them their own culture-loaded assumptions. Under this perspective, it is culture that ultimately influences the interpretation and assessment of speech acts and behavior (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

In line with the above, the assessment an individual makes of any communicative interaction depends on the interplay of various elements: linguistic forms, pragmatic rules, and cultural connotations (McConachy, 2013). As a consequence, making the correct choice of forms and pragmatic conventions that enable learners to maintain effective and appropriate communication in the target language, for all interlocutors, is a challenge that learners need to face. The challenge lies in the fact that learners, and users of a given language in general, tend to be unaware of the cultural load of language use in context, which may result in communication breakdowns (McConachy, 2013), or even judgements, positive and negative,

that would later lead to stereotypes (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). In order to deal with these issues, McConachy (2013) and McConachy and Liddicoat (2016) propose (meta)pragmatic awareness as a way to purposefully lead individuals to understand the role that language and cultural assumptions play in the establishment of effective communication during intercultural interactions.

Pragmatic awareness can be defined as the conscious knowledge of the linguistic forms and their contextual appropriateness as well as of those sociocultural variables that are involved in a successful communicative interaction (Takahashi, 2012). Along these lines, Taguchi and Roever (2017) state that pragmatic awareness reflects individuals' impressions of the appropriateness of an utterance to their understanding of target pragmatic norms and to their pragmatic intuitions; that is, pragmatic awareness comprises both pragmalinguistic (illocutionary or interactional functions a certain linguistic form realizes) and sociopragmatic (the way in which the sociocultural context influences an individual's choice of linguistic forms) aspects of a language. Nonetheless, the fact that individuals are aware of pragmatic features and the choices they make when communicating does not mean that they are able to explain or verbalize the reasons for such choices; at that point is when metapragmatic awareness comes to play (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021).

Metapragmatic awareness is defined as "knowledge of the social meaning of variable second language forms and awareness of the ways in which these forms mark different aspects of social context" (Kinging & Farrel, 2004 p. 20). McConachy (2013) adds that it is the conscious knowledge of the cultural assumptions behind pragmatic phenomena. In this vein, it could be said that metapragmatic awareness allows individuals to reflect on the nature of pragmatic practices as well as the cultural assumptions involved in their interpretation (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). For Liddicoat and McConachy (2019), metapragmatic

awareness indicates that the language learner can have agency both in choices about how to communicate and in understanding the communicative intentions of interlocutors.

Following these lines, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) argue that pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness could enable learners to make the right linguistic choices, to use such choices appropriately in a given context, and to be able to consciously make the right communicative decisions when interacting with individuals with different cultural background. In other words, (meta)pragmatic awareness could potentially facilitate intercultural interactions that are comfortable for the individuals involved and at the same time effective according to the demands of the situation (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

Metapragmatic awareness is not only a key element that enables learners to understand the effects and limitations that linguistic practices of a language may have in another; it is also the springboard to understand the roles of language and culture in the construction of meaning; and it is the critical and conscious knowledge of how ideologies shape the norms of language use (McConachy, 2019). In doing so, metapragmatic awareness assists in the development of cultural understanding, interpretation of cultural practices, and mediation between cultural differences and cultural assumptions of interactants, going beyond the language itself. In this process, learners take a neutral stance to interpret the languages and cultures involved from an emic and an etic perspective⁷, being able to assess linguistic behaviors from an alternative viewpoint. As Liddicoat puts it, “it is an act of translation between cultural frameworks in which the value and assumptions of each framework are attended to” (2014, p. 275). When learners develop metapragmatic awareness, they resort to their knowledge of languages and cultures to elaborate their own interpretations of the language they use and are exposed to (McConachy, 2019). In addition, they can discern cultural assumptions, so that they are better

⁷ From an emic perspective, a particular culture is studied from within by an insider who is familiar with it. It is usually referred to as the culture-specific perspective. Conversely, from an etic point of view, a specific culture is studied from outside, by someone who is not familiar with it; this can be conceived as the cultural-general view (Liu et al., 2011).

able to justify their interpretations, explain the reasons behind such assumptions, and make deeper, well-founded comparisons. However, developing metapragmatic awareness and acquiring the ability to decenter are not always inherent to learners; instead, educators need to create opportunities to foster them (Liddicoat, 2014).

The processes immersed in metapragmatic awareness suggest that it can serve as a facilitator in processes of cross-cultural comparison, reflection, and mediation, which lead to minimizing misunderstandings and promoting effective and meaningful intercultural communication (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). In other words, it can assist in coping with non-linguistic issues that may arise in intercultural encounters. In this sense, metapragmatic awareness can be considered as a constituent of ICC and could contribute to the development of the latter over time (McConachy, 2022).

2.3. Instruments to Assess Intercultural Communicative Competence

Despite the mixed opinions regarding the feasibility of assessment of ICC and also the multiple models and definitions, Deardorff's (2006b) study using the Delphi technique, found that experts agree that ICC can be measured and therefore assessed. In fact, over the years, numerous assessment tools have been proposed. Some of them are in line with at least one of the models of ICC (see section 2.1.1) and are intended to obtain an integrated measure. Others were designed considering a particular target audience or only very specific areas of ICC. In total, by the time his study was conducted, Fantini (2009) found 44 instruments and characterized them in terms of the area they are planned to measure, main features, and source where they can be accessed. From that point onwards, several more instruments have also been developed. For the present research, the instruments Fantini reviewed and a few more recent ones were analyzed and organized to identify those that could potentially be used to assess ICC in foreign language learners. Table 1 shows a number of the most relevant instruments classified into groups.

Table 1*Instruments to Assess ICC*

Characteristic	Instrument
1. Designed to test mostly language proficiency	ACTFL Proficiency Scale & Guidelines Assessment of Language Development (ALD) Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR) European Language Portfolio (ELP)
2. Designed for a very specific target audience	Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC) Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Scale (CCSS) Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ) Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire TM Development Communication Index Expatriate Profile (EP) Intercultural Living and Working Global Mindset Inventory (GMI) Global Mindedness Scale (GMS) Global Readiness Development Assessment (GRDA) GlobeSmart Profile (GSP) Global Team Process Questionnaire TM (GTP) Intercultural Living and Working Inventory (ILWI) International Mobility Assessment (IMA) Kozai-intercultural-assessment Living and Working Overseas Inventory Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)
3. Designed to measure only part of ICC	Cultural Mapping Assessment Global Awareness Profile Global Literacy Survey Cultural Orientations Indicator® (COI®)
4. Designed to measure ICC	AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication (BASIC) Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) Cross-Cultural Assessor (CCA) Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS) Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) Intercultural Competence Questionnaire Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Intercultural Language Learning Profiler (ILL-P) Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI) Intercultural Incidents Task Peterson Cultural Awareness Test (PCAT) & Peterson Cultural Style Indicator TM (PCSI)

Note. Adapted from ‘*Assessing intercultural competence: issues and tools*’ by A. Fantini, 2009, pp. 466 – 474.

Table 1 displays a list of the most widely-known instruments that have been created to assess ICC. They have been grouped considering the characteristics that they share with one another. As can be seen, the first group comprises tools that actually measure proficiency in the second or foreign language even though they are said to measure ICC. The instruments in this group resemble the layout and indicators of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). They assess mostly language skills based on set parameters and then classify them into proficiency levels which implicitly include ICC. The second group includes instruments designed to be used at the workplace or with immigrants. The third group encompasses instruments that partially measure ICC. Finally, group four comprises instruments that aim at assessing ICC considering different dimensions and can be used in or adapted to academic settings.

From the above, it can be inferred that there are a wide range of tools at hand; however, when choosing one to assess ICC, it is necessary to bear in mind some criteria for the assessment to serve the intended purpose. In this sense, Fantini claims that assessment should be “multidimensional, multiperspective, ongoing, integrated, aligned, and intentional” (2009, p. 465). Besides, it should resort to quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from participants, and it should include self and external assessment (Deardorff, 2006b). Apart from these suggestions, Fantini (2009) recommends a set of guidelines to assist in the selection of the instrument that best meets the needs of the assessor and is also appropriate for the audience it would be used with. The author states that one should ask oneself the following questions:

- Is the tool in line with the administrator's objectives?
- Will it improve one's assessment plan?
- Does the tool have theoretical grounds?
- Is it context specific, or can it be used with groups with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds?

- Is it age-appropriate for the intended population?
- Is it suitable in terms of costs and time to administer?
- Who will the results benefit?

Since there is a plethora of instruments available, using these guidelines may help to discard those instruments that are definitely not adequate in terms of intended purpose, theoretical foundations, context, audience, and costs. In addition, it would be important to consider that there is not a one-size-fits-all type of instrument; therefore, an additional aspect to consider would be that it can be adapted to the target audience without suffering major changes.

The evaluation of the instruments above revealed that each one of them has its potentialities and voids, but as Fantini (2009) states, the most relevant aspect is that the instrument should indeed assist in gathering the data one needs to achieve one's objectives. In line with this, the Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) project and the Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo 2021) were chosen as part of the data collection instruments in this dissertation. Both instruments will be further explained in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 respectively. It can be said that they fit into the fourth category in Table 1 because, on the one hand, the INCA project builds on Byram's ICC (1997) framework, whose componential nature makes it appropriate to assess ICC at the individual level, and thus have a comprehensive account of an individual's level of competence in the different dimensions that make part of ICC. The Intercultural Incidents Task, on the other hand, focuses on measuring ICC considering its (meta)pragmatic components; it is the only instrument available so far that tackles this aspect, and it is a constituent that this research seeks to vindicate.

2.3.1. Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) Project

The INCA project, funded by the Commission of the European Communities, was conceived as a three-year Leonardo da Vinci II project that ran from 2001 to 2004. Its main objective was

to develop a comprehensive framework and accompanying instruments to assess ICC (Precht & Davidson-Lund, 2007). The idea behind the project was to bring together Byram's ICC framework (1997) and the need to minimize cultural mismatches and intolerance towards differences among individuals who were likely to work in an international environment, especially in the engineering field, thus meeting the needs of employers. The target audience of the INCA was, therefore, young engineers and professionals or people working in multicultural or multilingual teams in their own country. In addition, the project also aimed to develop a framework of IC, develop an assessment tool for ICC, produce a portfolio to keep evidence of ICC, and establish guidelines for assessors as well as instructions for assessees (INCA Project Team, 2004)

The INCA project conceives ICC as a composite of six elements, which can be taken as a basis for the design of training programs (INCA Project Team, 2004):

- Tolerance of ambiguity. It is the ability to identify and effectively solve problems of ambiguity in a way that satisfies as many members of the group as possible.
- Behavioral flexibility. It is the ability to adapt one's behavior to situations that are culturally different from one's own in order to avoid conflict.
- Communicative awareness. It refers to the capacity to deal with communicative conventions (i.e., expressions, gestures, body language) of people from different cultural backgrounds and module one's own to reach common understanding. It also includes the ability to ask for clarification when needed.
- Knowledge discovery. It is the capacity and perhaps willingness to learn about the other culture and cultural practices to be able to act accordingly in real-time communicative situations.
- Respect for otherness. It is the ability to keep an open mind in regards to other people's values, customs, and practices instead of judging them as being out of the norm due to

the fact that they do not match one's own. It does not mean that one needs to necessarily accept them, but adopt a diplomatic stand towards those one does not agree with.

- Empathy⁸. It involves “putting oneself in the other person's shoes” and trying to understand the way they feel, that way one would be less likely to hurt their feelings or be offensive.

These six elements, according to the framework created by the INCA project, can be measured and assigned a level of competence: level 1: Basic, level 2: Intermediate, and level 3: Full (see Appendix A for the complete rubric). In order to do so, the INCA project contains a series of tasks to be completed by assesseees and evaluated by two assessors. These include questionnaires, scenarios, and role-plays:

- Questionnaires. There are two questionnaires; the first one is aimed at collecting personal information (biographical information) about the assesseees and their previous intercultural experiences. The second questionnaire, named *intercultural profile questionnaire*, contains statements related to all the dimensions, and it requires participants' self-assessment. This part is not to be evaluated by the assessor; it is only included to provide additional information on the assessee and his/her previous intercultural attitudes and experiences (INCA Project Team, 2004).
- Scenarios. This section includes text-based scenarios and one video-based scenario portraying intercultural encounters. The dimensions they assess are knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, tolerance of ambiguity and empathy. Each scenario has a set of follow-up questions (either multiple choice or open-ended) that can be completed online or as pencil and paper tasks. Their objective is to measure some or

⁸ Empathy represents a fundamental part of the UNESCO Story Circles, and it is considered as one of the key intercultural competencies necessary for individuals to become global citizens. This process is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals 4 (on education) and 16 (to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies) (Deardorff, 2020).

the six competencies that this model addresses through the analysis of particular situations. This part, therefore, relies on the external assessment of the behavior the assessee displays when faced with the intercultural encounters.

- Role-plays. These are to be presented either in pairs or in groups and are intended to measure the six competencies simultaneously. There are two types of role-plays. The first one features an intercultural encounter in which the assessee is required to explain a procedure to either the assessor or an actor (one-to-one role play). The other is a simulation to be performed in groups (various role players). The assessors' task is to take notes and evaluate the assessee's behavior.

As mentioned earlier, the INCA project provides guidelines for the assessor and instructions for the assessee. In that sense, each assessor first reviews the results of the questionnaires to gain some insights into the intercultural background of the assessee. Then he/she reads and evaluates the answers given in the accompanying questions of the scenarios. These are analyzed using the assessor's rubric and are rated as basic, intermediate, or full competence in the dimension they correspond to (i.e., tolerance of ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy). As for the role-plays, each assessor observes the behavior the assessee displays while performing the role-plays and takes notes on the observation sheet. Then he/she evaluates the behaviors and, with the help of an assessment sheet, each behavior is assigned to the dimension it belongs to and evaluated against a set of indicators of basic, intermediate or full competence.

As can be seen, the assessment performed through this instrument relies on the assessors' skill and objectiveness; that is the reason why there are usually two assessors, who at the end meet for an assessors' conference. There, they compare the results of each participant. Even though the assessors work with the six dimensions, the final results are

grouped into three strands: openness, which comprises tolerance for ambiguity and respect for otherness; knowledge, which includes knowledge discovery and empathy; adaptability, which involves behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness. The assessee or company, if that were the case, receives feedback from the assessors regarding the three strands: openness, knowledge and adaptability.

Altogether, it can be said that the INCA project is a very comprehensive tool that has several positive aspects. One of them is the multidisciplinary team that was behind its design; this included experts in intercultural learning theory and diagnostic testing and assessment, who contributed to give the project a sound theoretical basis. Another aspect to underline is the fact that it is a thorough tool that contains a wide range of tasks, namely role-plays (see section 5.5.1.4 for further details), portfolios, questionnaires, and intercultural scenarios, and does not merely rely on self-reported data. Finally, the manual for the assessor constitutes a useful guide that provides support during the assessment process.

2.3.1.1. INCA Project to Measure ICC in Educational Contexts

Section 2.3.1 presented an overview of the INCA project (INCA Project Team, 2004), including its origins, theoretical underpinnings, aims, components, and the details related to the way it assesses ICC. It was also mentioned that the INCA project (INCA Project Team, 2004) emerged from the need to help engineering companies lessen intercultural conflicts among their employees, who had diverse cultural backgrounds. As Prechtel and Davidson-Lund (2007) argue, the INCA project is generic but also comprehensive. Therefore, even though it was formerly intended to be used with engineers, it could be adapted to assess ICC in multiple target groups, as it can be considered a predictor of individuals' potential to develop ICC. At the same time, it could serve as a tool in different fields, including language education. In this area, the INCA project has been used as a data collection instrument in studies with diverse purposes, such as diagnostic testing, personnel recruitment, and especially evaluation of

teaching programs and their curricula. In this sense, this section will present a series of studies conducted in the language education field where the INCA project has been used as a basis for their data collection instruments. This review will shed some light on which parts of the INCA project have been employed, the adjustments they have suffered, how the scores have been analyzed, and how the tool has contributed to the growing field of ICC.

The first study to discuss was conducted by Cubukcu (2013), who explored the level of intercultural sensitivity and the perceptions of the integration of culture and language of a group of 65 Turkish pre-service teachers who were, at the time, in the last semesters of the foreign language program. In order to gather the data, two instruments were used. The first one was the three-point Likert Cultural Sensitivity Scale with a reliability of .87 (adapted from the INCA project). The Likert Cultural Sensitivity Scale was the section in the INCA project called *intercultural profile questionnaire*. This comprised the 21 items that were part of the original version, and they were divided into three distinct sub-sections; the first one included items 1-11, which were about an individual's encounter with other people in his/her home country; the second one covered statements 12-15, related to situations where an individual meets people in their home country; the third one contained items 16-21, which had to do with work situations with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. The participants were presented with the 21 items, and for each one, they were required to choose from three options: always, never, sometimes. Although the statements were kept the same, the options from which the participants had to choose differed from the ones in the original version, which were *not applicable, maybe, fully applicable*. Once the pre-service teachers completed the first questionnaire, the number of participants in each option per statement were tallied.

The second instrument in the study was the Cultural Sensitivity Scale, which was adapted from the one proposed by Castro et al. (2004) and was intended to determine the participants' insights on culture teaching in a foreign language education context. The scale

was made up of nine statements related to three ICC components (see section 2.3 for a review of ICC components) that the respondents had to rank depending on their relevance. Statements 1-5 addressed the *knowledge* dimension; 6-7 the *attitudinal* dimension; and the last two the *skills* dimension. The participants' responses were analyzed by two raters who fit them into Bennett's (1986, 2013) model; in this case, the interrater reliability was .92.

The results obtained through the Cultural Sensitivity Scale suggested that the pre-service teachers in the study had positive attitudes towards other cultures. In spite of the differences, they seemed to be willing to adapt to changing situations and habits, and also, they displayed a high degree of empathy. Concerning the participants' perceptions of culture teaching, it was seen that pre-service teachers understood culture teaching as the transmission/acquisition of information that would allow learners to get around in the sociocultural context of the target culture. They also stated that, as future teachers, they needed to promote empathy and shared values and beliefs. A finding to highlight was the fact that promoting only Turkish values was ranked as the least important statement. In this vein, Cubukcu (2013) claims that the pre-service EFL teachers conceive culture teaching in terms of attitudinal dimension (statements 6-7), followed by the knowledge dimension of teaching culture (statements 1-5). Overall, the results of the study suggest that there is a marked tendency for teachers to include culture teaching into their lessons, prioritizing attitudes, which translates into tolerance and sympathy towards others. Similarly, it was evidenced that the participants acknowledged the relevance that developing ICC represents nowadays. However, being familiar with the concept is not enough; pre-service teachers need to gain expertise in how to develop the skills for them and their future students to become interculturally competent.

A similar study, this time with the aim of evaluating the way in which ICC was being taught in a series of European universities, was conducted by Garrote-Salazar (2016). The study sought to measure pre-service teachers' ICC in order to identify training weaknesses in

the institutions where they studied. The sample consisted of 113 participants of ten nationalities at six European universities. The data were gathered by means of a questionnaire that was designed following the criteria established by the INCA project. Garrote-Salazar's (2016) questionnaire had three parts, which aimed at gathering data related to the participants' personal information, academic background, and ICC.

For this study, only the assessee's version of the INCA questionnaire was used (see section 5.1 for full description of the INCA project). That is, the six ICC dimensions, as stated by the INCA project, were synthesized into three: openness, which includes tolerance of ambiguity and respect for otherness; knowledge, which comprises knowledge discovery and empathy; and adaptability, which involves behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness. The section designed to assess ICC consisted of short situations, and for each one, the participants were asked to choose from four options that corresponded to basic, intermediate, full, or neutral competence. The last option, neutral, was not part of the original version of the INCA project but added by the researcher.

The total score of the questionnaire was 44 points, and the researcher created a scale to rank the participants' level of competence into the four possible options: neutral competence from 0 to 17 points; basic competence from 18 to 28 points; intermediate competence from 29 to 39 points; full competence from 40 to 44 points. The ranks were determined using the criteria 25% plus its half to guarantee significance between profiles. The data related to the participants' ICC was compared to variables such as age, sex, nationality, number of foreign languages spoken, prior experience abroad, and ICC training in order to establish if any of the variables had an effect on the participants ICC level.

The data collected through the questionnaire (personal information, academic background, and ICC) were subject to different types of analysis. The results revealed that the vast majority of the pre-service teachers (85%) had an intermediate level of competence; yet,

a small number displayed a basic level (6.2%), which was surprising for the author considering the context and the participants' profile. When analyzing the variables, it was seen that there was no significant difference between males and females, across nationalities, number of languages spoken, or having been abroad. Conversely, a significant difference was found when the dimensions were analyzed individually. In this vein, higher scores were obtained in *adaptability*, which had to do with behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness. Meanwhile, the lowest scores were obtained in *openness*, related to tolerance of ambiguity and respect for otherness. Considering that the universities in the study were from different geographical locations across Europe, the sample provides a good outlook of what is happening in the entire continent in terms of ICC training. In this sense, Garrote-Salazar (2016) argues that teacher training curricula need to make further efforts to guarantee that future teachers enhance their ICC so that they and their future students face the increasing intercultural encounters effectively.

To corroborate the results that the previous study yielded, Garrote-Salazar and Fernández-Agüero (2016) investigated the intercultural profile of 109 pre-service teachers from institutions in six European countries. The aim was to determine their level of ICC and some of the factors that may contribute to its development to subsequently evaluate the quality of training they were receiving and take remedial actions. The instrument used to collect data for this purpose was a questionnaire based on the INCA project (INCA Project Team, 2004). The tool comprised a series of statements aimed at measuring the three ICC dimensions included in the assessee's version in two domains: personal and professional. For each of the statements, the participants were asked to select one option that would later be assigned a score and classified by the assessor as displaying neutral, basic, intermediate, or full competence. The scores were analyzed statistically and compared against the variables of nationality, age, sex, experience abroad, and number of languages spoken.

The results of the study revealed that, overall, 97.3% of respondents displayed an intermediate level of ICC, and 2.7% showed a basic level whereas none of the participants demonstrated neutral or full level. When looking at the two domains separately, it was seen that the participants' ICC was the same in the professional domain in the *knowledge* dimension but higher when it came to the *adaptability* and *openness* dimensions. In regard to the variables that may affect ICC, the results indicated that there was no relationship between sex, having been abroad, or ICC training and ICC level. Regarding nationality and languages spoken, it was seen that the former did affect the participants' ICC scores, but the latter had no link whatsoever. Given that the ICC level of the pre-service teachers in the study was predominantly intermediate, and some of them even displayed a basic level, the researchers concluded that the way in which training is conceived needs revising especially in the dimensions where scores were lower. To attain this objective, Garrote-Salazar and Fernández-Agüero (2016) suggest that ICC should become a macro competence to be addressed across the curriculum, explaining its theoretical basis and making the link between theory and practice more evident.

Finally, Azadipour (2019) carried out a study whose objective was to find out which personality types facilitate the learners' capacity to develop ICC. The study involved 236 Iranian graduate students of architecture, management, and civil engineering who studied English as part of their program, and more specifically, it aimed to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between four behavioral dimensions reflecting ICC and eight personality types; it also intended to establish the personality types that were more influential in intercultural understanding.

To collect data, two questionnaires designed and adapted by the author were administered. One of the questionnaires was the Myers–Briggs' Type Indicator (MBTI), which yielded information about the participants' personality types. This test classifies personality types into binary dimensions: introvert - extrovert, sensing - intuitive, thinking - feeling, and

judging - perceiving⁹. The second questionnaire was related to ICC and consisted of two sections. The first section, based on Bennett's (1986, 2013) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, contained 11 statements related to six ICC stages: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration; the participants had to rate each statement using a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (the most disagreement) to 5 (the most agreement). The second part was a set of 10 statements that were based on the INCA project; these referred to four ICC dimensions: tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility, respect for otherness, and interaction. For each statement, the participants were asked to choose from three frequency options.

The data were first analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and t-tests were run to establish the correlation between the participants' personality traits and their likelihood to develop ICC. When comparing the personality types to the first part of the ICC questionnaire, the results showed that the participants' ICC level varied significantly among those with introvert and extrovert personalities; that is, extrovert students displayed higher levels of ICC than those who were introverted. Regarding the other personality types, no significant difference was found. This part of the evidence suggests that when going through the six stages, from denial to integration, being an introvert or extrovert influences an individual's success in becoming interculturally competent; however, the other personality types do not make a difference.

⁹ Introvert (I)- Extrovert (E): an introvert prefers doing activities alone while an extrovert feels energized from the energy received from others.

Sensing (S) - Intuitive (N): a sensing individual relies on facts and on the information he/she receives from the five senses. An intuitive individual, in turn, tends to pay closer attention to abstract and theoretical concepts and the inferences he/she can draw from them.

Thinking (T) - Feeling (F): a thinking type of individual tends to be more logical and objective in his/her judgments. In contrast, a feeling person is more likely to make decisions based on personal values, relationships, and feelings. These characteristics are more commonly found in women.

Judging (J) - Perceiving (P): this category refers to the way in which people perceive the world. A judging type of person prefers a more controlled life in which planning and regulation prevail. A perceiver, contrarily, prefers spontaneity, flexibility, and autonomy.

As for the comparison between the personality types and the second part of the ICC questionnaire, which was based on the INCA project, it was seen that in the dimension *tolerance for ambiguity*, there was a significant difference among students with thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving personalities. In other words, students with thinking and judging personalities seemed to be more tolerant. Concerning *flexibility*, no statistically significant differences were found across the personality types. In the third ICC dimension, *respect for otherness*, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving personalities also displayed significant differences; in this case, feeling and judging personality types appeared to have more potential to be interculturally competent. Finally, when it comes to *interaction*, there was a significant difference in the *sensing - intuitive* personality types. The results revealed that students with sensing personalities tended to be more competent in interacting with individuals with a different cultural background. Overall, the findings suggest that those students with extroverted, thinking, judging, and sensing personality types are more likely to develop high levels of ICC. For Azadipour (2019), the evidence may have implications in terms of syllabus design and teaching practices, which should cater to diverse personality types, thus helping learners develop ICC more efficiently.

The four studies cited above gave an account of the versatility of the INCA project. As researchers such as Prechtl and Davidson-Lund (2007) have argued, the instrument can be used in numerous scenarios apart from the one it was originally intended for. The research presented in this section shows that it can and has been used in the educational field, where it has been administered to EFL learners and pre-service teachers with diagnostic purposes.

The evidence also suggests that the INCA project can be adjusted to suit the requirements of the investigation, and it is possible to choose only certain sections as needed. For instance, the *intercultural profile questionnaire*, which was not meant to be assessed, has been used and marked. To do so, researchers have successfully adapted the options participants

have to choose from as well as the scoring criteria and scales; some of them have even been tested for reliability (see Cubukcu, 2013).

In a similar vein, in the studies above, only the parts related to personal information, intercultural background, and intercultural profile of the participants were used, whereas the scenarios and role-plays were excluded. Likewise, thanks to the multiple materials and instruments that the INCA project comprises, researchers, policy-makers, and educators can make use of those they consider best suit their objectives. One example is the use of the examinee's version instead of the assessor's as part of the diagnosis.

Furthermore, the evidence shows that the INCA questionnaire can be used in tandem with other instruments in order to add validity to the results (see Azadipour, 2019; Cubukcu, 2013). This point supports the use of the INCA questionnaire along with the Metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric in the present study with the purpose of gaining a multi-perspective outlook of the participants' ICC level and identifying possible training areas.

2.3.2. Intercultural Incidents Task

Section 2.2 addressed the issue concerning the lack of theorization of the role of language in ICC (Harbon & Moloney, 2013) and how pragmatic competence could serve as a bridge to connect the two constructs. In a similar vein, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) bring up the problem regarding the fact that none of the instruments to assess ICC include the assessment of linguistic aspects and more specifically pragmatic abilities. As can be seen in Table 1, there are a number of tools created to assess either proficiency in a language or ICC, but not integrated, and most of them rely on self-reported data. In this sense, and taking into account the parallelisms between metapragmatic awareness and ICC, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) have put forward the Intercultural Incidents Task, an assessment instrument that tackles metapragmatic awareness and could be considered an indicator of ICC.

With this assumption in mind, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) highlight the resemblance that (meta)pragmatic¹⁰ awareness and the notions of ICC bear. The authors suggest that learners' level of ICC can be manifested through their command of the elements related to (meta)pragmatic awareness and their intercultural adaptability. On this basis, the instrument is designed to assess the three dimensions proposed by Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021): pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, and adaptability.

- Pragmalinguistic awareness. It refers to the illocutionary or interactional functions a certain linguistic form realizes.
- Sociopragmatic awareness. It has to do with the way in which the sociocultural context influences an individual's choice of linguistic forms. Such context includes the relationship between speakers, power distance, potential imposition of particular acts, amongst a range of other variables (Takahashi, 2013, cited in McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020).
- Intercultural adaptability. It is the ability to operate effectively across different contexts by adapting communicatively and/or psychologically (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021).

In order to collect data to measure these dimensions and establish the participants' ICC level, the authors propose the use of critical reflection of the situations depicted in the Intercultural Incidents Task. The responses provided by each participant are coded and assigned to the dimension they belong to. Subsequently, the results in each dimension are compared against the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric (see

¹⁰ *(Meta)pragmatic awareness*, in brackets, is used as a term that includes “awareness” of the two areas: pragmatic awareness, which refers to the learners' ability to identify pragmatically (in)appropriate language use and metapragmatic awareness, as the learners' ability to verbalize the social meaning of language use (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020).

Appendix B) to determine the level of competence (initial, intermediate, mature) in each one of them.

The Intercultural Incidents Task and the rubric used for its assessment reveal how different levels of (meta)pragmatic awareness interrelate with ICC (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). This instrument is of relevance for this study because it is one of the few proposals that vindicates the role of pragmatics and, to be precise, (meta)pragmatic awareness in ICC, as a complex skill that sheds light on the individual's capacity to interact appropriately in different settings and considers the different domains that communication involves. In this sense, this study aligns with what McConachy and Liddicoat (2016) propose in that (meta)pragmatic awareness is highly similar to the concept of ICC given that both aim at establishing fluid, non-ambiguous, and effective communication, and both enable individuals to do so in different contexts including those which are culturally diverse.

2.3.2.1. Intercultural Incidents Task in Educational Contexts

The previous section indicated that assessing metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability stems from the claim that (meta)pragmatic awareness is the enabling factor for individuals to make the correct linguistic choices, use them appropriately in a given context, and hold effective communicative interactions with individuals with different cultural backgrounds. On these grounds, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) suggest that metapragmatic awareness resembles ICC. Therefore, an individual's command of pragmatic abilities provides an account of his/her level of ICC. To put this claim and the Intercultural Incidents Task to the test, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) conducted a study in which they assessed the participants' metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability by eliciting their critical reflections of a set of three critical incidents. This type of assessment was meant to establish the relationship between different levels of pragmatic awareness and ICC.

The research involved 37 third and fourth-year English linguistics students from different nationalities. As a data collection instrument, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) designed a task that comprised three critical incidents featuring pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic, and adaptational elements which the participants were required to analyze through critical reflection. Upon completion, the responses were coded and classified into either pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, or intercultural adaptability and as displaying an initial, intermediate, or mature level of ICC. The level was assigned based on the descriptors established in the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric that the authors had developed themselves. Subsequently, the researchers calculated the number of students in each level and the types of pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic, and adaptational elements the participants had identified.

Overall, the results showed that the majority of the students, 51.7%, displayed an initial level of ICC, 39% an intermediate ICC level, and 9.3% a mature level of ICC. Nonetheless, when the individual competences were examined, it was seen that the participants obtained an initial level in sociopragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability but an intermediate level in terms of pragmalinguistic awareness. Considering these findings, it could be affirmed that most participants were able to identify language-related misunderstandings, but they failed to point out those related to the situational context. Based on the results and the experience using the rubric designed to analyze the data, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) conclude that the Intercultural Incidents Task is an effective tool to assess the participants' level of ICC taking as a starting point their pragmatic and intercultural skills. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the importance of incorporating explicit metapragmatic instruction in the classroom as a means to develop ICC.

Even though there exists research supporting the idea that metapragmatic awareness is closely related to ICC and is conducive to its development (e.g., McConachy, 2013;

McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020; Moeller & Osborn, 2014); Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo's (2021) study is hitherto the only one that has examined ICC from a metapragmatic perspective using the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric, and as the authors suggest, it is worth using it in other contexts to verify its reliability. In fact, that is what the present study intends to do; the Intercultural Incidents Task was used to analyze the data collected from a population under different contextual conditions, and additionally, the results were confronted with those obtained from the INCA project. This triangulation of information allowed for more reliable results and added (or tested) the validity of both instruments.

2.4. Language Teachers' and their Knowledge of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The last few decades have witnessed how the chances for individuals to interact with others with different cultural backgrounds have significantly increased; hence, the need to prepare them to be interculturally competent has become one of the priorities, especially in the field of foreign language education. In fact, this area of knowledge could be considered the bedrock for learners to develop ICC. However, this has also become a daunting task in different settings across the globe, as different studies have suggested (e.g., Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Chao, 2016; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). In the international realm, studies in various countries with their particularities in terms of educational systems allow for a general view of how foreign language teachers conceive ICC, what they do in the classroom to develop it, and what they think may represent an obstacle for its implementation.

To begin with, Barletta (2009), based on the analysis of several research studies in Europe and the USA, provides an account of six of the most recurrent problems which are commonly present in the language classroom when it comes to the implementation of ICC in practice. The first problem, according to the author, is the widespread tendency to view culture

as a static system where all individuals who share the same system think, behave, and act in the same fashion. That is, most teachers and people in general have an essentialist view of culture. Conceived as an unchangeable system, culture teaching is reduced to the transmission of facts, generally about a country, or even worse, it is seen as a system that is implicitly acquired. The second issue is related to the fact that the native speaker is seen as the norm; therefore, learners are taught to master the “standard” target language instead of being prepared to face intercultural encounters with individuals with diverse first languages and cultural backgrounds. A third problem mentioned by Barletta (2009) is the detachment of language and culture, where the linguistic system is given paramount importance and culture is not seen as an equally important element; under this view, culture would always play a secondary role. One of the reasons behind this issue could be the limited time that teachers have to cover the contents in the syllabus. Hence, they are left to choose between language or culture, and most frequently, they benefit language-related topics over cultural aspects, which are more complex to address and might take more time. The fourth problem is related to the lack of consensus on how to assess ICC; given the complexity of the construct, guaranteeing reliability, validity and authenticity represents a real burden. A fifth issue is, as Barletta (2009) calls it, the technologization of culture teaching. This author claims that approaches to teach ICC resemble recipes, but they are doomed to fail given that what happens in an intercultural encounter is spontaneous and unpredictable. Therefore, it is impossible to follow a pre-established set of steps. The sixth problem is posed by the media, which is usually seen as a means whereby culture can be approached. Nonetheless, what is presented is at times slanted and stereotyped and may end up promoting a false idea of what a culture really is. The same obstacle is present in textbooks, which generally reduce culture to a set of simplistic and stereotypical ideas. In this regard, it can be said that textbooks are oftentimes, for better or worse, the only source teachers use, and as Barletta (2009) claims, they fall short of chances to address ICC

appropriately. As for teachers, their perception of culture teaching may also represent a burden, given that many of them consider that teaching culture is the simple transmission of information about a country.

Adding to the growing body of research on ICC, Chao (2016) explored in-service English teachers' ICC perceptions and practices in Taiwan. The study included 356 local full-time non-native English teachers working at different educational levels, from kindergarten to college. They were requested to complete a 24-item self-assessment inventory, and 22 of them were interviewed.

The results of the study showed that a great number of participants had positive orientations towards ICC and considered themselves as effective intercultural individuals. However, their answers were not consistent with their alleged practices, namely teaching objectives and strategies. For instance, it could be seen that many of them included elements only of cultures of English-speaking countries in their lessons and saw native speakers as the model to follow. The findings suggest that the in-service English teachers that took part in the study were not fully aware of more recent views such as those immersed in English as an international language or as a *lingua franca*. Under these circumstances, Chao (2016) states that the concept and implications of both culture and ICC should be clarified and made explicit for teachers, which could be possible if training is offered as part of English teacher education programs. The author also recommends the inclusion of intercultural perspectives in the Taiwanese English curriculum and instruction.

Similar research, involving in-service language teachers, was led by Smakova and Paulsrud (2020) in Kazakhstan in an effort to meet the requirements of the national curriculum, which included developing students' proficiency in English and developing ICC as part of the

lessons. The study involved 103 EFL teachers from 57 different EMI high schools¹¹. They were asked to complete a questionnaire containing closed and open-ended items in order to examine three areas:

- a) EFL teachers' awareness and perceptions of ICC.
- b) The teachers' teaching practices to integrate and develop ICC.
- c) The challenges encountered in the process.

As for the first area, the results revealed that the participants were familiar with ICC, and many of them even knew its dimensions; similarly, they acknowledged the importance and the need to build this competence among their students. Concerning the second one, the participants evidenced problems in implementing activities conducive to the development of ICC even if they had plenty of experience teaching the language. In this regard, and with respect to the third area, the findings showed that the most common challenges were the absence of a real environment for learners to develop their ICC, the lack of material with tasks tackling ICC, and also the fact that teachers did not know how to teach and assess ICC.

The results obtained in the study are consistent with Chao's (2016) in that ICC is conceived as a fundamental element in foreign language learning, yet the practices for its realization are unclear. In Smakova and Paulsrud's words, "there appears to be no apparent and definite relationship between teachers' awareness of the concept and its integration into their teaching practice" (2020, p. 704). Based on their results, Smakova and Paulsrud (2020) make two main recommendations. The first one has to do with EFL teacher education programs, which, the authors claim, should better prepare pre-service teachers with the appropriate pedagogical tools to materialize ICC in their future professional practice. The second one is

¹¹ EMI stands for English as a Medium of instruction and refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries where the first language of the majority of the population is not English.

the need to offer professional development programs for in-service teachers, so that they gain the knowledge necessary to teach and assess ICC.

Along that line, Sobkowiak (2021) carried out a qualitative study in which 18 high school EFL teachers in the Polish context participated. The research aimed to address four main aspects, namely, the participants' beliefs about teaching interculturally, the ICC teaching approaches they were familiar with, the actions they had previously taken to develop ICC, and the difficulties they found while engaged in this task. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews in which the researcher has a set of previously prepared questions, but participants were also free to add any additional comments.

The results showed that teachers were aware of the undeniable link between language and culture and also of the relevance of ICC. In addition, they knew that developing ICC goes beyond teaching superficial aspects about the target culture; however, the majority acknowledged that they had a limited knowledge of the principles behind ICC as well as how to implement it in the classroom. Also, their answers revealed that despite their positive perceptions towards ICC, developing it was mostly incidental. When asked about their specific practices, most teachers were unable to pin-point exact techniques or procedures and mentioned that when they incorporated culture into their lessons, it was mainly through the textbook and addressed superficial aspects of the target culture. They also admitted that this void may have led to making cultural generalizations and promoting stereotypes.

Based on the results of the study, Sobkowiak (2021) provides three main conclusions. First, the author asserts, ICC should be treated as an essential component of the EFL curricula, a claim that has previously been made by other authors committed to creating practices conducive to the development of ICC (Chao, 2016; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). Second, Sobkowiak (2021) argues that the way in which students are assessed should pull away from the traditional and rigid practices that only involve formal aspects of the language; instead,

these should include ICC. Third, the researcher states that the textbooks and material used should include activities that promote critical thinking and reflection, so that learners are prompted to analyze aspects beyond the surface features.

Along the same lines, but widening the scope to pre-service, in-service, and teacher educators, Moloney et al. (2020) conducted a study in Australia and Finland which yielded similar results as the ones mentioned earlier. The researchers surveyed 15 participants in Australia and 12 in Finland with regard to their perceptions of ICC and their practices. The researchers chose to include those distinct groups of participants in order to have a diverse perspective. They included pre-service teachers because they are the ones in the process of receiving the theoretical basis and putting them into practice. As for in-service teachers, they were made part of the study since their perspective has to do with “negotiating the demands of professional development and as part of an established professional identity” (Moloney et al., 2020, p. 22). Finally, foreign language teacher educators were surveyed as they are responsible for training future language teachers and giving them the tools to implement ICC.

The results obtained in both countries were alike: the three distinct groups acknowledged the relevance of cultural encounters and understanding, each in its own way due to geographic and socio-political characteristics. However, both coincided in that they lacked the capacity to bring the theory and their own personal learning of ICC into pedagogical practice.

Concerning pre-service teachers in Indonesia, Atmojo and Putra (2022) investigated English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers’ knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of the concepts of culture and ICC in order to identify the weaknesses or challenges that may hamper their future ICC teaching. The research was deemed a case study, and it involved 26 participants who were majoring in an English Education Program at an

Indonesian state university. The data were collected by administering a questionnaire to the participants and interviewing 7 of them.

When it comes to the concept of culture, Atmojo and Putra (2022) found that the definitions were varied and ranged from cultural products to cultural perspectives; however, an essentialist view predominated. Regarding the pre-service teachers' views of ICC, it was seen that they only gave very general definitions and did not elaborate around the concept. Overall, it could be said that they linked ICC to factual knowledge of specific cultures and the understanding of ways to display respectful behavior. The findings led Atmojo and Putra (2022) to suggest that the training offered to EFL pre-service teachers should include activities that encourage them to reflect and critically evaluate aspects of the target culture as well as their own culture that go beyond the surface, results that are consistent with those obtained by Sobkowiak (2021).

Up to this point, a review of studies carried out in a diverse range of countries lead to infer that regardless of the geographical location and the strength of the educational system, there exists a gap between teachers' perceptions of ICC, their understanding of the competence, and the way they think it should be developed in the language classroom. In addition, there is a recurrent complaint regarding textbooks, and it is related to the fact that, when addressing culture, their contents do not tackle other than surface aspects. Finally, a generalized claim among the researchers of the previous studies is the need to include ICC in the English curriculum and instruction and offer ICC training as part of English teacher education programs or professional development opportunities in this area.

2.5. Challenges to Incorporate Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Education

In the last two decades, ICC has become the focus of attention of a number of international organizations (e.g., Council of Europe, UNESCO) and scholars who point towards its

incorporation in educational policies, particularly regarding foreign language education (FLE henceforth) (Dervin et al., 2020), as its nature lends itself to discuss cultural boundaries and different ways of being and communicating (Moloney et al., 2020). In this area, it is well recognized that learners need to go beyond the mastery of communicative competence; they now have to be equipped with skills that enable them to successfully navigate intercultural situations, which is very common in today's interactions (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

Much has been theorized on the matter, but much remains to be done. The main concern nowadays is to materialize a shift of paradigm regarding the way in which culture is taught in the language classroom, in a way that it no longer promotes the idea of a target culture and stereotyped cultural comparisons (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013). Instead, the focus should be on acknowledging cultural diversity and on enabling learners to “acquire skills of analysis rather than factual information” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 19). As Byram (2021) claims, FLE can be an opportunity for teachers to guide their learners to critically reflect on cultural stereotypes, prejudice, and possibly generate a more valid appreciation of a culture.

Nonetheless, evidence suggests that developing ICC is not as easy a task as it is written on paper; it sometimes appears that ICC is a fuzzy concept unknowingly used by policymakers. As Moloney et al. put it, ICC is “not articulated in syllabus materials or teacher direction” (2020, p. 17). Regarding higher education, it seems that ICC generally plays a secondary role as an “add-on” in universities (Dervin et al., 2020, p. 5), and it is not granted the importance it deserves. In this regard, we may start by accepting that generally, cultural aspects are not within the scope of language teaching and learning. On occasions, due to pressure and time constraints, culture remains as the least of teachers' priorities even if they acknowledge its importance.

Another reason behind this issue may be the challenge that integrating culture into language teaching represents, a task that several teachers may see as unfeasible (Sercu, 2006),

and thus wind up focusing exclusively on linguistic features. What is more, it may be that language teachers are not even aware of cultural and intercultural aspects, or they do not have a clear idea of how to incorporate culture into their lessons in order to advance in intercultural learning (Garrett-Rucks, 2018; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). In the best scenario, the tendency of language teachers when “being intercultural” is to teach distinctive surface aspects such as traditional food, festivals, places, but these “will never prepare learners to encounter cultural identity, difference, and culture shock in real communication” (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018, p. 188). These practices only oversimplify what developing ICC involves; when doing so, teachers end up being essentialist, discussing more differences than aspects in common, promoting stereotypes, and simply transmitting information about a specific culture without engaging in deeper critical reflection (Harbon & Moloney, 2015).

Ideally, it should be otherwise. Besides learning about the most salient features of a culture, namely myths, emblems, or other national symbols, learners should also learn about people’s perspective on them (Byram, 2021). Yet, teachers may not be the ones to blame. Dervin et al. (2020) point at the inequity that prevails when it comes to opportunities for teachers to be qualified in the matter, and even if ICC is part of national and international policies and the sought-after goal, there is a clear lack of training and teaching materials; therefore, language teachers may not have a clear-cut idea of what it is or they may have little expertise on how to incorporate it into their practice.

This is a commonplace scenario in countries with dissimilar educational systems (see Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Chao, 2016; Moloney et al., 2020; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). This goes in line with what occurs in Colombia, where it is still unknown whether language teachers are equipped with the necessary background to facilitate the implementation of cultural and intercultural elements into the language classroom, which implies that ICC is not likely to be developed (Barreto & Medina, 2013; Rojas-Barreto, 2019).

This situation is not surprising if we take into account that research, practice, and educational policies have not found a common ground when it comes to understanding what ICC is. As can be seen from the brief review in Section 2.1, there are numerous conceptualizations and models, which makes it difficult for foreign language teachers to grasp how they can make a practical use of the concept. In this sense, Dervin asserts that “the multiplicity of approaches and meanings needs to be discussed and clarified to make the notion more useful and its uses more transparent” (2020, p. 59).

This issue leads to suggesting that there needs to be cohesion between what research recommends, what national and local authorities want to incorporate into the educational system and their goals, and how FL teachers can concretely contribute to the process with their practice. Since this is a task that could still take some time, a feasible alternative could be to work locally by generating opportunities for FL teachers, or from their onset as pre-service teachers, to be appropriately qualified to materialize what the theory and government policies state. It could be possible to start by leading FL teachers, and specifically pre-service teachers, to have a clearer idea of what ICC is, how they can advance in being interculturally competent, and how ICC can be brought to practice. Probably, only once they are able to mediate between cultures to communicate and interact in harmony will they be able to instill this into their students. In that way, the now pre-service teachers will contribute not only to enforcing the policies and guidelines that have been established but also to enabling individuals to appropriately face the challenges that a multicultural society poses.

2.6. Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

In previous sections, the problems that teachers face when incorporating culture in their lessons, and therefore ICC, and the reasons that account for such issues have been described. The discussion now centers around the fact that developing ICC is a need in language education nowadays. It is clear that linguistic aspects of the language such as grammar and vocabulary

are essential in language learning, yet insufficient to be proficient and establish effective communication in a second language. When one learns a language, one uses it in a cultural context, which at the same time shapes the way a language is structured and used (Liddicoat, 2004). However, cultural knowledge, conventions, and ICC are not something that learners simply pick up while learning other linguistic aspects of the language; as Thongprayoon et al. (2020) and Mai and Binh (2020) argue, ICC needs to be intentionally dealt with. Ingram and O'Neill (2002) stress that without being instructed, learners will not develop the positive attitudes that are part of ICC; what is more, after initial exposure to another language alone, they could even develop negative attitudes. Therefore, language teachers are called to step in and explicitly address culture and cultural differences that could be the source for misunderstanding when engaging in intercultural communication.

Considering that developing ICC is generally not part of the foreign language classroom, where most learners are not even given the chance to reflect on their own culture, let alone another; “it is difficult to come to terms with a different culture” (Liddicoat, 2004, p. 3). However, today’s language education requires teachers to adopt different perspectives towards the integration of culture in language lessons to lead learners towards being interculturally competent (Shaules, 2016). Although there is not a step-by-step procedure to achieve that goal, a number of approaches, principles and recurrent concepts in literature may serve as a possible path.

To begin with, Liddicoat et al. (2003) suggest five guiding ideas that can frame the ICC teaching/learning process, choice of methodology, lesson planning, materials, and assessment tasks. First, the language classroom has to be a scenario where learners explore and reflect on their own culture to later be able to do the same with another. That way, learners start developing their ability to notice the nature and impact of the differences and then take a step further to successfully deal with intercultural issues. Second, language learners should be

encouraged to compare and contrast what they already know about their culture, language, and knowledge and the new input related to another culture. Third, culture should be explored through social interaction. That is how learners can notice potential mismatches and may try to solve them. Fourth, language learners should be motivated to reflect on their experience facing cultural differences. Through the process of reflection, they can analyze how the new knowledge about another culture impacts their original perception of their own culture and the other. Fifth, learners should be aware of their responsibility to establish successful communicative interactions in which they consider and value other cultures, languages, and people.

The principles proposed by Liddicoat et al. (2003) show the interplay between language and culture within ICC, but they constitute just one of the multiple attempts to create the guidelines for the integration of ICC in foreign or second language teaching and learning. In line with these principles, Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) suggest a model that represents a pathway to develop ICC. The model comprises four steps: noticing, comparing, reflection, interactions.

The first one is *noticing*, which is fundamental to any type of learning (Schmidt, 1983); it has to do with learners' becoming aware of the existence of similarities and differences in the intercultural communicative event (Newton et al., 2010). Noticing is achieved through exposure to authentic written and spoken language and opportunities for interaction. For Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), what learners notice is the basis for other processes.

Noticing would subsequently lead to the second stage, *comparing*. At this point, learners are able to clearly identify the similarities and differences in relation to their culture and the other and also between what they knew about the other culture and what they are learning about it. An important point here is not to focus purely on the differences but also the aspects in which cultures converge.

The process does not end at the comparison level; it is actually the source for *reflection*, which is the third stage. Reflection is a process of making sense of the new elements they have recently discovered. It is also a matter of discussing the reasons behind the unfamiliar interactional features to finally state their reaction towards them.

Having become aware of and having discussed the new interactional features, learners are prompted to experiment with them by engaging in new *interactions*. Only during interactions can learners put what they have just learned into practice and can also have the chance to restart the process again by noticing new elements. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) affirm that this process is not linear but cyclical; learners can start at any point or stage several times. The objective is to keep learners from a certain stagnation in what they know and are comfortable with and motivate them to experiment (Newton et al., 2010). It is a matter of confronting learners with the unknown, which in the end could generate changes in them, thus fostering their intercultural development (Kramsch, 1993).

The principles and model described above together with other proposals to articulate ICC in foreign or second language teaching gave rise to Intercultural Language Teaching (see Byram & Zarate, 1994; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Liddicoat, 2002; Zarate, 1986). This approach conceives language and culture as inseparable constructs and is founded in six central ideas (Liddicoat, 2004):

1. Explicit teaching of culture. Culture is inherent to language and it is immersed in any communicative act; therefore, it should be incorporated into language teaching the way linguistic aspects such as grammar or vocabulary are (Crozet, 1996). As Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) claim, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation errors, and so on, are often tolerated, but that does not happen when there are cultural (or pragmatic) mismatches. However, cultural knowledge, let alone ICC, is not learned by only studying a language; it needs to be explicitly taught, and learners need to be guided to notice cultural

differences and the way varying cultures work before these cause interactional problems (Liddicoat, 2004).

2. Culture is integrated into other language skills, not a separate skill. As stated by Kramsch (1993), culture is often introduced once learners have achieved a certain mastery of the language skills, but it should be otherwise. Culture is immersed in language, and oftentimes, the appropriate use of language depends on the learners' cultural knowledge. Liddicoat (2002) argues that even if grammar is not complex, in certain languages, knowing when to use a pronoun over another makes a remarkable difference. This is the result of cultural understanding and also knowledge of pragmatics, more specifically sociopragmatic competence.
3. Culture is taught from the beginning. This principle goes hand in hand with the previous one. Although critical cultural analysis may only be possible at advanced stages, it does not prevent teachers from addressing less complex cultural issues at the beginning of language learning. Liddicoat (2004) warns that if cultural issues are left for more advanced stages, there is a risk that learners may, by then, have created wrong assumptions of the context where the target language is used. What is more, learners may have developed negative attitudes towards cultural differences (Ingram & O'Neill, 2002).
4. The bilingual speaker is the norm. It applies to any language, but nowadays, when people use English as a lingua franca, the idea of attaining native like proficiency is outdated and, as Liddicoat (2004) points out, unrealistic. This conception is reinforced in ICC, in which the learner is seen as a bilingual individual who is able to engage in communication with others with a wide range of cultural backgrounds and find a common ground for mutual understanding (Byram et al., 2002). It is important for learners to know how native speakers use the language and behave, but that does not

mean that native speakers need to be imitated. What matters is that learners are able to analyze and figure out the ways in which others, native or not, interact.

5. Language learning involves intercultural exploration. Providing learners with opportunities to reflect on their own language and culture and those of others' is a requirement for them to become interculturally competent. The process of reflection allows for deeper analysis and cultural understanding, which generally does not happen in the regular language classroom (Liddicoat, 2004).
6. Learning to continue to learn. It is clear that teaching culture is a daunting task, as teachers cannot address every single aspect of a culture or all the possible cultures learners will encounter. As McConachy (2013) states, language teachers cannot predict the scenarios where learners will have intercultural interactions; that would be unfeasible and the task never ending. However, teachers can create classroom experiences in which learners can develop awareness and analytical skills that enable them to navigate across cultural differences (Liddicoat, 2004; McConachy, 2013). Those skills are not particular to a specific context or situation; they can be transferred to any scenario learners need to face.

In a similar vein, Peyman et al. (2016) propose a set of criteria under the term Critical Comparative Intercultural Language Learning (CCILL). These criteria inform the design language teaching material that is coherent with ICC and at the same time is non-threatening for the context¹². CCILL has its grounds on existing literature and approaches shaping intercultural language learning and comprise five characteristics:

1. Comparing cultures. It refers to providing chances for learners to become aware of the particularities of their own culture to find similarities and differences with others. This

¹² The study was conducted in Iran, an Islamic country, where English language teaching is at times seen as a cultural attack. It is a common belief among policymakers and religious parents that the cultural values portrayed in ELT books represent Western cultures and may have a negative influence on Iranian learners.

awareness-raising process could be considered as the starting point to widen their knowledge and increase understanding and acceptance towards others. In addition, learners can also be encouraged to analyze patterns in language structure and use, and compare them to similar phenomena in other languages and in their L1 as well. Naturally, it could be said that comparisons may seem superficial and stereotypical at the beginning, but proper guidance from the teacher could facilitate more detailed and context-specific comparisons in the long run (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). By doing this exercise, learners are believed to gradually develop the skill to see their own culture the way others see it; that is, to step aside from an ethnocentric perspective (Newton et al., 2010). Furthermore, they can strengthen their openness and ability to appreciate differences in a non-judgmental manner (Huber & Reynolds 2014). In addition, Peyman et al. (2016) make an interesting point when they suggest that teachers can start by comparing the variety of cultures within a nation. In Colombia, the context of this study, what Peyman et al. (2016) argue is a possibility, as it is a country rich in ethnic and cultural diversity.

2. Exploring self. It requires learners to engage in discovering the aspects of their own culture that are beyond the surface. It also demands self-awareness and self-reflection so that learners realize how their culture influences their use of language and the way in which they interact. This increased awareness of the effect of their actions and attitudes on others is, according to Kramersch (1993), a step closer to being interculturally competent.
3. Finding one's own 'third place' between cultures. It has to do with learners acting as onlookers of their own culture and the other. In this way, they take a more objective stand to observe and reflect on both cultures (Byram 1997, 2021; Crozet & Liddicoat 2000; Kramersch, 1993; Liddicoat, 2002). In this regard, Crozet and Liddicoat (2000)

assert that at this point, it is possible for learners to overcome the differences and achieve their communicative goals.

4. Critical reflection. This characteristic involves motivating learners to critically analyze the similarities and differences of their own and other cultures and to reflect on their behaviors (Liddicoat et al., 2003). For Peyman et al. (2016), reflection is of paramount importance in any process that requires interpretation; in this case, it is applied to interpreting attitudes, beliefs, and values. The idea of promoting critical reflection should not be limited to a specific cultural issue, situation, or intercultural encounter while the learning process takes place; instead, it should turn into a skill that learners transfer to other contexts not only in the present but also in the future (Peyman et al., 2016). For the authors, critical reflection is decisive in successful intercultural interactions.
5. Learners' responsibility. Even though teachers play an essential role in the learning process, learners are ultimately held accountable for their success in the process. In terms of ICC, learners are responsible for attaining a good understanding of themselves and the other and for the interaction to go smoothly (Kaswan, 2013; Liddicoat et al., 2003). Possibly, to reach this goal, learners need to find out the most effective ways in which they learn; that is, discover the paths that lead them to understand, and in this case, effectively perform intercultural interactions.

Hitherto, some principles for the proper incorporation of cultural elements in the EFL classroom to develop ICC have been dealt with. Then, considering that in this dissertation, pragmatics and specifically (meta)pragmatic awareness has a paramount role in the development of ICC as well, some suggestions for its teaching will also be discussed. To begin with, it could be said that in order to be effective users of the language, learners need to develop pragmatic competence. To understand its importance, it is necessary to consider that foreign

language learners have already developed a set of pragmatic rules in their L1, and there are limited chances outside the classroom for them to develop pragmatic competence in the L2 on their own. Their already acquired system of pragmatic rules could possibly interfere with learners' effective communication in the L2, and guiding them to develop pragmatic competence through proper instruction could ease this burden (Bialystok, 1993).

A meta-analysis of studies on pragmatics conducted by Taguchi (2015) revealed that learners who receive pragmatic instruction generally outperform those who do not, a finding that supports the claim made earlier. From the results, the author drew several conclusions, although with some exceptions. First, explicit instruction accompanied by metapragmatic information and production practice have proved to be more effective than implicit teaching. Second, exposure alone does not lead to intake; learners need to notice the input for it to be internalized. Third, implicit instruction can have positive results if it includes tasks that have learners produce and analyze form-function-context mappings (Taguchi, 2015). One way to achieve this is by having learners respond to input or compare and contrast examples so that they can infer rules by themselves. Following these lines, Ishihara and Cohen (2022) assert that pragmatic instruction, and more specifically explicit instruction, is more likely to yield positive changes in learners' pragmatic competence; this progress would comprise their pragmalinguistic awareness and sociopragmatic awareness. Based on these assertions, it could be affirmed that if implemented properly, either implicit or explicit instruction can generate a positive change in learners; it is our responsibility as foreign language teachers to incorporate it into our practice.

After this brief review of some of the proposals to guide the implementation of ICC in foreign or second language teaching and learning and raising the issue that (meta)pragmatic awareness should also be encouraged, it is possible to draw several conclusions. First, as discussed previously, developing ICC is not a matter of acquiring factual information but

developing skills that enable learners to explore, discover, critically analyze, and become communicatively, behaviorally and attitudinally more flexible. Nonetheless, those skills do not simply emerge as learners learn the foreign or second language; they need to be explicitly addressed and incorporated into the teacher's practices from the beginning (Ingram & O'Neill, 2002; Liddicoat, 2004). Second, teachers play a crucial role in learners' becoming interculturally competent, but developing this competence is a lifelong process (Nguyen, 2017). As a result, learners need to do their share and discover how to keep nurturing the skills they learned in different intercultural interactions when instruction is no longer taking place. Third, even if different guidelines, frameworks, and proposals have emerged over the years, all of them share similar concepts at heart: awareness, (critical) reflection, and critical thinking. They arise in the literature as processes that lead to the development of ICC and generally co-occur; in this dissertation, they will be considered as the foundation for teaching practices.

Awareness, in general terms, can be defined as an individual's conscious knowledge gained from experiencing cognitive content or external stimuli (Tomlin & Villa, 1994). According to Leow (2012), awareness can result in individuals' behavioral or cognitive change and their understanding of the phenomenon. This state of mind is a core feature of ICC, and in this area, it deals with learners' conscious understanding of what culture involves and of linguistic and behavioral practices that vary according to the context (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Adding to this definition, Tomlinson and Matsuhara claim that cultural awareness is "an increased understanding of one's and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ" (2004, p. 7). In order to raise awareness, and thus take a step to develop ICC, the teacher should include activities that require the conscious and deep analysis of the similarities and differences between the learners' culture and others, in terms of values, behaviors, and attitudes, and also in terms of the linguistic choices that individuals make when interacting, which is part of (meta)pragmatic competence. In this sense, the lesson

would include the discussion of cultural structural characteristics instead of making only shallow comparisons (Byram et al., 2002). Byram (2021) states that including critical cultural awareness in the language lessons is crucial to cause the desired transformation in learners and lead them to develop ICC. Likewise, Nugent and Catalano (2015) highlight that by developing critical cultural awareness, language learners acquire skills that can be transferred to other domains; that is, they transcend the foreign language education curriculum, and this represents a big step in becoming interculturally-competent individuals and global citizens.

As for reflection, it is the purposeful act of thinking about a concept, event, idea, or situation to gain deeper understanding (David & Kochappan, 2001; Nardon, 2019). In the same line, Britton and Lorimer (2020) state that reflection may involve looking back at past experiences in order to reinterpret their meaning. Reflection in ICC is the process through which learners analyze how their culture influences their language use and the way they behave while engaged in intercultural communication (Kramsch, 1993, 2006). McConachy (2018) emphasizes the importance of learners' reflection on the foundations of their own judgments of what they consider appropriate or inappropriate and how these lead to judgments about individuals and groups. On this basis, the reflective process could lead individuals to withdraw from stereotypes and generalizations and to better understand the impact that one's values, attitudes, or actions can have on the other, and also comprehend those of others with a different cultural background.

Finally, critical thinking can be defined as the ability of individuals to monitor and analyze their own thinking (Elder & Paul, 1994). Critical thinking is a construct that constantly emerges in the ICC field. In fact, Bennett (2009) argues that to develop ICC, learners are required to go beyond declarative knowledge; they need to critically analyze cultures. In this regard, Bennett (2013) claims that critical thinking skills are vital to explore cultures and discover what lies behind them, and therefore strive in an intercultural environment. In the

same vein, Baker (2015) believes that to become interculturally proficient, learners need to develop more than communicative skills and acquire declarative knowledge about a culture. They need to critically examine the relation between culture, language, and communication. Critical thinking, as stated by Paul and Elder, is “self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking” (2012, p. 9). This process involves effective communication, problem solving skills, and the ability to decenter from one’s beliefs as an individual and as part of a society (Paul & Elder, 2012). According to Deardorff (2020), critical thinking is an indicator of ICC and involves individual reflection to describe, analyze, and critically evaluate one’s experience to then act according to such reflection. For Yaprak and Özmen (2021), critical thinking and intercultural competencies are closely related and together help learners overcome biases, narrow-mindedness, judgmental attitudes, stereotyping and ethnocentrism.

This section has tackled some of the guidelines and core concepts that constitute the backbone for the operationalization of ICC in the classroom. As stated above, the development of ICC depends on a joint effort from learners and teachers, as in any learning process. In fact, one could say that at the beginning of the teaching process, the teacher has a greater deal of responsibility, as learners are usually unable to develop the skills that ICC involves by themselves; they need more guidance in this respect until they become more autonomous. However, there seems to be a lack of empirical studies on teachers’ training on what ICC is and how to teach it. To address this research gap, this dissertation presents a teacher-training alternative based on the pedagogical approach of *Lesson Study*, whose conceptualization and potential to assist pre-service teachers in planning their lessons incorporating ICC will be the focus of the next chapter.

2.7. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 2 has dealt with the theoretical foundations of the present study, starting with the conceptualization of ICC and moving onto its components, models, assessment instruments,

the challenges of developing the competence, and the alternatives for its implementation. With regards to ICC, in spite of the plethora of definitions that have been proposed throughout the years, Deardorff's (2020) is considered as the one that best fits the characteristics of this study. After taking a stance regarding the definition of ICC adopted in this dissertation, the five types of ICC models were reviewed, but the vast majority neglected the role that pragmatic and especially (meta)pragmatic awareness plays in ICC. In this sense, the work of several scholars (Kington & Farrel, 2004; Liddicoat, 2014; McConachy, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández & Maiz-Arévalo, 2021) was cited to support the idea that metapragmatic awareness is closely related to ICC, as it facilitates the development of cultural understanding and interpretation.

In addition to the theoretical foundations of ICC, Chapter 2 focused on the difficulties that foreign/second language teachers have when teaching culture, let alone developing ICC in their students. In view of this burden, a number of principles and frameworks for the operationalization of ICC were analyzed. Some of them included explicit teaching of culture, teaching of culture from early stages, integration of culture and the language skills, opportunities to explore the learners' own culture, and (meta)pragmatic instruction (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Liddicoat, 2004; Liddicoat et al., 2003; Peyman et al., 2016; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Taguchi, 2015). At the same time, it was possible to see that there were core concepts immersed across such principles; those were awareness, reflection, and critical thinking. The three can be deemed the basis that informs teachers' practices conducive to the development of ICC.

CHAPTER 3: LESSON STUDY

The previous chapter addressed core concepts that provide an idea of how ICC is conceived in this dissertation, what it involves, the challenges that developing the competence represents, and finally a set of principles for the incorporation of ICC in the language learning classroom. Even though the information presented can serve as a starting point for the development of the competence, it is important to consider that, given its complexity, language teachers may still need some scaffolding to design lessons that meet the purpose. In this vein, LS is proposed as a pedagogical approach that can assist teachers, and especially pre-service teachers, in creating lessons that aim to develop ICC and, at the same time, are aligned with today's demands. In this regard, this chapter will deal with the conceptualization of LS, the stages of the process, and empirical evidence that give a glimpse on its potentialities and possible limitations.

3.1. Lesson Study: Origin and Description

Dudley (2014) defines LS as a pedagogical approach whose main objective is to improve teaching practices in order to help students or specific *case-students* make progress in an area that has been problematic for them. Nonetheless, LS, as Cajkler and Wood (2014) argue, can also be a strategy to improve teachers' expertise or as part of teacher training programs, including pre-service teachers (Larssen & Drew, 2015; Tasker, 2014). In this sense, it could be said that LS is suitable for experienced as well as inexperienced teachers to learn to better plan their lessons and "imagine learning" (Dudley, 2014, p. 4). In addition, in countries such as Japan, LS is considered as the main type of professional development (Lewis, 2000).

The implementation of LS generally involves groups of teachers, ideally 3 members in each, who engage in collegiate discussion and work collaboratively on planning, designing, teaching, observing, and evaluating lessons. It could be said that LS is a long-term practice and, just like ICC, draws on reflection and critical thinking, which takes place individually and

collectively in the LS group (Armstrong, 2011; Norton, 1997; Schön, 1987). In this process, the members of the group give their outsider look and may make teachers aware of lesson-related aspects, positive and negative, they would normally disregard, and consequently make the necessary adjustments. That is, teachers become more aware of their practices and the effects that these have on learning.

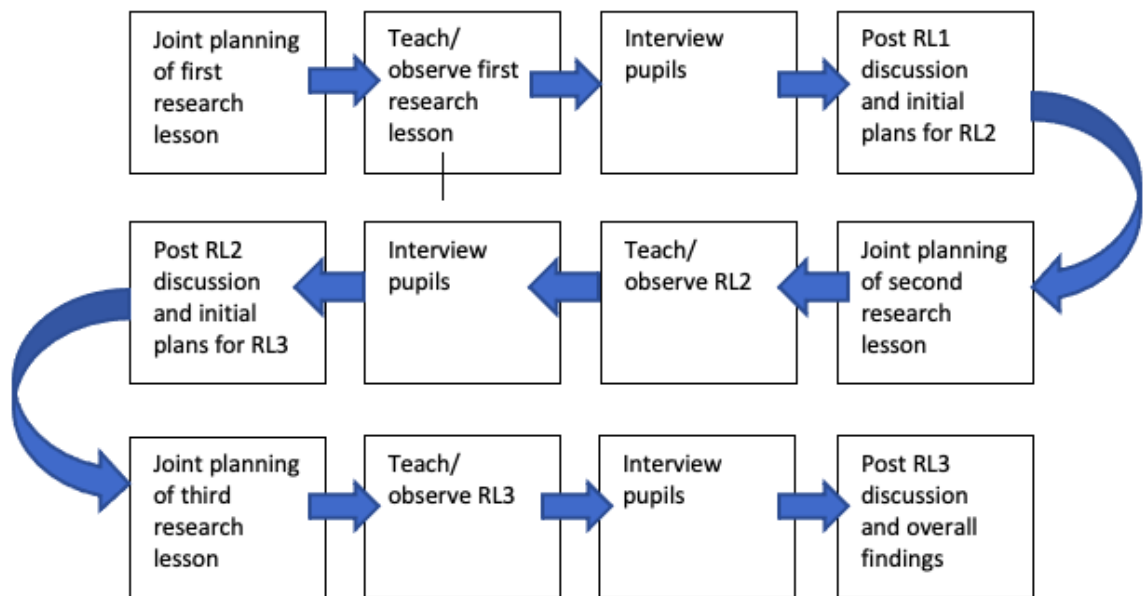
LS is not a new practice; in fact, its foundations can be traced centuries back to Japan (Angelini & Álvarez, 2018). However, it has only been theorized about in the last two decades and its use has spread to areas such as science (e.g., Jansen al., 2021), history (e.g., Halvorsen & Lund, 2013), mathematics (e.g., Suyanta et al., 2014) and language teaching (e.g., Monnier & Gruson, 2018; Walsh, 2019). Similarly, in recent years, a growing number of formally constituted groups have been established in various countries, including Japan, England, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Norway, and the USA, among others, where this pedagogical approach has been claimed to be beneficial because it helps teachers to:

- Pay closer attention to how the learning process takes place.
- See the possible mismatch between what they thought learners know and what they actually know.
- Modify their teaching practices in a way that best cater to their learners' needs
- Work collaboratively with other teachers who share the same commitment to improve their practices, and therefore students' learning (Dudley, 2014).

Moreover, LS involves a well-structured process that includes four distinctive stages that are cyclical, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Stages in the LS Process



Note. From ‘*Lesson study: A handbook*’, by P. Dudley, 2014, p. 5.

Figure 3 depicts the process of LS instruction, which starts with each group getting together to discuss the area or areas of improvement and to plan the first lesson; as mentioned earlier, the aim could be to assist particular students overcome specific learning problems or simply for teachers to have better teaching practices. Since the former was the original purpose, the figure depicts the process taking into account pupils that display problems in an area of knowledge. In that sense, in the second stage, one of the group members teaches the lesson to his/her students while the others observe and fill out an observation protocol focusing on the selected pupils. Once the lesson is taught, the observers interview the focus pupils and find out their impressions on the lesson. Finally, in the fourth stage, the group members get back together, discuss the lesson that was recently taught and plan the next one. The process repeats

and usually takes place three times until teachers reach general conclusions regarding the process.

In this study, the second use of LS applies because it will be implemented to help pre-service teachers plan their lessons. There are two main reasons that account for this choice. First, pre-service teachers are still inexperienced, and the incorporation of ICC, which will be the focus in their lessons, has proved to be somewhat problematic even for teachers with more expertise. Therefore, the collaborative work can contribute to the design of lesson plans that successfully incorporate tasks and elements aimed at developing ICC. The second reason has to do with the fact that even though they are pre-service teachers, once they enter the workforce, the opportunities to access professional development programs focused on ICC will probably be scarce. As a matter of fact, Vermunt et al. (2019) state that LS is a good example of effective professional development programs due to its core features: collaboration, scaffolding, and reflection. Therefore, LS could be an alternative to fill the existing void in terms of qualification opportunities.

In this dissertation, LS will be used as a strategy to help pre-service plan their lessons in a way that these incorporate the elements necessary to develop ICC among their students. In this way, they would not only enhance their teaching practices but also align them with the national curriculum and overall current demands. This goes in line with what Lewis and Hurd (2011) claim in that LS is the connecting thread between the national curriculum and the actual lesson, which is what this dissertation ultimately seeks to attain.

3.2. Lesson Study in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

As described in section 3.1, LS, in general terms, constitutes a practice that involves teachers working collaboratively on identifying a pedagogical problem, formulating a lesson plan to address it, analyzing the learners' response to it, and drawing conclusions (Lewis, 2002a, 2002b). LS mainly focuses on improving the quality of instruction and consequently learning.

In this respect, it could be said that LS is a type of professional development activity; however, it differs from other well-known programs such as seminars, conferences, lectures, among others, in that it is more context-specific; it includes follow-up meetings, feedback, observation, and collegiate support throughout. More importantly, the research lessons and the entire process revolve around the needs and goals of the teachers and learners involved instead of an outsider's perspective and advice (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012). These potentialities have been drawn from studies in several areas of knowledge. Nonetheless, this section will present a number of them which have been conducted in language education and specifically in EFL. In this particular field, research exploring the impact of LS has started to grow and has shed light on the benefits of this practice as an alternative to professional development programs for pre-service, in-service teachers (novice and experienced) as well as teacher educators.

With reference to in-service teachers, in Iran, Yazdanifar and Khazaenezhad (2020) conducted a qualitative case study that sought to identify the perceptions of four novice and three experienced EFL teachers concerning the practical implementation of LS and how this practice helped them merge theory and practice. In this study, the entire LS protocol was followed and the data were collected through participants' reflective notes, a semi-structured interview, observations, and field notes. Regarding the participants' perceptions of the practical implementation of LS, the findings showed that they associated the practice with three main themes, namely, teacher's learning about teaching, reflective teaching, and reflexivity¹³. Besides, all of them expressed that they had learned new pedagogical strategies within a real-life context, as the research lessons are implemented in the actual classrooms where they normally teach. As for how LS helped in integrating theory and practice, the participants mentioned that it was effective for this purpose. One example was the fact that after a number

¹³ Reflective teaching can be defined as the action of observing oneself while or after teaching has taken place. Reflexive teaching, conversely, can be referred to as the retrospective and introspective practice that involves making decisions and the necessary adjustments based on what has been drawn from reflection. In other words, reflexive teaching translates reflection into action (Elkommos, 2020; Stingu, 2012).

of sessions, they were more aware of and better able to incorporate the theoretical principles of Communicative Language Teaching into their classroom activities. When it came to novice teachers, it was seen that LS enhanced their confidence due to the opportunity they had to collaborate with more experienced colleagues in the planning of the research lessons. These findings led Yazdanifar and Khazaenezhad (2020) to suggest LS as a professional development approach.

Similar results were obtained by Karabuga (2021), whose study intended to explore the potential benefits of LS in the professional development of EFL teachers in Turkey. The research questions Karabuga (2021) aimed to answer were related first, to the perceptions of the participants with regard to LS before the onset of the process; second, their perceptions of LS in terms of practicality and also its contribution to their professional development. The participants of the study were five high school EFL teachers and the data were collected through interviews with participant teachers before, and after engaging in LS, the participants' journal entries, and field notes taken by the researcher. The results showed that in the initial interviews prior to the implementation of LS, the participants conceived it as a process in which teachers worked cooperatively, discussed the challenges they face when teaching, and worked on solving those challenges by carefully planning a lesson for that purpose, which would contribute to the quality of their teaching and their students' learning. These initial expectations were met after the process took place, and it was revealed in the post-interview. In general terms, the results obtained in the study reinforce the idea that LS brings about benefits for teachers' professional development and teaching practices, which, in tandem, are conducive to learning. Karabuga (2021) then suggests that LS may be a more effective practice compared to other professional development strategies such as workshops and seminars, which usually present general, prescriptive, and decontextualized tips. Conversely, LS takes into account the

actual setting where the teaching will take place, the characteristics of the learners, the sociocultural context, and the learning conditions.

In order to study additional aspects, both positive and negative, related to the implementation of LS, Bayram and Bikmaz (2021) carried out a qualitative case study. This investigation aimed at exploring the opinions of four EFL teachers at a Turkish university in regards to LS and its stages and also their thoughts as to what LS represents for their professional development. The study took place during a four-month period and the data were gathered during the LS cycles through observations, interviews, discussions, and reflective reports. When it comes to difficulties, on the one hand, it was seen that the participating EFL teachers found it challenging to identify a problem that would turn into a research lesson. On the other hand, once the problem was identified and the topic was chosen, it was difficult for them to agree on a lesson design and teaching style.

In spite of these shortcomings, the participants stated that LS brought about a number of benefits. One of them was the fact that working with colleagues, sharing ideas, and seeing the research lessons being taught led them to question their actions and become more aware of their practices and flaws, for instance the way in which they gave their students instructions. In addition, they indicated that LS enabled them to see the lesson plan from their students' perspective, which also helped them detect their students' needs and interests. Another gain was the knowledge they acquired from each other, for instance, ideas on how to incorporate technology in the EFL classroom. The participants also claimed that LS gave them the chance to become more reflective as teachers and increase their sense of self-awareness. In line with what was inferred and suggested in previous studies, Bayram and Bikmaz (2021) argue that LS should be a more common practice among EFL teachers, as it has shown to be helpful in fostering teachers' pedagogical knowledge and classroom practice.

The studies described so far shed some light into how in-service teachers perceive LS, the benefits and challenges of this approach, and how it can contribute to teachers' professional development. The evidence collected was mostly positive and makes it possible to hypothesize that LS is a sound and appropriate practice to be implemented in EFL settings, not only with in-service teachers but also with pre-service teachers, as some empirical evidence indicates. Monnier and Gruson (2018), for instance, present the results of an experimental course project involving teacher educators and pre-service teachers from two partner institutions located in Switzerland and France. The purpose of their project was to organize LS groups to assist pre-service-teachers in planning lessons to improve interactive activities for young EFL learners at primary school level. The project consisted of two research lessons instead of the three that the LS protocol indicates, and the goal was to incorporate oral pair work to increase English speaking time in both of them. After the first lesson, the participants became aware of issues that still persisted in the planning and led to important adjustments in the second lesson. Once the entire cycle was complete and a feedback session took place, it was possible to determine that there was significant improvement from research lesson 1 to research lesson 2 in terms of pedagogical skills, which would have a direct impact on learners as well.

The results led the researchers to infer that LS can positively impact teaching actions, as it is a means to train pre-service teachers to analyze and take action to ameliorate their professional practice. In addition, as Monnier and Gruson state, "LS is an excellent way of discussing and documenting, from a didactic perspective, the main issues of the teaching and learning of foreign languages" (2018, p. 130).

In a similar vein, Arslan (2018) conducted an intrinsic case study in Turkey that aimed to explore how LS influenced pre-service EFL teachers' teaching practice. The participants were eight undergraduate students who would soon start conducting observations in schools and would have their first teaching experience under the guidance of a mentor. They engaged

in the LS process, which was new to all of them, and followed the protocol closely. The participants were divided into three groups and were in charge of preparing three research lessons to be implemented with 10th graders in a high school. The data were collected through videos of research lessons, group meetings, lesson reflections, researcher's field notes, student teachers' observations, written lesson plans, and pre-service teachers' reflections on the process.

The overall results showed that LS enhanced EFL pre-service teachers' professional growth, which occurred by observing and reflecting on their own and their peers' behaviors and teaching practices as well as on their learners' learning. When engaged in reflection of their own pedagogy and that of the other members, they were able to reconstruct their professional knowledge and experience. Another aspect to highlight was the fact that LS increased the participants' knowledge on how and how much to teach, which translated into an improved teaching practice. In addition, it is also worth pointing out that the discussions that were part of the LS process broadened the participants' understanding of teaching and enabled them to adopt new perspectives. Based on the evidence, the author concluded that the implementation of LS had a positive effect on the pre-service teaching practices, lesson design, selection of materials, and general performance for the time being and in the future. Arslan (2018) states that LS may have more benefits than a one-shot professional development program, as in LS, the participants are fully engaged and take an active role in the process, which differs from the former. In this regard, the author suggests that LS should be included into initial EFL teacher education programs so that pre-service teachers become aware, at an early stage, of the factors that contribute to effective teaching.

Concerning the implementation of LS to improve areas closely related to ICC, a study conducted by Walsh (2019) in England was found, and it is worth examining in depth given the similarities to the main areas addressed in this dissertation. Walsh (2019) carried out a

twofold qualitative and exploratory study that involved 42 primary practitioners from 8 different schools for the first phase, and 5 primary school teachers for the second phase. The first phase aimed to find out, by means of a questionnaire, the participants' intercultural understanding (IU), how IU was addressed in their schools, and the challenges they faced trying to promote IU in their schools. The second phase dealt with LS and involved 5 participants, selected from the group of 48, who engaged in this practice. The purpose was to discuss and agree on the steps they should take as teachers to promote IU within their classrooms and schools. In the process, they followed the original LS model and analyzed the factors that influenced their interpretation and teaching of IU, how they prepared to teach IU through LS, and the extent to which LS impacted their knowledge and practices regarding IU.

The results of the questionnaire showed that the participants' interpretation of IU was related to increasing pupils' knowledge of other cultures, fostering positive attitudes such as tolerance, respect, and empathy, and leading pupils to understand that all cultures are equally worthy. Concerning how IU should be addressed in their schools, most participants answered that it should be done from each subject matter, and others mentioned that it should be done as part of the policies of the school, as part of whole school events, as cross-curricular topics, and as other schemes and initiatives. As for the challenges teaching IU, the majority of participants acknowledged that IU was a difficult area to address and gave seven main reasons: limited teachers' cultural knowledge, low diversity, curriculum issues, limited pupils' knowledge, limited resources, limited teachers' foreign language knowledge, and negative home influence.

As for the second phase of the study, in which five participants took part in LS, the findings revealed that the factors that influenced IU teaching were of positive and negative nature. In regard to the former, the participants mentioned that IU was promoted informally from the school ethos and formally from the school curriculum. With respect to the latter, the negative factors included the pressure to emphasize on academic attainment more than on

developing the different facets of the child. Another factor affecting the implementation of IU was the fact that doing so implies making a conscious effort that is reflected in their planning and practices. Most practitioners are not willing to undertake such a task, as it is time-consuming, and it also requires additional effort and resources, which at times are scarce. In sum, Walsh (2019) pointed out a clear mismatch between the well-articulated cultural dimension on school policies, what teachers think, and what they actually do.

Concerning the implementation of LS, it was seen that the process was easy to follow. For the participants, it was seemingly easy to work together; they saw each other as peers and understood that LS sought to attain mutual learning instead of becoming experts. Finally, when it comes to the extent of the impact of LS on the participants' practices, the findings indicated that LS represented a professional learning opportunity that stimulated their cognitive and affective resources and their ability to critically analyze their own preconceptions (Walsh, 2019). More importantly, LS assisted the participant teachers in jointly working on the strategies to turn a complex concept such as IU into a teachable matter. In all, after completing the two phases of her research, the author concludes that IU constitutes an important part of primary schools, and although teachers seem to be qualified to teach IU, a number of challenges may hinder its systematic teaching. In addition, Walsh (2019) asserts that teacher professional development opportunities such as LS should be paid attention to in order to enable both teachers and learners' to properly access IU in primary school contexts.

As can be seen, the outcomes of research on LS in EFL settings reviewed in this section are highly congruent in several ways. Initially, the perceptions of the participants concerning LS are positive, and in most studies, they highlighted the potential of the collaborative work involved in the process. The participants indicated that working with their colleagues enabled them to learn from each other, gain practical and theoretical knowledge, and even adopt new perspectives. In addition, the joint planning, the discussions, observations and feedback

increased their capacity to become more aware of their actions and reflect on them and their impact. In this way they were able to pin-point their strengths and weaknesses and how to overcome them.

Another important element when it comes to the benefits of LS is the fact that by engaging in LS, it is possible for the participants to link theory and practice, as found in Walsh's (2019) and Yazdanifar and Khazaeenezhad's (2020) studies. This finding is of particular importance for the present dissertation because the issue at its core is that bringing the theory related to ICC and practice has become a daunting task in most scenarios where its development needs to be enforced. Therefore, LS could represent the support that the pre-service teachers in this study need to be able to integrate this competence in their future teaching experiences. The collaborative work and procedures immersed in LS may not only boost their confidence but also serve as a scaffolding for them to reflect on their lessons and how they incorporate ICC. This type of work is of primary importance especially when dealing with ICC because, as a group, they could pay closer attention to what being intercultural means and stay away from teaching merely superficial aspects of culture.

Bearing in mind the potential of LS, several authors explicitly recommend its implementation as an alternative to traditional forms of professional development (see Arslan, 2018; Bayram & Bikmaz, 2021; Monnier & Gruson, 2018). This suggestion, especially for the context where the present study took place, is highly appropriate. It is true that seminars, training courses, conferences, lectures, and so forth are valuable. However, as Karabuga (2021) claims, they tend to be prescriptive and may or may not fit the context where they are held. In fact, in regard to Colombia, there is a need for programs that empower teachers to critically analyze the context and needs to then devise their own alternatives (Buendía & Macías, 2019). Taking this into consideration, LS could serve as means to provide teachers and pre-services teachers with the tools that other forms of professional development do not offer.

As with any pedagogical approach, the implementation of LS has its challenges, as Bayram and Bikmaz's (2021) study showed. In their study, it was seen that it was difficult for teachers to identify teaching or learning-related problems so that they could plan a research lesson to address them. Similarly, they found it difficult to agree on the design of the lesson and teaching style. Nevertheless, what Bayram and Bikmaz (2021) found did not represent an issue in the present study, as the problem had clearly been identified, and that was the need to incorporate elements to develop ICC. As for the teaching style, it is an aspect that has to do with each teacher, his/her personality, and philosophy of teaching; however, if it is related to a particular methodology, the guidelines that rule the educational setting should be reviewed to have a clear idea of which principles to follow.

Drawing on the findings of the previous studies and considering their impact, it could be affirmed that the benefits of LS significantly outweigh its drawbacks. Given the gains in terms of increased reflexivity, awareness of teacher's own actions, confidence, and refined teaching practices, it could also be inferred that LS is an effective pedagogical approach that contributes to teachers' professional development, which at the same time targets specific problems that they encounter in their actual classes, thus fostering learning. The evidence presented in this review involved mostly EFL settings where teaching and learning conditions are similar to those in Colombia, a country where this approach has not been widely explored; therefore, it is worth testing its feasibility.

3.3. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter comprised the theoretical foundations as well as research studies related to LS. This practice is considered a well-structured pedagogical approach that consists in the collegiate work of teachers to improve their practices, overcome difficulties, and thus enhance the learning process. Empirical evidence suggests that despite some limitations, LS has diverse potentialities, including improved teachers' reflexivity, confidence, and more effective

teaching practices. Based on these ideas and considering the complexities of ICC, in this dissertation, LS is proposed as a professional development strategy that pre-service teachers can resort to in order to materialize ICC; that is, by working cooperatively, following the principles of LS, they can transform their theoretical knowledge into concrete practices, which can be reflected in their lesson plans.

CHAPTER 4:

THE COLOMBIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

There is no doubt that in Colombia, ICC has gained relevance in the last few decades due to the country's multicultural nature, but especially to the demands that emerged from today's world interconnectedness, increased mobility, and the urge to be a competitive nation (Colombian ministry of Education [MEN for its initials in Spanish], 2006). With the aim of meeting these needs, ICC has become part of the Colombian educational system, and language teachers have progressively become the ones responsible for the development of this competence. Put that way, it looks as if there was an instant solution for the necessity to ease the increasing intercultural encounters immersed in the current globalized world. However, the entire scenario is highly complex. To understand what has and is being done around ICC in Colombia, where pre-service language teachers stand, and the challenges they face when it comes to the materialization of ICC both as learners and future professionals, this chapter will address four main aspects.

First, the place and role of ICC in the education system in Colombia will be discussed. To do so, it is worth reviewing the main plans and policies that have been generated in the country concerning bilingualism, which will then frame the context from which ICC will be promoted. Second, the focus will turn to the existing regulations concerning foreign language and ICC, especially the *Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum, preschool to 11th grade* (MEN, 2016b), which must be applied in primary and secondary education, and therefore have to be implemented by in-service and the now pre-service language teachers. Third, given that a group of pre-service English language teachers are the main participants in this dissertation and will be the ones in charge of developing ICC in schools, this chapter will also address the place of ICC in higher education and, specifically, foreign language education programs where this particular population belongs. Fourth,

empirical evidence examining the knowledge, perceptions, and practices of preservice and in-service foreign language teachers will be presented as well as the results of pedagogical experiences that suggest the feasibility of fostering ICC.

In all, this chapter reviews the voids that current Colombian policies in regard to foreign language education, internationalization, and specifically ICC have. As has been referenced throughout this dissertation, these policies merely state what should be done and achieved, but rarely state how. As a result, Colombian pre-service language teachers are left with the challenge of becoming intercultural citizens themselves and also being the ones to foster this competence among their students, most of the time, without adequate tools to face such a challenge.

4.1. Colombian Policies Regarding Bilingualism

Promoting bilingualism in Colombia is not a recent matter; in fact, the first actions that evolved into the current guidelines in terms of foreign language education were taken in 1991, when the Colombian Constitution was reformulated. In Article 10, the document declared Spanish as the official language of the nation and granted the various Colombian ethnic languages and dialects official status “within their territories.” These pronouncements paved the way for the enactment of the Ley General de Educación (General Law of Education), commonly known simply as Ley 115 (Law 115) (1994). This law was meant to regulate the Colombian educational system, and among others, determined the compulsory subjects to be included in primary and high school curricula; among them were humanities, Spanish language, and foreign languages. This was the first time that the government formally acknowledged the importance of learning foreign languages, and it constituted the first step to then embrace bilingualism as one of the goals of education in the country (Cárdenas-Vergaño, 2018;

González, 2010; Usma-Wilches, 2009b). Even though this would mean that any language besides Spanish could be taught, bilingualism started to be linked to learning English.

In general terms, the above can be explained in the words of Canagarajah (2007), Kirkpatrick (2007), and McKay (2002), who claim that English has reached unprecedented importance, up to the point of becoming a *lingua Franca*, which probably reinforced the decision to encourage its learning in schools in Colombia as the norm (González, 2010). However, more concrete reasons exist to account for the fact that English became the *de-facto* language in the educational system in Colombia at all levels of scholarship; most of them are linked to the economy of the country. As Cifuentes et al. (2018) put it, it is a common belief that the higher the population's English proficiency level, the easier it becomes to integrate the nation into the global economy and international trade. Besides, having a population highly proficient in English is a great asset for a country like Colombia when it comes to boosting tourism, which also contributes to the nation's economic growth. Furthermore, considering the international scenario, it is a reality that the vast majority of literature and scientific matters are disseminated in English, which forces academics to publish in that language and those interested in accessing such information to learn it as well. On these grounds, for the last four decades, Colombia has seen at least seven initiatives that aim to align the educational system and the country with the international trends previously described, as will be discussed next.

4.1.1. COFE Project

In this context and after Law 115 passed, national authorities started their attempts to promote learning English as a foreign language. The first one was the COFE (Colombian Framework for English) project. It was carried out between 1991 and 1996 and was the product of an agreement with the United Kingdom. The purpose of this project was to improve the quality of English instruction in teacher education programs by awarding a number of selected pre-service teachers scholarships to study at Thames Valley University (Rubiano et al., 2000). The

project was designed as a professional development program that instructed teachers to become educational researchers, initiate their own research groups, assist in the improvement of their own teacher education programs, and propose research studies that would impact school practices (Rubiano et al., 2000; Usma-Wilches & Frodden, 2003). Despite some observed improvements in the curriculum of language teaching programs in participating universities, the project was short-lived; then, some of the curricular reforms made as a result of its implementation were revoked due to the issue of new policies (Bastidas, 2007 as cited in Cárdenas-Vergaño, 2020).

Besides, the Colombian context was not prepared to implement the changes that the teachers who benefitted from the program were instructed to make. The new trends were not aligned with actual university structures; teachers were not prepared to conduct educational research; and lack of resources made it impossible to carry on with curricular changes and innovations (Usma-Wilches, 2009). However, even though the COFE project did not yield the desired results, it constituted the first visible attempt to improve language learning programs before the first model for language/bilingual education was created (Cárdenas-Vergaño, 2018).

4.1.2. Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages

Soon after the COFE project resumed, in 1999, the MEN issued the Curricular Guidelines for Foreign languages (Lineamientos Curriculares Lenguas Extranjeras), which established the basic competences that students need to acquire throughout primary and secondary school in all regions in Colombia (MEN, 1999). On paper, this set of regulations seemed to be positive for the Colombian education system in terms of English teaching; nonetheless, yet again, teachers were not prepared to take on such a responsibility. As Bastidas et al. (2015) state, English teaching was enforced in primary school, but there were no teachers qualified to teach English at this educational level.

4.1.3. Basic Standards of Competencies in Foreign Language: English

This document, also known as Guide 22, was released in 2006 by the Colombian Ministry of Education and was intended to promote the development of national bilingual education policies to transform students into more competitive individuals in a globalized world (Díaz-Monsalve & Rúa-Vergara, 2016). In general terms, Guide 22 provided conceptualizations of what Colombian teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers should understand by “bilingualism,” “second language,” or “foreign language.” Guide 22 also highlighted the importance of learning English and clarified why it should be treated as a foreign language, although this was disregarded in subsequent plans. Additionally, this document was the first attempt to propose comprehensive goals for elementary and secondary schools, while referencing communicative competence (i.e., linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, pragmatic, and strategic competences).

4.1.4. National Bilingualism Plan

Subsequently, a two-year diagnosis of the level of proficiency of both students in secondary school, both at public and private schools, and English teachers was made. The results revealed a bleak reality: in spite of showing satisfactory pedagogical knowledge as measured by the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)¹⁴, only 1.8% of the teachers displayed an advanced level of English, 32.8% had an intermediate level, and 65.4% a basic level, according to the scales proposed in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). Additionally, it was seen that only 6.4% of students finishing high school performed at an intermediate level, whereas an overwhelming 93.6% did at a basic level. No students were found to perform at an advanced level (MEN, 2005).

The low level of proficiency in English evidenced in the diagnosis led the MEN to

¹⁴ The Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) is a test that assesses the skills you need to succeed in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

design a set of bilingualism policies that came to be known as the National Bilingualism Plan (2004 – 2019). In terms of language competence, the goal of this plan was to make Colombian citizens bilingual in Spanish and English by 2019, which “would make way to insert the country into processes of universal communication, global economy, and cultural openness in accordance with international standards” (MEN, 2006, p. 2 own translation). To reach the goal, the National Bilingualism Plan included the following actions:

- Reach the standards for English teaching and learning, which were known as the Basic Standards for Competences in Foreign Languages: English, issued in 2006 and also called Guide 22.
- Design coherent procedures to assess communicative competence in students, in-service and pre-service teachers.
- Promote professional development programs focused on pedagogical aspects as well as on communicative competence in English
- Support the use of ICTs in the language teaching process.
- Consolidate bilingual and trilingual models in the different ethnic communities around the country (Cely, 2007).

The National Bilingualism Plan was aligned with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020), and based on both documents, the national standardized tests SABER 11 and SABER Pro¹⁵ were adjusted to assess the levels of attainment. Table 2 illustrates how these levels were set.

¹⁵ Saber 11 and Saber Pro are standardized state tests that students must take at the end of high school and higher education respectively. Both assess five different competencies. Saber 11 tests critical reading, mathematics, social sciences, science, and English while Saber Pro tests critical reading, quantitative reasoning, citizenship competences, writing, and English.

Table 2

Goals in Terms of English Language Proficiency Set by the PNB per Educational Level.

Level in CEFR	Name of the level in Colombia	Education level in which the level is expected.	Goals for the education sector in 2019
A1	Principiante (beginner)	1 st – 3 rd grade	
A2	Básico (Basic)	4 th – 7 th grade	
B1	Pre -Intermedio (Pre-Intermediate)	8 th – 11 th grade	Minimum level for 100% of high school graduates
B2	Intermedio (Intermediate)	Higher education	Minimum level for in-service English teachers Minimum level for college graduates of undergraduate program other than foreign language teaching programs.
C1	Pre - avanzado (Pre – advanced)		Minimum level for new college graduates of foreign language teaching programs.
C2	Avanzado (advanced)		

Table 2 shows the English proficiency goals that the National Bilingualism Plan set per educational level, starting from first grade to higher education. It can be seen that, according to the Plan, in a timeframe of 15 years, by the end of high school, all learners must have attained a B1 level while graduates must have reached a B2 or C1 level depending on the program they were enrolled in. Under these conditions and with the aim of supporting the National Bilingualism Plan in higher education, a series of strategies were proposed. One of them was a diagnosis of the academic situation within language teaching programs at chosen universities by means of interviews, surveys, focal groups, tests, class observation and on-site visits (Cárdenas-Vergaño, 2018). Once the diagnosis was complete, an improvement plan was

formulated in order to strengthen those programs. During the implementation of the improvement plan, the participating universities counted on the support of the Colombian Ministry of Education.

4.1.5. Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages

In order to support the National Bilingualism Plan, in 2010, with the new government, an additional program was launched: Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages (PFDCLE for its initials in Spanish), which ran between 2010 and 2014. In line with the previous one, this plan aimed to “help Colombian citizens develop communicative competencies in foreign languages, emphasizing English, in order to favor the insertion of Colombian human capital into the global economy and the international job market” (MEN, 2014b, p. 36). In terms of proficiency in English, this program set the following goals by the end of 2014: 100% of in-service English teachers with B2 level; 40% of high school graduates with B1 level; 80% of students in English teaching programs with B2; and 20% of students in other undergraduate programs with B2 (MEN, 2014b). To reach this goal, the program promoted teachers’ training and professional development in pedagogical aspects, follow-up and evaluation, and institutional strengthening (MEN, 2014b). Besides, in 2013, the Colombian government issued the Bilingualism Law (Law 1651) (Colombian Congress, 2013), which modifies part of the National Law of Education from 1991 and makes English learning a priority.

As for teacher training and professional development, the PFDCLE provided opportunities such as immersion programs for primary and secondary school teachers to improve the areas of methodology and communicative competence in English. Along with this initiative, the PFDCLE offered educational materials: *English for Colombia-ECO* (MEN, 2011), *Let’s Learn English with the Adventures of Bunny Bonita* (MEN, 2012), *My ABC English Kit: Supplementary Materials for English Learning and Teaching in Primary Schools*

in Colombia (MEN, 2013), and *English, please!* (MEN, 2016). These materials were designed by Colombian specialists incorporating contextual aspects that addressed the needs of the students from the public sector. Additionally, they provided teachers with pedagogical guidelines that were meant to enrich their professional practice (Gómez-Sará, 2017).

When it comes to follow-up and evaluation, the PFDCLE promoted the administration of annual voluntary diagnostic tests that aimed to establish the English level and examine the methodologies used by English teachers from the public sector. As for students, their progress was tracked through the Saber 11 test. According to the MEN (2014b), the diagnostic test evidenced that the training teachers received had indeed enhanced their English level, going from 29% with B2 level to 43% in 2013. In addition, the MEN (2014b) states that the analysis of Saber 11 showed that as of 2010, 57% of 11th graders from the public sector obtained scores that corresponded to having no exposure to the language. Only 31% obtained an A1 level, 6% an A2, 4% a B1, and 2% a B2 level or above. It is important to consider that the official institutions account for 75% of the total population of 11th graders in the country (MEN, 2006, 2014b). Finally, in regard to institutional strengthening, the PFDCLE, by means of the local authorities in each city, urged schools and universities to create English programs or strengthen the existing ones in order to attend to the particular needs of their populations (MEN, 2014b); however, this attempt had already been made while the National Bilingual Plan ran.

4.1.6. National Plan of English: Colombia Very Well! 2015-2025

By 2014, a thorough examination of the impact that the previous plans had had on foreign language education in the country had been conducted. It revealed that their implementation had yielded positive results; however, their reach was still limited. Therefore, to give continuity to the previous strategies, the National Plan of English (PNI for its initials in Spanish) was launched in 2014, and it would run from 2015 to 2025. One of the premises of the program was to make Colombia the most educated country in Latin America by 2025. The objective of

the PNI in terms of proficiency was, by 2025, to have 50% of 11th graders achieve a B1 English level; 85% of students of language teaching programs attain C1 level when they complete their studies; and students in other undergraduate programs attain B2 when they graduate (MEN, 2014b). The plan also aimed to impact English education at the university level and in the productive sector (workers). To achieve the goals previously described, the PNI proposed, among others, these initiatives:

- Conduct an initial diagnosis of level of proficiency of English teachers. Based on the results, they would have the chance to attend courses lasting between 200 and 500 hours, immersion programs, and qualification courses on methodology aimed at transforming their pedagogical practice.
- Make pertinent curricular changes that increase the number of hours devoted to English.
- Provide schools with technological tools to support the language learning process.
- Launch advertising campaigns to promote English learning through mass media;
- Develop apps that enhance language learning.

Even though it seemed to be a very well devised project with clear actions and aims, this was widely criticized. First, it was designed by a consulting agency: McKinsey & Co without assistance from university departments of education, or experts in the area, which clearly affected those directly connected to its implementation (Bonilla-Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016). Second, although it was implied in previous programs, this one overtly declared English as being the only language Colombian citizens should learn to meet the goal of making the country bilingual. Third, it promoted the implementation of assessment standards, textbooks, and material made abroad, which were completely decontextualized, and the material and situations depicted in them were irrelevant for Colombian learners (Álvarez, 2008). In this regard, Ayala Zárate and Álvarez (2005) had previously called for the construction of context-based foreign language education principles and materials while

preparing students to be globally competent. Overall, this national plan ended up benefiting international publishing houses and other centers that had purely commercial purposes instead of encouraging English learning for social and personal empowerment.

4.1.7. Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018

Under the scenario described above, and only five months after its onset, the PNI was re-structured and renamed as “Bilingual Colombia” (CB for its initials in Spanish) in order to recover the conception of bilingualism that was completely excluded in the PNI (Bonilla-Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016). As can be recalled, it openly focused exclusively on English as its name indicated, setting up a barrier for other foreign languages to be taught. Yet, the aim of this program was to encourage and help teachers and students to better communicate in English. Being proficient in this language would allow them to access scholarships in other countries, foster mobility across countries, and provide better job opportunities, even in Colombia (MEN, 2016). This program contemplated different strategies to meet its purpose. These targeted teachers, use of materials, and pedagogical approaches. First, CB planned to continue with the diagnosis of proficiency level and training opportunities for English teachers regarding competence in the language and methodology. By implementing this strategy, it was expected that teachers moved in their level of proficiency. However, this had some implications; only B2 teachers would be hired in public schools. Another very controversial strategy, concerning public schools and some universities, was the arrival of more than 300 foreigners to 36 focal cities. The aim of this initiative was to provide opportunities to communicate in English authentically with the students outside regular class time. This group included professionals of different disciplines whose native language was not necessarily English. They did have some teaching experience but lacked in language teaching skills and didactics.

Concerning the use of materials, CB promoted the donation of pedagogical resources and technological kits to schools so that students and teachers could take advantage of them. Finally, regarding pedagogical design, CB aimed to construct a flexible and adaptable curriculum that would guide the instruction of English in the schools of the country following a communicative approach. Thus, two booklets were issued with this purpose, namely, *Basic learning rights: English 1st to 11th grades* (MEN, 2016a) and *Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum, 1st to 11th grade* (MEN, 2016b). These documents constitute the current framework that guides teaching practices from preschool to 11th grade in the country as will be described in the next section.

However, before moving onto the details of the guidelines to be enforced today in the country, it is worth going through the multiple plans and regulations, seven in total, that have emerged throughout the last decades in terms of language policies. Table 3 summarizes the different plans, stating their starting and ending date as well as their main goals.

Table 3*Summary of Plans to Promote Foreign Language Learning in Colombia*

Year	Plan	Aims
1995 -1999	COFE project	Improve the quality of English instruction in teacher education programs.
1999	Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages	Set basic competences that schoolers need to acquire throughout the educational process in all regions in Colombia. Conduct a diagnosis of the level of proficiency of both students and English teachers.
2006	Basic standards of competencies in Foreign Language: English - Guide 22	Promote the development of national bilingual education policies to enable learners to be competitive individuals.
2004 - 2019	National Bilingualism Plan	Enable citizens to communicate in English, so that the country becomes competitive in the global economy and cultural openness. Lead 100% of the school population to reach B1 proficiency in English by 2019.
2010 - 2014	Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages	Assist teachers and learners in developing communicative competences in English to favor their insertion into knowledge-based economy. Lead 40% of the school population to reach B1 proficiency in English by 2014
2015 – 2025	National Plan of English: Colombia Very Well!	Contribute to making Colombia the most educated country in Latin America and the country with the highest English proficiency of South America by 2015. Lead 50% of the school population to reach B1 proficiency in English by 2025.
2014 - 2018	Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018.	Enable the school population to better communicate in English so that they can access scholarships in other countries and better work opportunities in the country and abroad. Lead 8% of the school population to reach B1 proficiency in English by 2018.

Table 3 provides a chronological account of the different plans and policies that have emerged from 1995 to this day concerning language education in Colombia. As can be seen, in about 25 years, seven different initiatives have been proposed, all of them promoting

bilingualism but basically declaring English as the only foreign language to be taught/learned. From the table, it can also be inferred that the ambitious standards in terms of proficiency were lowered, going from 100% of the school population with B1 level by 2019 to 8% by 2018. At this point, and before discussing the current guidelines (i.e., Basic learning rights: English preschool to 11th grades and Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum, preschool to 11th grades), it is important to critically assess the different programs that have been proposed during the last few decades to foster foreign language learning in Colombia. It is true that the different attempts to make Colombia a bilingual country are positive in nature, but as Mora et al. (2019) point out, it is possible to perceive that a series of discrepancies and voids are evident. First of all, an apparently minor issue is the inconsistent use of the terminology; for instance, the terms foreign and second language are used interchangeably, and there is actually a notorious difference. If those in charge of designing national policies in Colombia were aware of the difference, then they would refer to English as a foreign language, but that is not the case. This inconsistency leads to confusion and reflects the poor theoretical knowledge that policy makers have in this regard. In a similar vein, it can be seen that the ones formulating bilingualism policies conceive bilingualism as being proficient in Spanish, which is the official language in Colombia, and English. This reflects the utter neglect of, first, the languages spoken as an L1 by ethnic minorities in the country (Torres-Martínez, 2009); second, other foreign languages that could be more in line with the interests of certain individuals.

Another void is the lack of participation of foreign language teachers and experts in the field in the design of national foreign language teaching policies. As Gómez-Vásquez and Guerrero-Nieto (2018) claim, the role of teachers in decision-making processes needs to be more active and consistent. Their role is usually limited to feedback providers once new policies are released. In addition, bilingualism policies are generally thought of taking

international benchmarks as a basis without considering the local conditions, which are unsuitable to meet the goals set by the government (Sánchez-Solarte & Obando-Guerrero, 2008). An example of this blunder were the ambitious English proficiency standards which students and teachers were far from attaining. As a result, after evaluating each of the plans, national authorities were forced to progressively lower the standards and establish more realistic objectives.

Finally, looking back at the different bilingualism plans, it was possible to see an overlap; while one of the plans is being implemented and has not resumed yet, a new one emerges and starts being enforced. This situation suggests poor planning and improvisation that lead to discontinuity. These circumstances together with the lack of guidance for the appropriate and effective execution of bilingualism plans does nothing but puzzle the subjects directly involved in the process, in this case, teachers, students, and pre-service teachers.

Probably, to mend this gap and provide teachers with a path to achieve the national bilingualism goals, the *Basic learning rights* (MEN, 2016a) and the *Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum* (MEN, 2016b) were released. Contrary to the seven plans reviewed earlier, which focused mostly on results, these two documents provide a plan to achieve the desired results. Both establish a sequence of language contents to be covered throughout the educational process from primary education to high school, the methodological principles, and recommended assessment tools; additionally, they are the first official documents that started to underscore the importance of ICC and to make way for its development in the foreign language classroom. In this sense, since the main participants in this dissertation are pre-service teachers who will be working with such documents, it is worth

having a brief overview of what these documents involve, focusing on the language-related goals but more importantly on how ICC is perceived and addressed.

4.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Learning in Colombia

In 2016, the Colombian Ministry of Education released two documents related to language learning: The Basic Learning Rights (BLRs from here on) from preschool to 11th grade (MEN, 2016a) and the Suggested English Curriculum from preschool to 11th grade (MEN, 2016b). The BLRs are supposed to be “an essential tool for ensuring quality and equity in education for all children in Colombia [...] structured coherently with the Curricular Guidelines and the Basic Standards of Competence” (MEN, 2016a p. 7). The BLRs constitute the key competences students need to develop in the foreign language from preschool to 11th grade. Having clear competences for each school grade makes it possible to track progress across the educational process. As for the Suggested English Curriculum, it is designed for students both in elementary and secondary school, who are the target population of the pre-service teachers in this dissertation; it comprises two comprehensive booklets that make ICC more explicit, and for that reason, their characteristics, especially those related to ICC, will be more deeply described and analyzed.

To begin with, the Suggested English Curriculum adopts a socio-cultural approach to language teaching and learning and integrates ICC as one of its leading features. Regarding language, it is conceived as a means of communication and negotiation of meaning and as a social phenomenon involving cognitive, affective, and interactional processes (Bandura, 1992;

Hymes, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). In terms of learning, in line with the socio-cultural perspective, the Suggested Curriculum is grounded on three principles:

- English language learning should focus on practices that promote interaction and cooperation.
- Interaction allows individuals to recognize cultural elements, from their own and the target culture.
- Individuals' cognitive development cannot be separated from the social, historical and cultural realms, which is where learning emerges from (MEN, 2016b).

A relevant element immersed in the Suggested English Curriculum is the promotion of diversity and equity, which are considered the pillars to acknowledge the rights and responsibilities that Colombians have. It is the authorities' task to make sure that everyone has access to the same opportunities and experiences that lead them to reach their learning objectives. It is stated by the authors that the Suggested English Curriculum is a proposal that embraces diversity, and thus needs to leave aside traditional and rigid teaching practices. As stated in the document, this type of curriculum sees diversity as a rule of human coexistence, and it also acknowledges the 'other' as being equally valuable. It is also claimed in the document that the diversity component implies thinking about cultural, demographic, and geographical heterogeneity in Colombia. It is also a call to understand foreign language learning as the crossroads for these elements.

Concerning more specific features, the Suggested English Curriculum is built around four main cross-curricular topics that should be the focus from preschool to 11th grade; their names change depending on whether they are taught in primary (preschool to 5th grade) or secondary school (6th to 11th grade), but in essence, they are and aim at the same. These cross-

curricular topics are supposed to be addressed through the implementation of approaches such as task-based instruction, project-based instruction, and problem-based learning.

For primary school, the topics are health and life, peace and living together, environment and society, and a global village; for secondary school: health, democracy and peace, environmental education and sustainability, and globalization. The last ones: a global village and globalization are directly concerned with ICC as well as peace and living together and democracy and peace, to a lesser extent. On the one hand, globalization, as the Suggested English Curriculum (MEN, 2016b) reads, addresses areas such as impact of the local, regional, and international culture on personal and social practices. The purpose is to promote understanding of one's place and role in the world, the value of one's own culture and that of others. Democracy and peace and peace and living together, on the other hand, are intended to address issues related to human rights, legal rights of children and teenagers, the Constitution, the Colombian democracy system, student participation in democracy, among others. The idea is that students use the target language to debate, come to agreements, and reflect upon their role in building peaceful relationships and promoting values and capabilities to reconcile, where ICC could intervene.

In line with the above, the Curriculum provides a sample syllabus for each school grade that establishes the language-related contents and the areas to be covered within the cross-curricular topics; these include lexical, grammatical, discourse, pronunciation, sociolinguistic and intercultural domains. Within the latter, which is the basis of this dissertation, the Suggested English Curriculum lists a number of activities to be implemented during the lessons to tackle ICC. These are valuation of cultural diversity, self-critical reflection, respect for differences, skills to analyze, interpret and relate information, knowledge of the impact of culture and situational, social and historical contexts, valuation of diversity of opinions, curiosity and discovery, knowledge of own culture and the culture of others, respect for cultural

differences and for situational, and adaptability to different forms of communication and learning.

As can be seen from the list, all the aspects are related to the tenets of ICC, which seems to be of particular interest for the Colombian educational system because it is linked to ethnic and cultural diversity, an aspect that was acknowledged since the constitutional reform of 1991. The Suggested English Curriculum draws on Byram's (2000) definition of ICC. The author refers to it as "the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one's own" (Byram, 2000, p. 297). It is expressed in the document that developing this competence does not point towards seeing another culture as better or worse; instead, it aims to have learners identify similarities and differences without judgment and foster respect and appreciation for diversity (MEN, 2016c). As pointed in the Suggested English Curriculum, the development of ICC is the product of experience; therefore, teachers should create opportunities for students to analyze and reflect on the sociocultural reality they are immersed in, including internal conflicts, agreements and disagreements related to the social and cultural realms, all of this while learning and using the foreign language (MEN, 2016c).

Incorporating ICC as a crucial element in foreign language education in the country is a positive step; however, the downfall comes in the vagueness of its conceptualization and operationalization. Current policies established in the Suggested English Curriculum emphasize ICC throughout. This competence is present in the theoretical background of the document, and it is also immersed in the suggested syllabus for each grade. Nonetheless, the strategies to implement it in the classroom are not made explicit. The document mentions, in a very general fashion, the activities aimed to develop ICC, but these seem a bit imprecise, ambiguous, and too broad. Valuation of cultural diversity, respect for others, learning through interaction are some of the recurrent activities proposed, but taken that way, it is unclear how

teachers with or without having much background knowledge on the subject can materialize them.

Looking back at the list of activities gives the impression that they were chosen at random and were not thoroughly analyzed. In this sense, it would be necessary to offer well-structured and coherent professional development programs that allow teachers to articulate current policies and curriculum proposals with their actual teaching practices, or in the long run, a reform of the curriculum within foreign language teaching programs that include ICC as one of their founding elements. As Hyland (2009) puts it, it is imperative to find a way to create policies that better support teachers and communities. This does not mean that there have not been professional development programs in Colombia. As seen in the COFE project, the National Plan of Bilingualism, or the National Plan of English, there have been attempts, but perhaps, these have either benefitted only a reduced number of teachers, or have not considered the context in which the learning acquired by the beneficiaries would be put into practice.

These limitations have been, historically, an issue in the country; as Sánchez-Solarte and Obando-Guerrero (2008) assert, “in Colombia, policies are created in a top-down approach where only a few people (not necessarily teachers) know what ‘should be done and why’” (p. 184). The authors highlight the almost non-existent participation of teachers in the creation and formulation of language policies in the country. They also affirm that a crucial element for the success of any national program is ensuring that information about the goals and their rationale are thoroughly disseminated across the nation. Supporting this claim, González-Moncada (2007, 2021) calls for more congruent professional development proposals that include pre-service and in-service teachers at all educational levels in order to bring about more meaningful language policies. Taking into account González-Moncada’s (2007) appeal and the population involved in this dissertation, the upcoming sections will provide a general account of the

policies that frame ICC in higher education and the type of preparation pre-service English language teachers receive within their programs in this regard.

4.3. Intercultural Communicative Competence as the Backbone of Internationalization in Higher Education

The previous section dealt with national policies and programs that have been formulated during the last few decades in terms of bilingualism and how these have started to make room for ICC, a construct that has gained importance over the last years in Colombia. Even though such policies and programs must be enforced at all educational levels, they make little reference to higher education except for setting the linguistic goals students need to attain, stating what future language teachers should include in their teaching practice (e.g., Suggested English Curriculum), and making a few efforts with selected institutions. This does not mean that higher education institutions do not have to adhere to any regulations in this respect. In fact, they are expected to lead significant changes in the Colombian education system to prepare learners for an adequate integration into a global and intercultural society and also align with internationalization processes that are taking place worldwide and are indicators of high quality of the programs (MEN, 2014b). Immersed in these endeavors is the development of ICC, a responsibility that mostly devolves upon foreign language teaching programs.

With regard to how ICC connects to foreign language teaching programs and internationalization, it can be affirmed that the practices immersed in the latter are the hotbed of intercultural interactions among individuals with different cultural and at times linguistic backgrounds (Coelen, 2009). This scenario requires the academic community to acquire competences that allow them to function effectively. Under these circumstances, it is nowadays imperative that individuals develop both communicative competence in a language as well as skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge about a culture that enables them to interact effectively,

surpassing the cultural boundaries that intercultural interactions may pose (Moeller & Osborn, 2014). At this point, the use of a common language, in this case, English, and ICC intersect.

Altogether, as Martínez-Barrios (2014) states, internationalization and all the aspects that it entails are somehow facilitated by foreign language learning, or what is more, it can be considered one of the several -and key- conditions for internationalization. However, nowadays, the premise is to leave aside the conception of foreign language learning as the acquisition of merely linguistic features, and see it instead as a means to express cultural-related aspects, acknowledging the close link between language and culture (Agray, 2010). As a result, ICC becomes an enabling condition for effective internationalization as well.

Even though ICC may be seen as a by-product of internationalization, in this dissertation, it is seen as a facilitator of the process that could be favored by the intercultural encounters that internationalization creates. In fact, according to Coelen (2009), the acquisition of intercultural skills is part of the backbone of internationalization; these skills should be cultivated and applied in the academic domain, but may be transferable to other areas where they are also needed given the rampant globalization. In this regard, Deardorff et al. (2009) argue that to succeed in today's interconnected world, higher education must be accompanied by knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would instill in learners understanding, tolerance, and respect necessary to work harmoniously and effectively with others from different cultural backgrounds, which is what ICC promotes.

The above suggests that ICC is immersed in higher education as one of the founding blocks of internationalization, and it should be made explicit in the curriculum, especially when it comes to foreign language teaching programs; first, because they constitute the ideal context for the acquisition and strengthening of ICC, and thus the support of the entire internationalization process (Martínez-Barrios, 2014); second, because they house pre-service language teachers who will soon be in charge of teaching ICC in schools, as stated in the

Colombian Suggested Curriculum; therefore, they need to have the basis to be able to develop ICC among their future students.

4.4. Actions to Support Internationalization Processes in Higher Education and their Reach

Having shed light on how internationalization, foreign language education, and ICC interrelate, it is important to examine the most salient actions the Colombian government and higher education institutions have taken to support the process. In the first place, in 1994, the Colombian Network for Internationalization of Higher Education (Red Colombiana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior - RCI for its initials in Spanish) was created by the representatives from a number of higher education institutions¹⁶. This network exists up to this day, and its members organize yearly national and international events that aim to contribute to the strengthening of internationalization in the country and improve the quality of the member institutions. Another significant effort was made in 2009 when the National Ministry of Education led the creation of a network named Colombia Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK). This non-profit network now comprises 31 both public and private accredited Colombian universities and among its objectives, the following stand out:

- To promote Colombia as an international destination for higher education and quality research.
- To disseminate the research projects carried out in Colombia at the international level.
- To monitor current international trends with respect to internationalization in order to strengthen this process in Colombian higher education institutions.
- To integrate internationalization in the curriculum of academic programs.
- To promote the inclusion of a second and third language in the curricula.

¹⁶ The exact number of former higher education institutions that created this network is unknown; however, today, the RCI has 282 member institutions. This number includes Colombian universities, community colleges, vocational schools, institutes of technology, and national and international development cooperation agencies.

- To promote Colombia as a destination for foreigners to learn Spanish (Briñez et al., 2020).

In line with the previous initiative, the Colombian government led the project titled Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education. This project ran from 2010 to 2014 and its purpose was to insert Colombian higher education institutions into the international context. The project comprised strategies such as seminars and workshops with the aim of making internationalization visible across the country. Such strategies featured topics such as incoming and outgoing mobility, internationalization of the curriculum, interculturality, internationalization of research, and foreign language learning¹⁷ (Martínez-Barrios, 2014). In addition to these measures, the MEN has also supported agreements with various countries to promote mobility of teachers, students, and researchers through other state organizations such as ICETEX and COLCIENCIAS¹⁸. Likewise, the MEN has offered qualification in terms of how to advance in internationalization to the academic staff at chosen higher education institutions (Briñez et al., 2020).

When it comes to internationalization of the curriculum, the MEN designed two programs. The purpose of the first one was to recruit foreign language assistants that would work at schools and universities to enhance bilingualism. As described in section 4.1.7, this program was somewhat controversial. It was also a cause of discontent among Colombian English language teachers given that the foreign language assistants were brought to the country due to their higher language qualifications as they were supposed to be native speakers of English. However, not all of them were native speakers nor were they qualified to teach (Hoyos & Villamizar, 2018). The second program was called Fellows Colombia, which started

¹⁷ English is the foreign language by default as discussed earlier in this chapter.

¹⁸ ICETEX is a Colombian government organization that promotes higher education by approving educational loans and scholarships to students with strong academic performance. COLCIENCIAS is a Colombian government agency that supports fundamental and applied research in Colombia.

in 2016 and promoted incoming visiting lecturers and professors for a stay no longer than 6 months. The aim of this program was to strengthen selected undergraduate programs especially in research areas (Hoyos & Villamizar, 2018).

As for higher education institutions, they are expected to make their own advancements in terms of internationalization, mostly to meet accreditation¹⁹ standards. Each institution needs to make its own strategies and achievements in this regard explicit in institutional guidelines, namely Institutional Educational Project (PEI for its initials in Spanish), the Development Plan, the Program Educational Project (PEP for its initials in Spanish)²⁰ and the curriculum of each study program. In addition, each institution, or at least that is what the government has instructed, needs to have an International Relations Office (ORI for its initials in Spanish) whose purpose is to coordinate all the matters related to internationalization. Put this way, each institution should count on an internationalization policy that takes into consideration the national conception of the process and its instructions and also incorporates institutional actions to succeed in it. However, this task has proved to be more difficult than what was initially thought.

4.5. Challenges of Internationalization and their Effect on the Implementation of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Higher Education in Colombia

In spite of the initiatives to support internationalization and, as a consequence, ICC and foreign language education, which are the scope of this document, they fall short, as has been commonplace in Colombia. There are numerous challenges in the education system that need

¹⁹ Accreditation is a process that certifies that high standards of quality are met. In order to be accredited, academic programs and institutions are assessed in 12 different aspects; one of them is internationalization.

²⁰ PEI: This document specifies the founding principles and purpose of the institution. It includes all the information and regulations regarding, among others, academic staff, resources, pedagogical strategies, and management system.

Development Plan: This plan serves as a tool to prioritize actions that lead to the institution's growth, development, and improvement.

PEP: This document sets the learning objectives within a study program and how these connect to the different courses that are to be taken throughout the educational process.

to be overcome if this were to be inserted into the international context. Looking at the different projects and plans described in section 4.4, one could think that there is a widespread agreement on what internationalization is, what it involves, what should be done, and what is sought; however, the efforts that have been made in the last few years have not had the expected impact, and this may have its source in five main reasons.

The first one is lack of coordination; the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN for its initials in Spanish) (2015) explains that there is no cohesion on the part of the main national partakers involved in internationalization and higher education. For ASCUN (2015), the concept of internationalization is not clear among all the actors involved nor are its scope and plan to realize it. According to ASCUN (2015), this theoretical and thus practical void together with the lack of a consistent national procedure to achieve the goal results in each institution doing the best they can to be in line with internationalization or with what they conceive as such.

The second reason is related to limited financial support. It is widely known that internationalization is costly both for students and also the universities and other institutions they receive support from. The efforts made up to this point are valuable but are far from being enough (Téllez & Langeback, 2014). The funds to invest in internationalization are tight, which hinders the implementation of policies even if these were coherently formulated. It is not a matter of a one-shot investment as usually happens with plans and campaigns. Instead, there should be a consistent and stable financial source for such purposes (Salmi, 2014).

Somewhat in line with the prior statement, inequity could be considered a third reason. In this regard, Salmi (2014) points at the inexistence of a coherent national policy that is articulated with the different contextual needs of all regions in the country. In fact, this is a critical issue in Colombia, as not all regions are in the same financial, social, and geopolitical conditions. Even if there have been clear attempts to promote internationalization, these have

benefited chosen institutions, usually located in key parts of the country, generally bigger cities. However, when it comes to regulations and standards, all universities across Colombia have to comply.

A fourth aspect that may account for the inability to internationalize higher education in Colombia has to do with the misbeliefs related to what internationalization is and implies. As stated before, there is no agreement on its conceptualization and the areas that it involves, namely, incoming and outgoing mobility, inter-institutional research projects, organization of international events, foreign language teaching, and internationalization of the curriculum, among others. This dissonance has generated two main misconceptions. The first one is related to the idea that internationalization equals incoming, but especially outgoing, mobility of students, professors, and researchers who seek to obtain academic credits, degrees, or qualification (De Wit et al., 2017). In this case, the success of internationalization is measured in terms of the number of people that travel abroad or the international students and lecturers that Colombian universities take in. The second one has to do with the fact that teaching English is also considered a synonym of internationalization, when in fact it is just one of its multiple areas, as discussed earlier. Even if it is just one component, it should be paid attention to; first, because of the low level of proficiency that students across the country have demonstrated (see Benavides, 2021); second, because of the strong emphasis on linguistic features and the neglect of the cultural component, which contradicts what the policies dictate. Addressing this void, de Wit (2014) affirms that the intercultural component is a pivotal ingredient in internationalization, as are the practices that promote inclusion and mutual cultural understanding.

Finally, the fifth reason is the incapacity to internationalize the curriculum, which is the area ICC is part of. According to Anzola-Pardo et al. (2014), the existing misconceptions have played down the importance of this area, but it is claimed that internationalization of higher

education could not be conceived as such without internationalization of the curriculum (Leask, 2015). In fact, Martínez-Barrios (2014) believes that given the financial circumstances and the inequity that are present in Colombia, internationalizing the curriculum could be the most feasible alternative when mobility and other areas are limited. However, internationalization of the curriculum should be handled with care, as its realization requires a team of experts that have the knowledge and skills necessary to actually make it happen; otherwise, it would only result in the adoption of inaccurate practices that do not match the nature of the process (Leask, 2015). It is probably what has been taking place at the majority of universities in Colombia, where it is evident that the offer of academic programs with the characteristics of an international curriculum is scant (Martínez-Barrios, 2014).

Under these circumstances and considering the definition of internationalization of the curriculum into account, it is possible to see that ICC plays a pivotal role in the entire process. Nonetheless, the actions taken to insert it into the curriculum and actually develop it may be a little reductionist. Focusing on language teaching programs in Colombia, which educate the future teachers in charge of promoting ICC, some efforts in this regard have been seen. Cabrales-Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo (2018) found that some of them have integrated courses whose names suggest contents related to interculturality. These include Language and culture, American cultural studies, British cultural studies, Intercultural communication in English, Intercultural communication in French, Culture and interculturality, Globalization and intercultural experience. The authors clarify, however, that some of these courses are not compulsory, and that their study did not deepen into the objectives, contents, and methodology that are immersed in the course. Therefore, the authors argue, it is impossible to establish how interculturality is approached in them. In the case of the foreign language program the participants of this research are enrolled in, two courses similar to the ones found in Cabrales-

Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo's (2018) study are included in the curriculum; these are *Angloamerican Literature and Culture* and *Littérature Francophone e Culture*.

It is generally claimed that ICC is part of courses such as the ones cited above or at least that they are supposed to address culture. However, this does not necessarily imply that culture is studied from a critical or analytical perspective as should be when developing ICC. Generally, these courses mostly focus on teaching about literary movements or historical events related to the target culture de Wit (2011). Language teaching, as discussed in previous chapters, represents the ground ICC can stem from, and together constitute the enabling conditions for internationalization to take place, as only by learning how others see and experience the world, will it be possible to raise the awareness, tolerance, and inclusiveness that internationalization seeks to attain.

By analyzing what has been presented in this chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn. To begin with, it has been shown that despite the government's plans, campaigns, and offer of teacher development programs, these are limited to a few participants belonging to chosen institutions. That is, numerous teachers ignore what the current policies are, let alone how these should be implemented. This has been the scenario since the first attempt to make Colombia a bilingual country was made through the COFE program; it still persists up to this day, when besides attaining high English proficiency levels, the school-age population must develop ICC according to the Suggested English Curriculum, and higher education institutions must prove they are in line with internationalization.

On another note, in Colombia, the formulation of policies in different areas of education (e.g., foreign language policies, internationalization, accreditation) are in the hands of a few decision makers who are generally oblivious to the reality of the education system in the country; the participation of those directly involved in enforcing the policies, that is, teachers, is generally scarce (Bonilla-Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016; Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero-

Nieto, 2018). As a consequence, there has been a historical breakdown between the expectations of policy-makers, teachers' knowledge of the policies, and how to materialize them.

Furthermore, there is a persistent theoretical and practical disagreement in different areas of the education system, but in this specific case, related to internationalization and ICC. In this regard, there is no clarity in their conceptualization, what they embrace and require. Therefore, on the one hand, there is a lack of synergy at least when it comes to creating unified internationalization policies to be followed by higher education institutions at the national level (Martínez-Barrios, 2014). On the other hand, narrowing the focus to ICC, a founding component of internationalization, there is not a clear pathway leading towards implementing this competence either, an issue that has been discussed throughout this dissertation.

Addressing internationalization, Salmi (2014) asserts that it is necessary to set national policies with a clear plan that incorporates and unifies the individual efforts made so far by the different actors involved, thus providing higher education institutions with solid orientations that show them the direction to take in terms of internationalization in the country. This process involves the formulation of a new foreign policy, an investment policy, and a foreign language policy. These advancements together with a more equitable system that guarantees stable financial and academic support, as has happened with chosen institutions, could probably yield more visible results concerning internationalization across the country. Equally important, Barletta (2009) asserts, is the need to clarify what ICC is and to set concrete guidelines regarding its development. This way, language teachers could have a better understanding of the knowledge and abilities their students need to develop in order to have appropriate and

effective intercultural interactions, and at the same time instill in them intercultural awareness, tolerance, and respect that are the basis of internationalization and ultimately global citizenship.

Finally, by having a clear idea of what ICC is and its relevance in today's education, it will be possible to proceed to internationalization of the curriculum, especially in foreign language teaching programs. In this process, one of the tasks would be the integration of a course that focuses exclusively on ICC so that pre-service teachers familiarize with the competence and how it could be materialized. This statement is supported by several whose studies will be reviewed in more detail in the next section. Olaya and Gómez (2013), for instance, argue that language teaching programs should tackle deep cultural aspects of diverse cultures and be critically discussed. This could be facilitated by making ICC a systematic part of the curriculum and syllabi of the program. The authors go on to say that pre-service teachers should also be taught how to incorporate ICC into their praxis, which is a goal to achieve in the entire education system in order to face globalization.

In a similar vein, Peña-Dix (2018) asserts that there is willingness on the part of language pre-service teachers to incorporate ICC in their teaching practice; however, they have not been taught how, and thus they end up focusing on mere linguistic aspects of the language. The researcher affirms that ICC should be made a consistent component of language teaching programs so that future language teachers are provided with the tools necessary to gain expertise in ICC and how to develop this competence in their students as well. This claim is backed by Esteban-Nuñez (2021), who believes that the curriculum in language teaching programs should be adjusted to make room for ICC, thus preparing pre-service teachers as intercultural individuals or at least providing them with the theoretical foundations needed for this purpose. Finally, Rojas-Barreto (2019) makes an interesting point when she highlights the importance of bringing ICC to the attention of the entire academic community in public

universities and not just language teaching programs. As Rojas-Barreto (2019) asserts, this would be the first step in internationalization of higher education, which is nowadays required.

Higher education institutions have not been tone-deaf to these claims; ICC, as studies have shown, has gained importance in the Colombian context and especially in language teaching programs. Indeed, there have been efforts to include courses that could address ICC, as Cabrales Vargas and Loaiza Trujillo (2018) found in their study. Nonetheless, the results of such study indicated that there is still a long way to go to make ICC a consistent and effective part of the curriculum. For the time being, in the best scenario, ICC has been integrated in courses that, at times, may be misleading; for instance, American cultural studies, British cultural studies, Angloamerican Literature and Culture suggest an emphasis on historically dominant cultures that speak the target language as an L1. However, as has been discussed, ICC goes beyond those boundaries and actually encourages the incorporation of multiple cultures, regardless of their L1, in the language classroom. Other case scenarios that Cabrales-Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo (2018) found include the fact that ICC is somehow addressed in optional courses or isolated lessons. That is the situation in the teaching program the participants of this study belong to, and that is exactly the gap that this dissertation attempts to fill. Overall, a course on ICC which is a consistent part of the curriculum with sound theoretical bases and with clear strategies to operationalize the competence could be the starting point for the transformation that, initially, foreign language teaching programs need (Barletta, 2009). Then such transformation may be expanded to other areas, which is what the education system in Colombia requires not only to be competitive as per international demands (Rojas-Barreto, 2019), but also to instill in learners the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy that any society needs.

Up to this day, it is possible to affirm that studies specifically exploring how ICC is integrated into the curriculum of foreign language programs are still scarce. Probably the one

carried out by Cabrales-Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo (2018) is the only one examining this issue so far. However, since ICC has become a topic of primary importance in the Colombian educational system, the competence has spurred the interest of researchers whose work has aimed to investigate other related areas; these include the circumstances that may hinder its operationalization in foreign language lessons, the current knowledge, practices, and perceptions of in-service and pre-service foreign language teachers regarding ICC, and also pedagogical experiences that describe how the competence can be fostered in the language classroom. Studies expanding these areas will be discussed in the following sections.

4.6. Research on Intercultural Communicative Competence in Colombia

Section 4.4 addressed the place of ICC in higher education, where the competence can be considered as the cornerstone of internationalization processes that enable institutions at this educational level to be in line with worldwide trends. Section 4.5, in turn, tackled the main factors that may hinder the proper implementation of internationalization policies; one of them was the multiple misconceptions, lack of knowledge, and lack of synergy when it comes to the integration of ICC in the curriculum, especially within foreign language programs, which have become accountable for educating interculturally competent individuals. In spite of this fuzzy scenario and also as a result of it, ICC has caught the attention of researchers in the country who have striven to examine the challenges more deeply and learn about the current state of ICC, particularly among pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers in the country as can be seen next.

Barletta (2009), in addition to the review conducted at the international level, examined 20 monographs written by Colombian in-service language teachers upon completion of a course they took on English language teaching. In line with the problems discussed earlier, the results of the analysis of the monographs evidenced several issues that were common among the teachers. It was seen that the concept of culture was rarely defined, and when it was, an

ambiguous and essentialist view prevailed. Furthermore, ICC was thought to be implied and automatically acquired by learners as they advance in their proficiency in the language. Another persistent issue was the fact that the teachers favored native speakerism. They claimed that they trained their students to interact with native speakers in the tourism sector, and that was why they had to be taught “standard” English.

Another problem that stood out was the lack of coherence between what the Colombian Ministry of Education states should be taught and what they assess. In other words, policymakers highlight the importance of ICC and have formulated guidelines that promote its development; however, they are also in charge of designing and administering a national standardized test which is a requirement to pursue a college degree in the country, but the test does not assess ICC at all. In the foreign language section, it aims to assess purely linguistic aspects. This issue is reflected in language teachers as well. Initially, they claim that developing ICC should be one of the priorities of the educational process in the country; however, teachers suddenly switch to talking about preparing learners to pass the standardized test.

Considering the issues discussed above, Barletta (2009) proposes a number of possible solutions to cope with such problems which are common in the Colombian context and abroad. The author states the following could be taken as a basis to start working on the implementation of ICC; as for which ones, she clarifies, depends on the context where they will be tried. Among the possibilities, Barletta (2009) mentions: promoting interdisciplinary work that can nourish the way in which ICC is implemented in language programs; re-examining the worth that certain cultures are given over others in an attempt to make learners aware that all cultures deserved to be valued; holding discussions regarding stereotypes; developing syllabi and materials with tasks that feature analysis of language use, behaviors, responses, and values of individuals from different cultures; adjusting the curriculum of teacher education programs so that these explicitly incorporate ICC; prompting teachers to incorporate and evaluate the

cultural component in their lessons; finally, organizing conferences where ICC is at the center of discussion. Barletta (2009) also maintains that Colombian policy makers should establish concrete standards for the development of ICC. Thus, teachers would have a clearer idea of the knowledge and skills their learners need to develop. Similarly, the author asserts, national standardized tests should include ICC as one of the components to be evaluated. It would be possible, in this way, to grant ICC the importance it deserves and the attention other areas receive. Finally, the author concludes by stating that foreign language teaching should go beyond its instrumental use; it should be seen as the scenario to promote “better relationships among human beings on earth for the mutual benefits of all who interact in order to make our planet a better place to live” (Barletta, 2009, p. 156).

Given the importance that ICC has gained globally, one may say that, in the years following Barletta’s (2009) study, at least some of the problems the author addressed would be solved. However, more recent research reveals that not much progress has been made in that regard. One clear example of this claim is the evidence provided by Olaya and Gómez (2013) who conducted a qualitative study that included 51 pre-service English teachers in the 5th semester of undergraduate programs at three Colombian universities. The purpose of the study was to identify the participants’ perceptions and attitudes of the incorporation of culture in the English lessons they took in order to determine their level of understanding of ICC. The researchers used three data collection instruments: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of the syllabi. The information gathered was first coded and then triangulated to check for consistency. The analysis yielded the following findings: the pre-service teachers in the study had a traditional and static view of culture and defined it based on surface features. As for ICC, most of the participants gave a partial definition of the construct; others did not provide a definition, and others mistakenly defined it as communicative competence. On another note, when asked about the cultural topics they studied in class, the vast majority

mentioned aspects related to surface culture; only 8 out of the 51 participants affirmed they had addressed historical and social aspects, but they were not able to pin-point which ones. Another interesting finding of the study was related to autonomous research on culture. The participants affirmed that they did their own research on cultural aspects outside the classroom. However, their answers showed that most of them searched for information on the American or British cultures and surface aspects; only a few of them were interested in topics such as politeness and slang, and just one had looked for information on behaviors, expressions, and accents in other cultures.

The information above led Olaya and Gómez (2013) to draw three main conclusions. First, the instruction that pre-service teachers receive in the teaching programs needs to be revised so that they widen their view of culture and ICC, thus being better prepared EFL teachers. Inside the teaching programs, a different approach to teaching culture should be adopted so that deep cultural aspects are brought to discussion. Second, critical thinking and the ability to interpret cultural information should be encouraged if one seeks to educate interculturally competent individuals. Third, teacher education programs at universities should make ICC explicit in their curriculum and syllabi, and to actually develop ICC, culture should not be approached as a composite of facts and figures about a country but from a more critical and analytical perspective. As future teachers, the participants of the study should be guided to make culture part of their lessons in a way that they promote the development of ICC in their students as well. In this way, it might be possible to contribute to educating individuals better prepared to face the challenges of globalization.

More recently, Peña-Dix (2018) conducted an exploratory interpretive study that examined the perceptions of 5 pre-service and 20 in-service Colombian English language teachers regarding existing or prospective ICC practices. The main purpose of the study was to investigate how close the participants' practices, beliefs, and professional self-concepts were

to an envisaged intercultural teacher. To achieve this objective, the researcher made use of questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

The results made three main aspects evident, and these were congruent with some of the issues that were discussed by Barletta (2009). First, the participants provided varied definitions of culture that ranged from those with essentialist to those with non-essentialist views. Second, regarding the importance and role of culture in English language teaching, most of the respondents expressed that culture is indeed relevant in the area. However, they were likely to treat the two separately, which is the most common tendency among language educators (see section 2.2 for discussion on detachment of language and culture). Furthermore, when asked which cultures they would address in their lessons, participants showed preference towards nations in the inner circle (i.e., the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada). As for the incorporation of culture, it was also found that this was taught mostly incidentally; it was not a systematic part of English language lessons. Third, in terms of knowledge of ICC, the participants did not seem to have a clear idea of what ICC implies. Those who claimed that ICC was part of their lessons and others who expressed their willingness to develop ICC in their students did not appear to go beyond tackling declarative knowledge and sometimes stereotypes of a culture.

Based on these findings, Peña-Dix (2018) asserts that many participants have a positive attitude towards ICC teaching. Nonetheless, the limited understanding of the competence and lack of clear instruction on how to integrate the intercultural dimension in their praxis could account for the participants' tendency to focus only on the linguistic part of the foreign language learning process and also for the absence of practices that lead learners to develop ICC. Peña-Dix (2018) argues that language teacher education programs and language policies in Colombia are, although not the only ones, highly responsible for the neglect or omission of the intercultural component in English language teachers' practices. The author claims that

foreign language education in Colombia should systematically include intercultural education. This could provide language teachers with some guidance to explore the dimensions of ICC, and therefore be able to assist their learners in the development of this competence and cope with “the unpredictability of intercultural encounters” (Peña-Dix, 2018, p. 177). Finally, and in line with what has been mentioned, Peña-Dix (2018) suggests that ICC teaching in the Colombian context should have its grounds on three constructs: Byram’s ICC (1997) model, critical thinking, and reflective teaching.

In a more international context, Ramos-Holguín et al. (2019) carried out a document analysis to establish the concept of interculturality that is adopted in foreign language teacher education in four countries: Spain, Mexico, Chile, and Colombia. The study consisted of two stages. The first one was the examination of documentary sources found in databases from the year 2000 to 2015. The second one was the selection of 25 articles that were the result of studies conducted in the four countries. The analysis demonstrated that the concept of interculturality in foreign language teacher education is just emerging but has gained importance in Europe and Latin America.

The results showed that, in literature, interculturality is perceived as a pedagogical process whose relevance is a consequence of global demands and not the product of local and social construction. That is to say, the attention that interculturality is starting to receive is mostly due to its instrumental facet. In this sense, developing ICC could be considered an enabling feature to better face immigration, internationalization processes, and competitiveness in a globalized world. In addition, it was seen that interculturality is conceived as a concept connected to ethnicity instead of cultural diversity. Finally, the documents examined showed that research is being conducted in relation to interventions to foster ICC in the language learning process so that learners improve their capacity to interact with individuals from a

different culture. From this perspective, it is assumed that teacher training programs must include an intercultural component if they aim at offering quality education.

The claims regarding the challenges of implementing ICC presented so far are ratified by Rojas-Barreto (2019). The researcher carried out a study that aimed to identify the intercultural profile of a group of English professors from Colombia by examining their conceptions and beliefs in relation to the development of ICC in the English classroom. To achieve this objective, the researcher administered a questionnaire that was answered anonymously by 70 English teachers working at eight public universities.

The data collected revealed that, in general, the participants with a higher academic profile seemed to have a better understanding of ICC and its implication than those with a lower level of schooling. In spite of this, when asked about their practices, the responses made it evident that the promotion of ICC was limited to the transmission of knowledge about a culture and aspects that usually appear in textbooks. When it comes to activities conducive to the development of ICC, these were very scarce or absent. In congruence with the results of prior studies referenced in this dissertation (Barletta, 2009; Peña-Dix, 2018), most participants in Rojas-Barreto's (2019) study affirmed that their lessons mostly focused on the linguistic aspects of the language and little or no time was devoted to fostering the development of ICC. The teachers involved in the study argued that this situation was the result of three main causes: the lack of proper training that would prepare them to incorporate ICC in their lessons; the limited class time they generally have, which forces them to stick to the linguistic contents of the syllabus; and the lack of awareness regarding the relevance that ICC has in their students as language learners, as future professionals, or as socially committed beings.

In sum, Rojas-Barreto (2019) found that the participants had some insights into the concept and the relevance of ICC. Their strategies to materialize the competence, however, were limited transmitting cultural aspects based on topics featured in the textbook. On this

basis, the researcher affirms that the importance of ICC should be brought to the attention of the entire academic community in public universities so that sound actions are enforced to lead the institutions to internationalization processes, coherent with the existing demands worldwide.

The issues discussed above as well as the recommendations made to ameliorate the existing conditions are supported by Esteban-Núñez (2021). This descriptive case study involved a group of five pre-service language teachers at a public university in Colombia and intended to explore their knowledge of ICC as well as their opinion on how they were approaching this competence in their lesson plans. The data were collected through a survey, semi-structured interviews, and the lesson plans the participants had designed.

The results indicated that the participants had a partial understanding of the competence. In their answers, they defined ICC by referring to interaction between cultures, and when asked about the cultural elements that they would address in their lessons, they agreed on superficial aspects such as holidays, customs, food, religion, and music, and did not mentioned others that are not that evident such as beliefs and values. As for the role that ICC plays in their lessons as student-teachers and its relevance, the participants expressed that the competence, although not developed all the time, is indeed an important part of the English lessons they take; however, their answers also evidenced that in the lessons culture and language were treated separately, prioritizing language over ICC.

After analyzing the information collected, Esteban-Núñez (2021) concluded that the participants identify some aspects of ICC but not completely, which hinders their possibility to incorporate ICC in their future teaching practices. Considering the voids that the participants of the study displayed, Esteban-Núñez (2021) recommends that the curriculum in the language teaching program should be adjusted in a way that it incorporates the elements necessary to prepare pre-service teachers as intercultural individuals, or at least to familiarize them with the

theoretical foundations to achieve this purpose. In the same vein, the author suggests raising awareness among pre-service teachers of the need to align language education with the current needs, and also providing opportunities for them to realize the value that their own culture and others have, which makes them worthy of being reflected on and analyzed.

Based on the information given by some of the most prominent studies on ICC conducted in Colombia and other nations, it is possible to infer that in more than a decade, no major advances for the operationalization of ICC in the language classroom have been evidenced, and the challenges for its overall implementation persist and their roots are basically the same worldwide. To begin with, a recurrent issue has to do with the fact that language and culture are still treated as separate entities that do not occur in tandem but simply coexist; this situation causes culture to be relegated and seen as less important than the linguistic components of the language. Regarding the inclusion of cultural elements into the lessons, a transmissionist and stereotypical paradigm prevails. In other words, language teacher educators, and consequently pre-service teachers, tend to focus on factual and shallow information rather than deep aspects of culture. In this sense, discussing culture in the language classroom would do more harm than good. This would only perpetuate stereotypes about cultures instead of actually developing the skills that ICC involves.

The findings in the studies also coincide in that the conceptualization of ICC among pre-service and in-service teachers is still unclear or inaccurate, as seen in Olaya and Gómez (2013), Ramos-Holguín et al. (2019), and Chao (2016). In addition, even if teachers acknowledge its importance and claim to promote this competence, what they actually do indicates otherwise. Also, an aspect that, in fact motivated this dissertation, is the evident lack of synergy between policy makers, institutions, teachers, and even the evaluation system. In this regard, the authors agree on the idea that concrete measures regarding the materialization of ICC need to be implemented; these include the formal inclusion of the intercultural

component in the curriculum of language teacher education programs and proper teacher training and guidance to include ICC in their lessons.

A positive aspect that needs to be pointed out is that in spite of the problematic scenario, the participants in the studies manifest their positive views and willingness to incorporate ICC in their teaching, as reported by Olaya and Gómez (2013). This can be considered as a valuable starting point that together with the adjustments and opportunities for language educators and pre-service teachers to receive adequate training could yield concrete results (Atmojo & Putra, 2021; Barletta, 2009; Chao, 2016; Esteban-Nuñez, 2021; Moloney et al., 2020; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018; Ramos-Holguín et al., 2019; Rojas-Barreto, 2019; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020). These actions should be the product of the cooperation between the actors involved, namely education authorities at all levels and those who actually have to enforce the rules and guidelines proposed.

4.7. Pedagogical Experiences Involving Intercultural Communicative Competence in Colombia

Taking the evidence of the descriptive studies in section 4.6 of this chapter as a basis, it can be said that a deep transformation in the Colombian education system towards the development of ICC requires a great effort and time and, ideally, should start at the source of the issue: language teacher education programs which are responsible for the preparation of pre-service teachers, as they are the ones in charge of bridging theory and practice, and will also be directly involved in the education of young individuals in schools, or will possibly become language educators themselves (Moloney et al., 2020). For the time being, attempts in the form of pedagogical experiences have been made to establish how particular groups respond towards certain strategies for the development of ICC. Although their effect cannot be generalized given that most of them are small-scale studies, the results can give insightful information and motivate others to test the strategies proposed or, as is the case of this dissertation, be part of

an entire program with a sequence of activities and tasks. In this vein, it is worth addressing a group of pedagogical experiences that have taken place in Colombia.

To begin with, Ramos-Holguín (2013) conducted a study that aimed to help future language teachers develop the intercultural skills described by Byram (1997). The research involved 40 pre-service teachers in the 5th semester of a foreign language teaching program at a public university in Colombia. To achieve this objective, Ramos-Holguín (2013) implemented an intercultural approach as part of a compulsory course named *Pedagogical and Research Project IV*. Specifically, the researcher connected the analysis and reflection of cultural and intercultural issues to the main contents of the course: evaluation, assessment, and testing. Some of the tasks the participants had to complete focused on analyzing educational systems in different countries and finding out the reasons behind certain practices (e.g., standardized testing), their usefulness, and applicability. After 16 weeks of combining the contents of the subject matter and element of ICC, it was seen that the participants became more aware of social and cultural aspects related to education and were able to analyze, interpret, and contextualize certain practices in that area as well. In addition, they improved their ability to recognize the positive and negative elements of other cultures and their own, at least when it comes to educational systems.

Similarly, Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) reports the findings of a pedagogical intervention that aimed to explore how a group of advanced pre-service EFL teachers addressed topics related to deep culture (invisible aspects) and determine if they advanced in terms of critical ICC. This study stemmed from a previous need analysis that showed that these learners had only been taught surface cultural features. Then, to achieve the purpose of the study, Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) chose complex elements of Colombian and US cultures and were presented through four authentic stories of both countries. The participants, 27 in total, had to complete tasks that included group work, formal presentations, and short written responses. In all of

them, the participants engaged in discussions about controversial issues such as social class, poverty, cultural loss, prejudice, individualism, the American dream, and others that prompted learners to take a critical stance. The data were collected through interviews, field notes, and response papers and were coded for further analysis. The findings indicated that the pre-service teachers that made part of the study were capable of providing critical opinions about topics related to deep culture; they were able to discover, compare, and view Colombian and US cultures from an outsider's point of view, which are indicators of the development of ICC.

Based on the results of the pedagogical intervention, Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) asserts that EFL teacher educators should guide learners to the analysis of deep culture elements instead of perpetuating stereotypes by only presenting shallow information about a culture. Moreover, the author highlights that it is possible to integrate language and culture in the EFL classroom, as demonstrated by his study in which learners developed their language skills and ICC concomitantly. For Gómez-Rodríguez (2015), creating opportunities for pre-service language teachers to analyze deep culture and thus develop their ICC should be of primary importance. This specific population will soon be practicing teachers and, based on the Colombian regulations (see Colombian Suggested Curriculum, 2016b), they will not only have to teach the linguistic aspects of a language (English in this case), but also develop ICC in their students. Therefore, if instructed since they are pre-service teachers, they will be better equipped to boost their students' critical thinking and ICC, required nowadays to thrive in the globalization process.

In line with the above, Carreño (2018) presents the results of a pedagogic experience that took place with undergraduate language students enrolled in a course titled Intercultural Studies and Local Identities. The course had been previously designed for Colombian students, but during the semester in which the study took place, four out of the six students enrolled in it were from other countries (three from Germany and one from Haiti); for that reason, the

researcher decided to adjust the existing syllabus so that it would be suitable for the international students, and efforts were made to learn more about other cultures given the varied audience. The class met twice a week for 2-hour sessions during 16 weeks. The lessons revolved around topics such as minority groups, national identity, and racism, which were the source of discussion, and the overall purpose was to raise learners' awareness of the relevance that interculturality has nowadays. The data were collected through learners' replies to a given topic proposed every week by the teacher on an online forum. Additional data were gathered through a survey, which yielded information on the impact that the course had had on the development of their ICC. The results of this pedagogical experience revealed that the participants became more interculturally aware and learned to appreciate differences. Carreño (2018) points out that developing ICC has to do with creating opportunities for learners to learn from one another and also with fostering reflection, analysis and development of interpersonal relationships. Finally, Carreño (2018) suggests that ICC should be a priority in higher education, not because students may travel abroad, but because all individuals have to face cultural differences on a daily basis. Thus, preparing them to be interculturally competent will enable them to properly interact in numerous scenarios regardless of cultural backgrounds.

In the same vein, Gómez-Rodríguez (2018) conducted a case study to determine if a group of four EFL learners' ICC was fostered by being involved in critical reflection of cultural topics presented in news. The topics for discussion included injustice, gender inequality, and stereotypes, and the data were collected through field notes, logs, and a questionnaire. The findings revealed that news helped the learners analyze cultural aspects such as beliefs and practices related to deep culture. Similarly, it was seen that the participants were able to interpret and evaluate ideologies from other cultures. Overall, it was possible to conclude that news, as authentic material and accompanied by proper instruction, could be a valuable source to promote ICC in EFL education.

In broad terms, the pedagogical experiences discussed in this section yielded positive results, and consequently suggest that there exist techniques, materials, and tasks that can contribute to the materialization of ICC in the language classroom. That is, there are alternatives to bring ICC to practice despite the numerous challenges. Analyzing the driving principles behind the activities to develop ICC, it can be affirmed that the results support the claim made in Chapter 2, regarding the idea that critical awareness, critical thinking, analysis, and reflection are at the heart of an individual's development of ICC.

Furthermore, the interventions presented imply that a teacher's knowledge of the theoretical grounds of ICC is a pivotal factor to develop the competence in his/her learners, and so is his/her willingness to create experiences for such a task. In other words, it is the convergence between a teacher's preparation and the desire to replicate what he/she already knows that would lead to educating interculturally competent individuals. Therefore, training opportunities for teachers at all educational levels should be offered (Barletta, 2009; Esteban-Núñez, 2021; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018; Rojas-Barreto, 2019), as they need to develop ICC themselves before they can promote this competence among their students (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Also, if they learn an array of possibilities, they could probably overcome problems such as viewing culture as a static system, promoting native speakerism, or separating language and culture, among others (see Barletta, 2009 for a description of the most recurrent problems). Even though language teachers working in different settings should take part in ICC training, pre-service language teachers are of particular importance since they are probably the ones responsible for the shift towards intercultural education and the creation of scenarios to place cultures into the language classroom once they join the workforce (Esteban-Núñez, 2021).

The above constitutes the basis for the present study, which also seeks to create opportunities for Colombian pre-service teachers to develop ICC, thus preparing them to

follow the same path with their future students. This study differs from the pedagogical experiences previously cited in that it intends not only to put a range of tasks to the test but also to track the participants progress by means of a pre-test and a post-test. In addition, the proposal made in this dissertation is not an isolated attempt to encourage deeper analysis of cultural aspects; it has a sound basis (see section 2.6 for founding principles) and a structure that moves from raising awareness to more complex cognitive processes that involve critical thinking and metapragmatic analysis. The latter, which has not been included in prior studies involving ICC in Colombia, directly tackles the long-held separation of language and culture by merging them in a way that they do not simply coexist but interrelate.

4.8. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 4 has provided an overview of the Colombian policies that frame ICC as part of the entire education system. Initially, the chapter gives an account of the programs and initiatives that have been advanced in the country regarding language education in schools; the purpose was to give an idea of what the now pre-service teachers will have to face when they start their professional practice, and also demonstrate the historical inconsistencies in terms of language education; such incongruences are evident in different areas, and nowadays ICC is one of them. This scenario suggests that even though there exist objectives and plans, there are major reasons that impede their implementation; when it comes to ICC, its theoretical basis and the means for its operationalization lack clarity.

Concerning higher education, ICC has gained even more importance as a founding part of internationalization processes, which are compulsory for Colombian higher education institutions to be accredited. Nonetheless, there are conceptual voids in this regard, and that represents a burden for ICC to be made real as well. In language teaching programs, specifically, ICC should become a consistent part of their curriculum, not only because it contributes to internationalization, but also because they have become highly responsible for

educating future language teachers who are able to develop this competence among schoolers from preschool to 11th grade, as stated in the Colombian regulations.

Furthermore, this chapter reviews previous exploratory studies conducted in Colombia that focus on pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers. The results, in general, are consistent with those obtained in other countries regarding the participants' positive perceptions and willingness to incorporate culture as well as ICC in the EFL classroom. However, the findings also reveal the existing problems when it comes to the conceptualization of ICC, the separation of language and culture, the incorporation of merely superficial cultural elements in language lessons, the lack of joint work between policy makers, institutions, and teachers, and the options available to materialize the construct.

In addition to the review of exploratory research in the educational field, Chapter 4 reports the results of four pedagogical interventions that have taken place in Colombia in an attempt to fill the current void concerning the development of ICC in EFL classrooms. The findings suggest that, in spite of the complexities of ICC, the teachers' knowledge of the theoretical grounds of ICC and his/her willingness to create opportunities for its development are the starting point to materialize ICC and make it a conventional practice in the language classroom.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology adopted to meet the objectives of this study. It comprises 9 sections that will tackle the theoretical methodological grounds of the study, the setting in which it took place, the participants, as well as the methods, procedures, and instruments used to collect data, implement the intervention, and analyze the results. Their selection was made on the basis of their suitability to answer the research questions, in the first place, and subsequently address the purpose of this study, which is to explore to what extent an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. Table 4 illustrates the research questions, together with the corresponding hypotheses.

Table 4

Research questions and hypotheses.

Research questions	Hypotheses
How does a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers conceive ICC?	The participants will not display full knowledge or will have mistaken conceptions regarding ICC.
What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?	Participants' ICC level will be incipient or very basic.
To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?	The intervention consisting of a training course and LS will boost participants' ICC level.
To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?	An intervention consisting of a training course and LS will improve the participants' future teaching practices.

As can be seen in Table 4, four research questions were formulated in an attempt to guide the investigation addressing this purpose. For each research question, a hypothesis was drawn. In general terms, the hypotheses point to the idea that the participants' initial level of ICC is incipient, but this and therefore their teaching practices could improve with the intervention that this study proposes, as will be explained.

Hypothesis 1: The participants will not display full knowledge or will have mistaken conceptions regarding ICC.

Studies conducted in Colombia and other contexts exploring EFL teachers' conception of ICC (e.g., Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018) have indicated that the teachers' understanding of the competence is not solid. Olaya and Gómez (2013), for instance, found that most participants in their study were not able to accurately define ICC, and others mistakenly equated it to communicative competence. Likewise, Peña-Dix (2018) reported that the participants in her study had a limited understanding of the competence.

Hypothesis 2: The participants' ICC level will be incipient or very basic.

On the one hand, considering the intricacies of ICC, it is believed that the competence cannot be developed incidentally while learning a second or a foreign language (Crozet et al., 1999; Mai & Binh, 2020). The skills, attitudes, and values immersed in ICC need to be purposefully addressed in the classroom, and learners need to be instructed (Ingram & O'Neill, 2002). On the other hand, it has been seen that ICC is generally not articulated within the educational process (Moloney et al., 2020), and it usually plays a secondary role in universities (Dervin et al., 2020). In Colombia, even though ICC is included in documents issued by the Ministry of Education (see Suggested Curriculum), such documents do not provide a clear path to operationalize the competence; what is more, in them, the concept is even blurry. In a similar vein, a study conducted in the country, revealed, upon its completion, that no courses explicitly addressing ICC were found in foreign language programs (Cabrales-Vargas & Loaiza-Trujillo,

2018). Under these circumstances, it could be said that in Colombia, those enrolled in the educational system, and more specifically foreign language pre-service teachers do not receive the training needed to develop ICC. As a consequence, it could be affirmed that their ICC level will tend to be incipient.

Hypothesis 3: An intervention consisting of a training course and LS will boost participants' ICC level.

Studies such as those conducted by Ramos-Holguín (2013) and Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) have indicated that providing learners with opportunities to explore and engage in discussions on cultural issues, critically analyze cultural aspects of one's own culture and that of others have yielded positive results with regard to ICC. In those studies, the participants developed the ability to analyze aspects related to deep culture, recognize negative and positive aspects of their and other cultures. According to the authors, those gains are indicators of the development of ICC.

With regard to LS, even though no studies that tackle specifically LS to develop ICC, the approach fosters reflexivity, awareness of one's own and others' actions (Armstrong, 2011; Norton, 1997; Schön, 1987). Those aspects are founding elements of ICC. In this vein, it could be affirmed that LS may also contribute to enhancing the competence.

Hypothesis 4: An intervention consisting of a training course and LS will improve participants' future teaching practices.

Purposeful efforts to develop ICC among EFL pre-service teachers could have an impact on their future practices. Increasing their awareness and knowledge of ICC would be the first step towards their likelihood to integrate the competence in their teaching, as Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) affirms. However, it is necessary to tackle the difficulties that operationalizing ICC represents, and that is where LS comes to play. The approach could be the link between theory and practice. In this regard, research on LS (e.g., Arslan, 2018; Bayram

and Bikmaz, 2021), and more especially the study carried out by Walsh (2019) suggest that the collaborative work involved in LS benefit the creation of strategies to materialize complex constructs, in Walsh' (2019) case, intercultural understanding.

In order to better understand the methodological grounds that support this study, the next section will address the type of research that frames it, the stages, and the procedures involved.

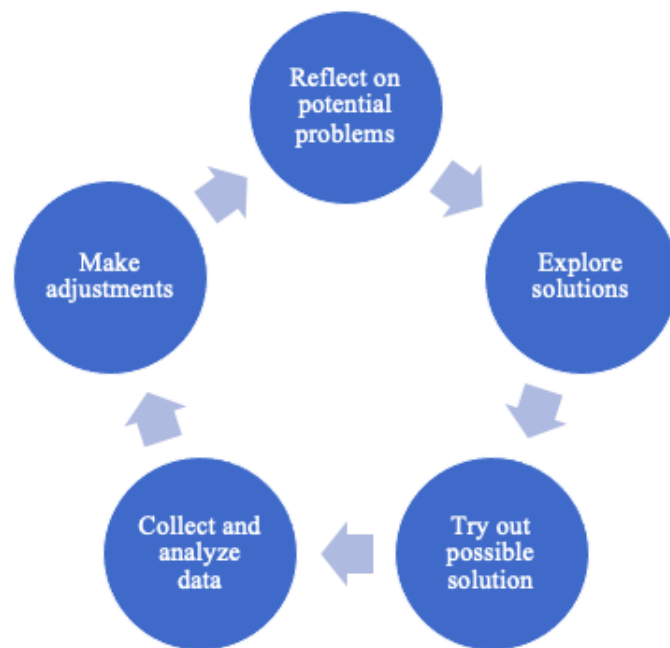
5.1. Type of Research

In view of the nature and objective of this study, it goes in line with action research. Burns (2009) conceptualizes action research by defining its two constituents: action and research. For the author, the former deals with an intervention within a social context (e.g., school, organization, classroom) to generate improvement or changes. The latter has to do with the systematic observation that leads to the initial action and then of the outcomes of such action in order to analyze its effectiveness or the need for further changes. From this perspective, Burns claims “the driving purpose of the action research process is to bridge the gap between the ideal (the most effective ways of doing things) and the real (the actual ways of doing things) in the social situation” (2009, p. 290). The applicability of its results has made action research a common practice in the field of education, including applied linguistics and language teaching (Burns, 2010). In this regard, Mackey and Gass state that “action research is one form of teacher-initiated research” (2022, p. 380); that is, it stems from the teacher's own concerns to address and possibly solve a problem or need that has been identified generally in the classroom or school. To achieve that objective, action research follows a clear schema: educators first study the problems they face on a daily basis to detect the one that requires especial attention, try to find a possible solution, implement it, collect and analyze data, and make adjustments based on the findings (Creswell, 2012). It is believed that action research is not linear and does not end when the findings are obtained; instead, it is a process of “repeating

and revising procedures and interpretations” (Creswell, 2012, p. 584). Figure 4 depicts the process immersed in this type of research.

Figure 4

Stages in Action Research



Note. Adapted from ‘*Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*’ (4th ed.), by J. Creswell, 2012, p. 580

Figure 4 indicates the stages of action research as proposed by Creswell (2012). It can be seen that the process is cyclical, as teaching practices require continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustments if improvement is sought. In this study, reflection on the possible problems in the teaching/learning process led to the identification of the low ICC level of a group of pre-service teachers. While exploring the possible solutions, an intervention consisting in an ICC training course and LS was proposed as an alternative to address their weaknesses in this field. Subsequently, the intervention took place (see section 5.8.2 for description of the implementation process). Data were collected through a pre-test, a post-test, and a rubric to assess the lessons created during LS. Then, the information was analyzed to

determine the effects of the training course and LS. Finally, some conclusions regarding the implementation of the intervention and its effects were drawn and suggestions were provided so that other researchers or teachers can incorporate them if they are to tackle the same problem.

In addition to the above, Mills (2011) highlights a number of aspects that account for the transformative nature of action research; among them, the author mentions its democratic approach to education, potential to generate change in schools and empower individuals through collaboration projects, capability to connect research and practice, and create scenarios for teachers to test their ideas. In the same vein, this research is meant to be shared with other educators, school, and community (Creswell, 2012). This way, others can also take ideas to generate the necessary adjustments within their own classroom or school. These characteristics fit perfectly with the purpose of the present study: it originated from the reflection on the perceived mismatch between the theory behind ICC and how it could be brought to practice; it intends to test a set of theory-informed strategies and analyze their effectiveness in promoting the development of ICC; finally, it seeks to inform the educational community of the results and possibly encourage them to take their professional practice to a more investigative stance.

In terms of research methodology, action research draws on quantitative and qualitative methods by themselves or combined to collect and analyze data. In this study, both methods are evident in the data collection instruments, which include a questionnaire with open-ended and multiple-choice questions and the Intercultural Incidents Task. Hence, besides being considered action research, this study can also be classified as mixed-methods, in which both quantitative and qualitative data converge to provide a better understanding of the research problem. It is important to highlight that a mixed-methods type of research does not simply involve gathering information about an issue in two different ways; instead, it requires, as Creswell puts it, “merging, integrating, linking or embedding the two strands (quantitative and qualitative)” (2012, p. 535). Mixed-methods research is believed to make use of the strengths

of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data can be statistically analyzed, thus enabling the researcher to look for trends in the sample examined. Qualitative data, conversely, comprises the participants' perspectives on the issue under study. These generally require more complex analysis and interpretation and contribute additional details which cannot be obtained through more quantitative means.

In order to guide and ease the data collection process and analysis, six major designs have been identified within mixed-methods research (Creswell et al., 2003): sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, sequential transformative, concurrent triangulation, concurrent nested, and concurrent transformative. The type of design is determined by four parameters including implementation of data collection, priority given to quantitative or qualitative data, stage of integration of quantitative and qualitative data, and theoretical perspective (Creswell et al., 2003). In this regard, this study can be classified as concurrent triangulation. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously to either confirm the findings or possibly find inconsistencies. The data can be integrated at any stage during the research process, but it usually happens at interpretation of results. Regarding priority, it is generally given to both types of data, but it could be given to any of them if the research requires it to. In terms of theoretical perspective, although not a requirement nor exclusive to this type of design, it may include the researcher's empirically and theoretically informed assumptions about the study (Creswell et al., 2003). Table 5 explains how the characteristics of the present study fit into the parameters mentioned previously and account for the concurrent triangulation design.

Table 5*Characteristics of the Study that Determine the Type of Design*

	Parameter	Characteristics of concurrent triangulation
1	Implementation of data collection	Both qualitative and quantitative data collected at the same time
2	Priority given to quantitative or qualitative data	Equal priority for both
3	Stage of integration of data	At collection and interpretation
4	Theoretical perspective	Action research

The information in Table 5 indicates how this study is in line with the concurrent triangulation design. In terms of the implementation of data collection, the process was done simultaneously through the same instrument with different sections that elicited both quantitative (e.g., Likert-scale surveys) and qualitative (e.g., open-ended questions) data. Regarding the priority given to data, it can be said that qualitative and quantitative data were treated with an equal level of relevance, as both types contributed evenly to answering the research questions. As for the integration of data, it occurred at two stages. It first took place during data collection through a single instrument, and it also occurred during the interpretation phase. Regarding the latter, the qualitative data were assigned codes and were grouped into themes in order to establish tendencies, which were later compared to the quantitative scores.

The above undergirds the decision to select action research and mixed-methods as the most appropriate methodological foundations to lead this study. In addition, following the methodological underpinnings of action research and mixed-methods, this study drew on quantitative and qualitative data to have a more complete picture of the participants' ICC perceptions and level of competence before and after the intervention.

The quantitative data of this study were collected through a Likert scale and the intercultural profile questionnaire taken from the INCA project (INCA Project Team, 2004). These data were subjected first, to a descriptive statistical analysis and then were processed using inferential statistics. The former was useful to summarize the main characteristics of the data collected, and the latter to establish statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test and between the control and experimental groups.

As for the qualitative data, that is, “the actual words of the people in the study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 535), they were gathered through a set of four open-ended questions, the analysis of five scenarios taken from the INCA project, and also the Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021), which consisted of five scenarios be analyzed by participants through critical reflection. Using both types of data was thought to be the most suitable approach for this study because quantitative and qualitative information add validity to the study, and also because the sections taken from the INCA project or the Intercultural Incidents Task alone would not suffice to analyze the different dimensions of ICC, specifically when it comes to the (meta)pragmatic part of it.

Finally, taking into account that this study ultimately aimed at testing the effects of an intervention (treatment) on the participants’ ICC level (outcome), it was necessary to work with an experimental and a control group. Following these lines, the study can be deemed a quasi-experiment, which Creswell defines as a procedure where “the investigator uses control and experimental groups but does not randomly assign participants to groups” (2009, p. 215). In this case, the participants were assigned through non-random sampling on the basis of convenience and accessibility.

5.2. Socio-cultural Background and Context of the Study

Looking at the broad picture, the study took place at a public university located in Pasto, the capital of the state of Nariño, in the south-west of Colombia. It is the only public university in

the region and enrolls over 13,000 undergraduate students who are mostly from Nariño and two other bordering states. In the region, there are 5 categories to classify the socio-economic status of the inhabitants; 1 and 2 are low, 3 middle, 4 upper-middle, and 5 upper class. With this in mind, it is easier to understand the data displayed in the statistical system of the institution²¹, where the figures show that over 10,000 out of the 13,000 students come from a low socio-economic status. Regarding minorities, the data shows that 134 students come from afro-descendant communities and 143 belong to indigenous groups. In the case of the latter, it is important to highlight that some of them speak Spanish as a second language.

Regarding the University, there are some aspects that are worth mentioning for the purpose of the study. The first is that the institution was *accredited* by the Colombian Ministry of Education in 2017 and reaccredited in 2023. That is, it is recognized as a university that meets high quality standards established by the government, among them, the sustainability of the institution in the long run and the ability to respond to the changes and challenges that today's world poses. In this sense, the institution needs to go in line with national bilingualism policies and immersed in them, but not exclusively, is the need to advance in the development of ICC. In this respect, ICC is an important part of the institutional guidelines as established in the Development Plan of the University and the national policies that were discussed in Chapter 4 in this dissertation.

In spite of the regulations, by revising official documents that guide the educational process (e.g., Colombian Suggested Curriculum), it is possible to see that there is no specific path that teachers and students could follow to advance in the development of the competence, which has been a recurrent phenomenon in the country as González-Moncada's (2007) and Sánchez-Solarte and Obando-Guerrero (2008) affirm. In such documents, it is possible to see

²¹ It is a system created to have easy access to information about current students and those who have already graduated in terms of overall number of students, number of students per program, school, socio-economic status, socio-cultural background, among others. The information is available at http://matriculas.udenar.edu.co/ocaranew2/udenarestadistica/ak_menu_estadisticas/ak_menu_estadisticas.php

that ICC is vaguely mentioned as part of the contents to be covered, but the way in which it should be dealt with is not specified, and that is what needs to be promptly addressed.

Narrowing the focus to the undergraduate program the participants of this study belong to, the following information stands out. It is a foreign language teaching program with a concentration in English. In this program, French is a minor, but students are qualified to teach either language. The program lasts 10 semesters, of 18 weeks each. From 1st to 8th semester, students take courses such as English and French communication, reading and writing, academic writing, notions of psychology, second language acquisition, methodology in language teaching, assessment, English and French literature, and notions of research. In the 9th and 10th semesters, apart from taking a number of courses, students need to do their practicum, usually in public primary and high schools in the city, and in such settings, they will have to develop ICC among their students as well, as established by the national guidelines (Suggested Curriculum of English).

It is important to remark that even though the students enrolled in the program receive instruction in key areas, the curriculum does not explicitly include a course on the field of pragmatics nor one specifically addressing ICC. It could be inferred that these areas are part of other courses. ICC, for instance, may be part of *Angloamerican Literature and Culture* or *Littérature Francophone e Culture*, courses that the students have to take in 10th semester. However, as discussed in section 4.5, the integration of this competence in courses of that sort may not be completely beneficial. Another possibility could be that both areas are simply not included.

5.3. Participants

The participants in this study were 40 pre-service teachers who were in the 8th or 9th semester of the foreign language program and were selected for the study on the basis of convenience and accessibility. Given the general characterization of the students enrolled in the university

and based on the information provided by the statistical system of the institution, it can be affirmed that the vast majority came from low and middle socio-economic status. Other personal characteristics include the fact that they all spoke Spanish as their L1, which is commonplace in the institution except for those students who belong to some minorities. Considering that the aim of this study is to test whether a specific intervention consisting of a training course and LS had an impact on the participants' ICC and their teaching practices, it was necessary to divide the participants in two groups: an experimental and a control group. All participants completed a pre-test and a post-test, but only the experimental group received the intervention. The intervention was offered in addition to the participants' study load for the semester.

The core characteristics of the participants in both groups were very similar. The experimental group was made up of 22 pre-service teachers, 82% females ($n = 18$) and 18% males ($n = 4$); 4 of the participants had spent a few days abroad in the past; 4 had been abroad for 3 months or more, and 2 of them interact with other cultures very often. As for the control group, it consisted of 18 pre-service teachers, 78% females ($n = 14$) and 12% males ($n = 4$), and their ages ranged from 21 to 38 (average: 24 years old). According to the data provided, 2 of the participants had previously been abroad for a short period of time, no more than 2 weeks; 3 had been abroad for a period of 3 months or more, and 1 of them claimed to interact with other cultures on a daily basis. The details concerning both groups have been summarized in Table 6.

Table 6*Characteristics of the Participants of the Study*

	Experimental	Control
Number of participants	22 Females: 18 Males: 4	18 Females: 14 Males: 4
Age	20-26 (average = 22)	21-38 (average = 24)
# participants who have stayed abroad for a short period of time.	4	2
# participants who have stayed abroad for 3 month or over	4	3
# participants who interact with other cultures on a daily basis	2	1

Adding to the characteristics of the participants of both groups, it can be affirmed that in terms of academic profile, the participants had a B2 level of proficiency in English, following the guidelines of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). This is the level they are expected to have achieved at this stage of instruction according to the curriculum of the undergraduate program. In order to ensure that they meet this goal, standardized proficiency tests are administered at a certain point in time throughout the study program. Since the main characteristics of the context and participants have been presented, it is now possible to turn to the description of the procedures, techniques, and instruments used to collect the data.

5.4. Data Collection Instruments

The instruments in any research study are crucial to gather the data needed to answer the research questions. This section details the ones used as a pre-test, intervention and post-test. Each instrument will be described as to how and why it was chosen, the modifications it suffered (if applicable) and the research question(s) it is intended to answer. Concerning the

intervention, an outline of the course designed for such purpose will be presented as well as the details of how it was structured and implemented. All the information as a whole will give an answer to the research questions and ultimately address the purpose of this study.

5.4.1. Pre-test

The purpose of the pre-test was to examine the participants' initial perceptions of culture in language teaching, ICC and its relevance in English lessons as well as their initial level of ICC. In addition, this instrument was used to obtain a demographic profile of the participants. In order to come up with an adequate instrument that would collect the information required to meet these objectives, first, it was necessary to bear in mind several aspects: a) The definition of ICC that was adopted in this study as well as the models. b) The research questions. c) The characteristics of the participants and the setting. In this sense, the instrument comprised six distinct sections organized as follows: personal information; four open-ended questions to examine the participants' understanding of culture and ICC as well as their possible practices integrating the concepts; a Likert scale for them to rate, according to their importance, eight elements that are generally part of language teaching, including culture; the intercultural profile questionnaire, aimed at determining general ICC level; five scenarios to analyze the participants' competence in five ICC dimensions; five intercultural incidents named Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021) to gather data regarding participants' ICC level in a way that the previous questionnaire was not designed to collect; that is, from a metapragmatic stance (see Appendix C for the complete version of the pre-test).

5.4.1.1. Personal information

This part of the pre-test, taken from the Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) project, was intended to collect the participants' personal details as well as information about prior

intercultural experiences they may have had. Apart from providing the learners' contact information, this section made it possible to have a clear idea of the participants' profile by asking questions related to how long they had been studying to be language teachers, the foreign language(s) they spoke and how they learned it/them, whether or not they had experience teaching languages, and others related to their prior or future intercultural experiences in and out of the country. In this part of the questionnaire, they had an additional section where they had the chance to write about any additional experiences they had had with people from another culture.

5.4.1.2. Participants' Perceptions of Culture, Teaching Practices, and Knowledge of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The purpose of this section was to assess the participants' perceptions of culture, a founding principle of ICC, their teaching practices regarding culture, and their notions of ICC. To achieve this objective, a set of four open-ended questions was included. The participants were instructed not to use any type of source to answer them, just their own knowledge and criteria. They were also told to clearly state that they did not have an answer if that was the case. The questions were:

1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words.
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) in your teaching practice?
4. What is intercultural competence for you?

5.4.1.3. Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture in Language Teaching.

This part of the pre-test aimed to find out, from the participants' point of view, how relevant culture is in language teaching, and thus obtain some information as to how they could possibly conduct their teaching practice. To do so, a Likert scale was created for the participants to rate, from 1 to 5, eight components that are generally part of language teaching with the purpose of

gauging the degree of relevance the participants gave to culture against the other elements.

Table 7 below illustrates this part of the pre-test.

Table 7

Likert scale – Place of Culture in Language Teaching

Based on your perception and experience as a teacher, provide a score for each of the following elements according to their relevance in your teaching practice. (cero (0) is not relevant - five (5) is highly relevant).

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar						
Vocabulary						
Speaking						
Listening						
Reading						
Writing						
Culture						
Pronunciation						

As Table 7 shows, the participants were asked to give a score from 0 to 5 to each of the eight elements in the list, depending on the degree of relevance that each item had for them. Their answers would inform about the importance that culture has over the other aspects or the opposite. The information collected regarding culture is vital because it could be considered as the starting point to subsequently include and promote the development of ICC.

5.4.1.4. Participants' General Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence

This part of the pre-test aimed to explore the participants' general ICC level and contribute to determine their initial stage in this regard. For this section, it was necessary to go through different stages to choose the most suitable tool to fulfill the objectives of this study. The first step was to review the instruments that had previously been designed and tested by experts or groups of experts. The comprehensive list of 44 instruments provided by Fantini (2009) served as a guide for this study, but more recent proposals were also reviewed and considered (e.g.,

AAC&U - Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric, Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), Kozai-intercultural-assessment, Intercultural Language Learning Profiler (ILL-P), Metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric). Then, each one of them was reviewed and a number of them were soon discarded since they were far from fitting the purpose of this research, as will be discussed next.

It was seen that a number of instruments were designed to assess mostly language proficiency (e.g., ACTFL Proficiency Scale & Guidelines, Assessment of Language Development (ALD), Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR), European Language Portfolio (ELP); others that were designed for a very specific audience were discarded as well (e.g., Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory, Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC), Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Scale (CCSS), Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ), Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire, Development Communication Index, Global Mindedness Scale (GMS), Global Team Process Questionnaire™ (GTP), Expatriate Profile (EP), Intercultural Living and Working Inventory (ILWI), International Mobility Assessment (IMA), Kozai-intercultural-assessment, Living and Working Overseas Inventory, Overseas Assignment Inventory (OAI), Personal Orientation Inventory (POI); and the ones that were designed to test very specific areas of knowledge instead of IC as a whole were excluded as well (e.g., GAP Test: Global Awareness Profile, Global Literacy Survey, Cultural Orientations Indicator® (COI®). Thereafter, the instruments that focused specifically on measuring ICC were considered for deeper evaluation.

With regard to the remaining instruments, it was necessary to resort to some criteria that would allow their objective evaluation. In this vein, Fantini's (2009) guidelines were used to select the instrument that best fit the needs of the study (see section 2.3 for list of guidelines). Apart from this, it was important to consider that the instrument to be used in this study could

be adapted to the intended audience without suffering major changes. On this basis, the instruments in Table 8, below, were seen as being closer to meeting these characteristics.

Table 8

Existing Tests Considered to Measure ICC

Instrument	Main features and objectives
Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley & Meyers, 1992)	It measures individuals' ability to adapt to other cultures taking as a basis the fact that those who have such ability share the others' feelings, perceptions and experiences regardless of their own cultural background
Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication (BASIC) (Olebe & Koester, 1989)	It measures intercultural communication, understood as the ability nonnative speakers have to differentiate effective behaviors from those that are not in a cross-cultural setting.
Cross-Cultural Assessor (CCA) (Richard Lewis Communications, 1989)	It is an online tool intended to measure individuals' understanding of themselves and others, and thus promote positive attitudes towards cultural differences.
Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI) (Bhawuk, & Brislin, 1992)	It measures intercultural sensitivity oriented toward the concepts of individualism and collectivism.
Peterson Cultural Style Indicator™ (PCSI) (Across Cultures, Inc., 1996)	These tools measure cross-cultural awareness and effectiveness focused on promoting global business success. They include a pre-test and a post-test to determine development of IC after training.
Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) (INCA project team, 2004)	This tool is aimed at diagnosing and recording the achievement in terms of intercultural communicative competence. It comprises six competences and three levels of achievement.
Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, 2011)	It is designed to measure individual and group intercultural competence based on individuals' attitudes towards cultural differences and willingness to be trained to become interculturally proficient. Those who take this test first need to be trained on how to take it.
Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021)	The task is designed to assess the level (initial, intermediate, mature) of ICC considering three dimensions: pragmalinguistic aspects, sociopragmatic aspects, and intercultural adaptability. The answers are assessed considering the metapragmatic and intercultural adaptability rubric.

Table 8 shows the result of the initial analysis, which consisted in selecting the instruments that focused specifically on measuring ICC. The instruments are listed

chronologically, considering the date they were first published as a reference, and are accompanied by information regarding their proponents and a brief description of the elements of ICC they focus on. Based on their evaluation, the feasibility of a possible adjustment, smooth administration, and cost effectiveness, the Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) project was chosen to be partially used together with the Intercultural Incidents Task assessed through the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural skills rubric.

As stated in section 2.3.1, the INCA project establishes that ICC is the composite of six dimensions, namely tolerance of ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect of otherness and empathy. These elements are assessed by means of a rubric provided in the project and assigned a level of competence: basic, intermediate, full. The individuals who are assessed with the INCA project are required to complete four sections: biographical information, the intercultural profile questionnaire, a set of scenarios that tackle specific dimensions, and role-plays. With regard to the Intercultural Incidents Task, thoroughly described in section 2.3.2, it is an instrument designed to measure metapragmatic awareness, which has much in common with ICC (McConachy, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). The Intercultural Incidents Task includes a series of intercultural incidents that contain pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features and also portray situations requiring communicative or psychological intercultural adaptability. The respondents are asked to critically analyze the incidents to later identify and put forward solutions of pragmalinguistic/sociopragmatic nature, or those related to intercultural adaptability. The elements in each of the three categories are assessed using the metapragmatic and intercultural adaptability rubric and assigned an initial, intermediate or mature level of competence.

It is true that the instruments are not flawless, and therefore, they all may be subject to improvement. Concerning the INCA project, it has been applauded but also criticized. On one

hand, regarding the apparent downside, Zerzová suggests that the use of the instrument may be slightly limited to the target audience it was initially designed for: engineers. The author affirms that “it may not be suitable for assessing language teachers' and students' IC” (2016, p. 6). In the same line, in a brief review of the instrument, González-Plasencia (2019) asserts that in its design, it is not clear which competences the items in the questionnaire are meant to assess. Also, according to the author, there is no empirical evidence of its internal validity or applicability to students with different nationalities. On the other hand, when it comes to the positive aspects, Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021) highlight the fact that the INCA project assesses ICC from multiple perspectives thanks to the series of instruments that make part of it, as described above. In addition, it is the product of joint efforts between workplace supervisors and trained assessors; that is, experts and those directly involved in its use were involved in its development.

González-Plasencia (2019) does acknowledge that given its features, components, and aims, the INCA goes in line with the conception of culture as a non-static construct. Besides, the instrument has an added didactic value because it provides the guidelines to possibly design activities that promote the development of IC inside the classroom. Furthermore, Prechtel and Davidson-Lund (2007) affirm, in their chapter devoted to the INCA project, that it can be used in a variety of situations in which individuals with different cultural backgrounds, namely values, beliefs, and behaviors, interact, but these interactions do not necessarily have to take place while being abroad. The authors go on to say that “the INCA project is generic in that it applies to all cultural groups. It identifies the range of competences needed in intercultural encounters, whatever the cultural groups involved” (Prechtel & Davidson-Lund, 2007, p. 471). Spencer-Oatey (2006) backs up this statement by pointing out that each cultural group may have their own particularities and therefore may require the development of specific

competences; however, this supposes an unrealistic effort. Then, ICC needs to be seen as generic so that it caters to different groups regardless of their cultural background.

Prechtel and Davidson-Lund (2007) recount how the members of the group in charge of the INCA project came themselves from different backgrounds and after an extensive discussion, they reached the conclusion that the instrument could be used as a diagnostic tool; Prechtel and Davidson-Lund call it “a snapshot in time of performance” (2007, p. 478) and add that the INCA project can also be a predictor of the assessee’s potential to develop IC. Furthermore, Kinast (2003 as cited in Prechtel & Davidson-Lund, 2007) affirms that even though the INCA project emerged from and for the engineering sector, it can be adapted to fit other audiences, which, according to the researcher, has proved possible. Its use has also sparked the interest of experts in fields such as health, business, linguistics, culture, and languages (Kinast, 2003 as cited in Prechtel & Davidson-Lund, 2007). Also, due to its characteristics, the INCA project can be used for different purposes, including diagnostic testing, recruitment, selection, continuing professional development, and the evaluation of intercultural development programmes (Kinast, 2003 as cited in Prechtel & Davidson-Lund, 2007, p. 486)

Finally, Prechtel and Davidson-Lund (2007) argue that the sole completion of one or all the sections in the INCA project could be seen as an intercultural experience, which accompanied with appropriate feedback could contribute to the development of IC. This information together with the assessment of the different available tests using the questions proposed by Fantini (2009) were the basis to opt for the INCA project as part of the pre-test to collect the initial data from participants.

Taking Prechtel and Davidson-Lund’s (2007) statements as a basis, in this study, the different components of the instrument were revised. The necessary adjustments were made

for it to be compatible with the intended audience of this study: pre-service teachers. Along these lines, the changes described below were made.

Concerning biographical information, the questions were modified so that they would be more contextualized for the audience. For instance:

Table 9

Adjustments Made to Biographic Information in INCA Questionnaire

Questions in the original questionnaire	Adapted questions
How many years have you worked for your company?	How long have you been studying in your current institution?
How often have you dealt with people from other countries in your professional life?	Do you work in a field related to your studies? If so, how often have you dealt with people from other countries in your professional life?
Have you ever worked in a work group with members from various cultures?	Have you ever worked/studied in a work group with members from various cultures?

As can be seen in Table 9, the adapted questions differed from the original ones in that they were more applicable to students, as is the case in this study. Besides these changes, an additional question was introduced: “Are you likely to travel abroad in the future? If so, where and how?” This question was aimed to understand the participants’ expectations and projections regarding future intercultural encounters.

When it comes to the intercultural profile questionnaire, no modifications were made. Even though some of them did not apply to the participants, the heading read: “*Maybe these statements are related to situations that you have not yet experienced. Please try to imagine such a situation and tick those situations that correspond best to your possible behavior and reaction*”. The instructions were clear enough for students to place themselves in such scenarios. Originally, this part is not to be evaluated by the assessor; it is only included to

provide the assessor with additional information on the assessee and his/her previous intercultural attitudes and experiences (INCA Project Team, 2004). However, in this study this part was adapted and used to collect quantitative data, which may add validity to the study.

As for the scenarios, a number of adjustments took place. Given that the original INCA project was designed for use with engineers in the workplace, certain parts of the situations and wording (i.e., *workplace* for *place of study*) were reformulated to make participants feel more familiar with the situations being described. With this in mind, Table 10 below shows the original situations versus the ones participants were presented.

Table 10

Adjustments Made to Scenarios in INCA Questionnaire

Scenarios in the original questionnaire	Scenarios with changes
Scenario 1. You have been selected to take part in an international work project with an associate European company.	You have been selected to take part in an international university project with an associate European company.
Scenario 2. A place in a young workers' hostel, together with some of your fellow nationals	A place in a hostel, together with some of your fellow nationals
You have been appointed to a placement in another country for training purposes.	You are spending a year in another country working as a language assistant.

Table 10 shows how the scenarios originally described in the INCA project were adjusted for the context where this study took place. The changes were made considering the situations that the participants of this study are likely to face so that they appear more real and natural to them. One of the scenarios and follow-up questions included in the pre-test can be seen in the excerpt below.

Scenario 2: Accommodation

Given the fact that one of the stated aims of your work placement abroad is that you would be able to find out more about another country and its way of life, please study the options for your accommodation. There is no one correct answer, as each option would offer some advantages and some disadvantages.

Rank the options in the order in which you yourself would choose, and then write a paragraph in which you explain why you chose your first option.

1. A place in a hostel, together with some of your fellow nationals
2. Living with a local family; you would have your own room
3. A small flat where you would cater for yourself

The reasons for my choice are as follows:

With respect to the video-based scenarios and role-plays, they were not included. The factors that determined the omission of these sections of the INCA project were of practical and theoretical nature. First, it was seen that the biographical part, the intercultural profile questionnaire, and the scenarios were useful enough to have a snapshot of the participants' general level of ICC. Time constraints also played a role in this decision since role-plays generally require "careful development and selection of scenarios, thorough debriefing, and a trained facilitator" (Deardorff, 2020, p. 8) that must be monitoring participants throughout. For these reasons, this activity was almost impossible to carry out at this stage of the study, as the number of subjects was 22. Concerning the theoretical nature of this decision, the early argument Ginsburg (1978 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) presents was also weighed in given that it could apply in the case of this study:

The technique is unreal with respect to the variables under study in that subjects report what they would do, and that is taken as though they did do it; the behavior displayed

is not spontaneous, even in the more active forms of role-playing; the verbal reports in role-playing are very susceptible to artefactual influence such as social desirability. (Ginsburg, 1978 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 215)

Likewise, Golato (2005) asserts that what learners say during the role-play tends to be a bit orchestrated, as the discourse they produce is intended to meet the teacher's expectations instead of being motivated by what they actually want to express. In addition, it is very likely that they have never been in a context such as the one where they have to perform the role-play nor have they been in such a role in real life; therefore, they could only make assumptions as to how someone in such a role and situation would act, probably without knowing how to do it if the situation were real (Golato, 2005).

Another important aspect Golato (2005) points out is the fact that while involved in the role-play, learners are able to express and act freely with no consequences, something that does not happen in real contexts where those details do matter. With this argument, the author reinforces the idea that role-plays are not an accurate sample of the language learners would use and how they would use it when interacting in real life.

Apart from the reasons discussed above, it is considered that role-plays may not be suitable in certain settings as they "require participants to 'perform' in front of others" (Deardorff, 2020, p. 8), and that could make some participants feel uneasy. In addition, it may be that not all participants are willing to take part in them; or it could also be that those who are more skilled take over and the chances to participate are not even for all participants (Yen et al., 2015). Taking these statements into consideration, if the technique had been used in this study, there would have been the risk of collecting inaccurate data that does not truly represent what participants really perceive, want to express, or would perform in actual intercultural situations. This, by no means, implies that role-play is not suitable for classroom use to support language teaching/learning, as empirical evidence has demonstrated.

Another reason that accounts for the omission of video-based scenarios and role-plays is the fact that an additional instrument was integrated as part of the pre-test: the Intercultural Incidents Task, assessed through the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021), which provides further information on the participants' ICC seen from another perspective. The purpose of using these instruments in tandem is to confront the data that both provide, thus having a view of the participants' competence from different angles.

5.4.1.6. Participants' Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability

The Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021), depicts 5 situations that involve intercultural misunderstandings. The task aims to elicit pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic responses as well as intercultural adaptability strategies from the participants. This instrument was designed taking as a basis the premise that pragmatic competence, and specifically, metapragmatic awareness is an important component, and therefore an indicator of ICC (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021). In the original study, the Intercultural Incidents Task was implemented to assess learners' ICC by having them analyze three written real-life intercultural encounters, which were taken from a pool of samples. Each of the selected samples included pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic elements and differed from one another in terms of social distance and power differences between the interlocutors. Once presented with the incidents, the participants were asked to analyze each one and answer the questions, in writing, through critical reflection. Excerpt 1 illustrates one of the intercultural incidents and the instructions the participants needed to follow.

Excerpt 1. Incident 3 in pre-test.

In my culture, it is very common to show how grateful you are when someone does a special favor for you. The incident took place during the interaction of a graduate

student and a professor of the program. I have had different meetings with my professor, who was an expert in a topic I was interested in. He had scheduled a couple of meetings and we were to meet for the last time in his office. I thought that it would be nice if I had a gesture of gratitude with my professor. The last minute had taken about an hour and I believed that this new meeting could possibly take the same time. I decided to bring a cup of coffee for the meeting and bought one for my professor. As I entered his office I announced “I brought you a cup of coffee”. He was shocked. He said that he was not allowed to receive any gifts from his students. As a teacher myself I understood the position he might be in. I explained to him that I understood, but I also explained that it was just a cup of coffee. I told him that I would leave the cup of coffee on his desk and that he could decide whether or not to take it. I explained that if he would decide not to take it was ok and that I would take it with me on my way out. I explained that in my culture it was ok to have a gesture like that as it was something small, not a gift or a bribe. He finally understood my intentions and that there was nothing to read between lines and drank the coffee.

Instructions

- Briefly explain, in your own words, what went wrong.
- Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?

(Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021, p. 207)

The Intercultural Incidents Task was integrated into the pre-test for a number of reasons. The first one is linked to the definition and components of ICC that was adopted in this document, in which metapragmatic awareness plays an essential role. In this regard, it would be reasonable to say that apart from being compatible with the goals and objectives being assessed (Fantini, 2009), the data collection instrument is also coherent with the

theoretical grounds that support the present study. Besides, considering that existing instruments to assess ICC, including the INCA project, do not integrate the assessment of its metapragmatic component, the Intercultural Incidents Task can serve as a tool to fill this void and also contribute to the assessment of participants' ICC from another perspective.

The second reason is the fact that the use of a sole instrument may not be enough to have an accurate assessment of an individual's ICC. As Fantini (2009) claims, given the complexity of ICC, its components, and dimensions, it is possible that a single instrument falls short of resources to assess all of those aspects. In addition, Deardorff (2006a) states that ICC assessment should comprise its different dimensions and should be done from different perspectives; these may include quantitative and qualitative methods and instruments such as interviews, observations, self-assessment questionnaires and others that involve the teacher's judgment. These assertions were conclusive to opt for the use of the INCA project and the Intercultural Incidents Task in this study. Together, they could yield a more complete appraisal of the participants ICC. This can be possible, on the one hand, due to the fact that the analysis of the Intercultural Incidents Task does not rely on self-reported data as a large part of the INCA project does. The fact is that there are some disadvantages when dealing with self-reported data. It may sometimes be flawed because participants tend to answer according to the expectations of the test or administrator instead of their own knowledge or opinions (Sinicrope et al., 2007). It could also be that the respondents answer thinking about socially desirable answers instead of what they truly believe (Dornyöi & Taguchi, 2010). Another problem could be what Dornyöi and Taguchi (2010) call *acquiescence bias*, which has to do with participants agreeing with statements in the questionnaire when they are not sure about what to answer.

Conversely, the Intercultural Incidents Task entirely involves the external judgment, in this case, of the researcher with the aid of the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural

adaptability rubric. Besides, the data collected through both can be confronted to see if the results coincide or diverge.

As for adjustments to the Intercultural Incidents Task, it can be said that these only happened in terms of the number of incidents the participants were asked to analyze. They were required to analyze five instead of the three that were used in the original study in order to have a bigger corpus. This made it necessary to collect new writing samples of intercultural incidents. However, the principles and questions in the tasks, as well as the rubric used for the assessment were kept the same.

The process to gather the writing samples of intercultural incidents occurred as follows. The first step was to select an appropriate audience that would be willing to write an intercultural incident. 20 participants, including students and professors who had had an intercultural experience, and particularly a misunderstanding, were asked to do so and instructed to follow the instructions in Appendix D. As in Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo's (2021) study, only the ones that met the requirements: include pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic elements and differed from one another in terms of social distance and power differences between the interlocutors were considered. Out of the 20 samples, 12 met the characteristics and at the end 5 were chosen to be part of the pre-test, as described next.

Incident 1: Uber driver describes a situation in which a girl from Colombia takes an Uber ride from an airport in New York to the place she is going to stay at. While in the car, the driver starts talking to her in a language she does not understand; according to her, he seemed to be from India. Instead of asking him to switch to English, she thought he was disrespectful for thinking she was from his country probably because of her physical features and opted to ignore him. The pragmalinguistic aspect in this incident is request; the girl should have asked the driver to talk to her in English instead of ignoring him and also politeness, as the driver was also at fault for assuming the girl was from his country instead of asking where she was from

first. Regarding sociopragmatic elements, cultural distance is observed; being in the USA, the girl expected everyone to use and be addressed in English while the driver assumed that she was from his country and thought it was okay to use his mother tongue.

Incident 2: Christmas in the USA depicts an exchange between an au pair and her host family during Christmas. The au pair, from Colombia, made a traditional Colombian dish to share during dinner. When she offered some by saying: *you can try the natilla I made if you'd like*, just a couple of the guests tried a bit and left some on the plate. She felt a bit offended and sad because in the first place, she expected the entire family and guests to eat what she had prepared; in the second place, for her, leaving food on the plate is considered impolite, as in Colombia, people do not do that. The pragmalinguistic elements are the invitation, which can be either refused or accepted and the perlocutionary act of offense. The sociopragmatic element in the incident is the cultural distance between Colombians and Americans.

Incident 3: Professor, it's just coffee is the interaction between a PhD student and one of his professors at an American University. The student had a meeting with his professor to discuss some aspects related to a topic of the student's interest. Since a previous meeting had lasted over an hour, the student decided to bring two cups of coffee. When he entered the office, he announced: *"I brought you a cup of coffee"*. The professor was shocked and said he was not allowed to receive any gifts from his students. The pragmalinguistic elements are perlocution, as the act and what the student said causes offense. Sociopragmatic aspects involve cultural distance and power relationship which affects the way in which the gesture is interpreted.

Incident 4: A compliment gone wrong is a misunderstanding between a girl from Colombia and her friend from the USA of Mexican descent who was holding her baby; both girls spoke Spanish but the American girl was a heritage speaker. The Colombian girl wanted to compliment how well-behaved the baby was and said in Spanish: *"tu bebé es muy juicioso"* (your baby is very well-behaved) to which the other girl did not react accordingly; she gave the

other the look and walked away. The word *juicioso* has a positive connotation in Colombia and other Spanish speaking countries and can be used to refer to someone who behaves well or is responsible. However, it could be that the word had a different connotation for the American girl who despite being a Spanish speaker as well, linked *juicioso* to the verb to judge. In this incident, a pragmalinguistic feature is the different connotation of the word *juicioso* due to negative transfer and others of sociopragmatic type would be cultural distance and the NS - NNS relationship.

Incident 5: The power of words describes an incident between a Colombian au pair and her host dad in the USA. The host dad had told the girl *“I would prefer that you didn’t wear shoes inside the house”*. At the beginning the girl followed this “suggestion” (in her words) to try to comply with the house rules as much as possible. However, as time went by, and considering how uncomfortable walking barefoot was, she decided to stop following this suggestion, which caused her host dad to get mad. The girl said that she thought it was not mandatory to walk barefoot at home, and did not think it was such a big deal. Looking at the dad’s reaction, she felt ashamed. One pragmalinguistic element in this incident is the force of the illocutionary act and its effect. The girl did not interpret it as being directive; instead, she took it as an option. In terms of sociopragmatic elements, cultural distance and power relationships are found.

The above was a succinct description of the Intercultural Incidents Task, an instrument that, contrary to previous ones, considers pragmatics as a pivotal element of ICC and as an indicator of an individual’s level of this competence. As can be seen, devising it required a careful selection and analysis of existing tools as well as a process of design and collection of writing samples for the Intercultural Incidents Task. Once this stage was complete, the course, which served as intervention for the experimental group, was devised, a process that is described in the following section.

5.4.2 Intervention: Training Course and Lesson Study

The literature review and the problem statement discussed the need to incorporate ICC into the language classroom. In this case, the focus were pre-service teachers who, throughout their educational process, had most likely not experienced lessons formally addressing the matter and who will soon be asked to promote a competence they have little or no knowledge on how to operationalize (see Esteban-Nuñez, 2021; Peña-Dix, 2018). To address this concern, an intervention, in the form of a training course together with LS, was designed with two objectives: to promote the development of ICC among participants and to assist them in planning their lessons incorporating ICC, which they will soon require in their professional practice. The course was created considering the principles proposed by Liddicoat (2004), Liddicoat et al. (2003), Scarino and Liddicoat (2009), Taguchi (2015), and Peyman et. al. (2016) and the core concepts immersed in them: awareness, reflection, critical thinking, and analysis of some basic pragmatic features (see section 2.6). It is important to note that only basic pragmatic and metapragmatic analysis was included in the course given that the participants had not received formal and explicit instruction on the matter before. The structure of the entire intervention can be observed in Table 11.

Table 11*Program for Intervention: Training Course and LS Sessions*

Lesson	Topic	Aim(s)
1	What is culture?	To raise awareness on the invisible aspects of a culture and how these influence certain behaviors.
2	Values - Coming of age in Japan	To analyze attitudes toward others at the beginning of the intercultural process and the values behind cultural representations.
3	Two visions for one reality	To raise awareness about different perceptions of the same reality, especially in intercultural context.
4	Stereotyping and Prejudice	To raise students' awareness of the meanings and implications of stereotyping and prejudice. To motivate critical analysis.
5	Cultural orientations - part	To motivate self-awareness of learners' own and others' cultural values and orientations related to orientation to self and orientation to power.
6	Direct and indirect communication.	To raise awareness on indirect and indirect communication as a source of misunderstanding. To motivate learners to conduct basic pragmatic analysis.
7	The power of suggestion	To discuss different speech acts and how these are realized across certain cultures. To motivate learners to conduct basic pragmatic analysis .
8	How close is too close?	To raise awareness on proxemics and how it differs depending on the culture. To motivate learners to conduct basic pragmatic analysis .
9	Common cultural misunderstandings	To increase awareness of intercultural issues (linguistic and cultural values) by stimulating meaningful and critical discussion about common situations. Review the different techniques that we studied so that they later incorporate them into their lessons.
10	LS - session 1	
11	LS - session 2	
12	LS - session 3	

As can be seen in Table 11, the lessons aimed at gradually introducing cultural and intercultural elements. As explained earlier, the course, taught entirely in English, consisted of 12 sessions (one per week) to be covered in 12 weeks. For each session, lasting 2 hours and 50 minutes, a lesson plan was prepared with specific activities featuring ICC at its core. Lessons 1 through 9 were intended primarily to raise awareness on ICC, develop the core elements of the competence, promote critical reflection, critical thinking, and have participants analyze (meta)pragmatic elements involved in ICC. Most lessons comprised a theoretical and a practical part. In the former, the aspects of ICC dealt with during the lesson were explicitly addressed (e.g., analyze culture beyond stereotypes, decenter from one's culture, analyze pragmatic aspects, etc.). In lessons 7 through 9, more formal elements related to metapragmatic analysis were introduced. At the end of the 9th lesson, one hour was taken to review the different techniques used to incorporate ICC in a regular English lesson. Then the 3 remaining sessions, following the suggestions of LS, focused on having participants design their own lessons in which they could demonstrate their ability to connect usual topics in textbooks and elements to foster ICC. For this stage, participants were divided into groups of 3 or 4 and were instructed on how the process was to take place.

To begin, before starting the LS cycle, the first task the groups had was to select a topic of any school grade that was included in the Colombian Suggested Curriculum (MEN, 2016b), and they, as pre-service teachers, would be likely to teach. Then, during the LS cycle, each group would have to design a task integrating the topic they selected and activities that would develop ICC. An example of such topics for sixth grade is:

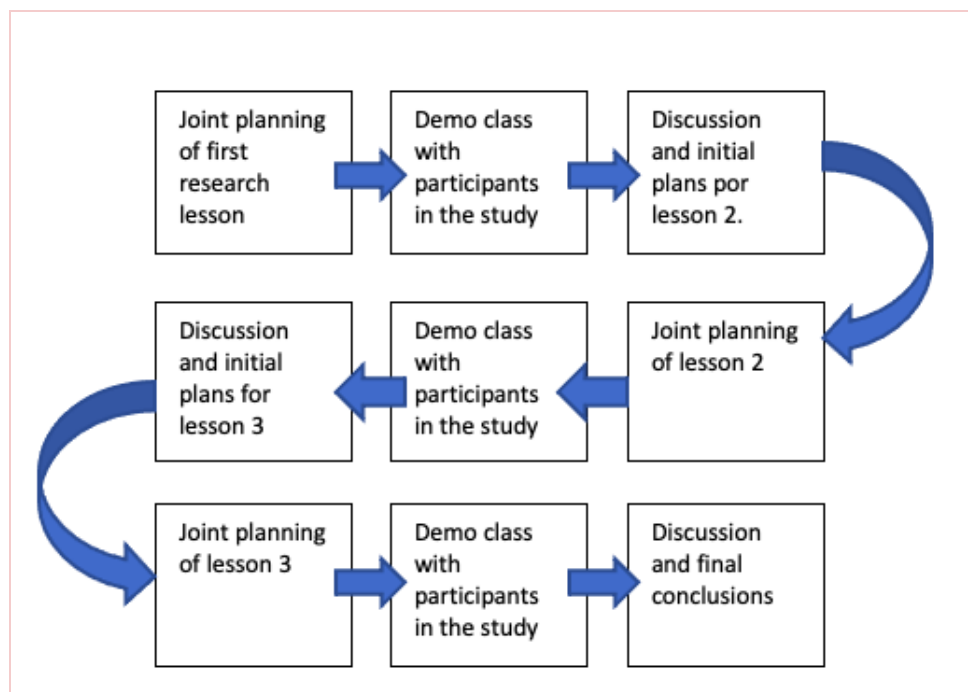
- Goal: define own traits of national Colombian Identity
- Functions: describe characteristics of a culture. Establish comparisons between countries. Ask and give information. Describe people, places and customs.

- Objectives: identify phrases and expressions related to features of people, celebrations, and places in short written and spoken discourse. Build simple sentences about the characteristics of people, celebrations, and places in written and spoken discourse. Exchange information about the features of people, celebrations, and places through questions and sentences (MEN, 2016 own translation).

Once the topic was chosen, the groups engaged in LS following the principles proposed by Dudley (2014), with the adjustments presented in Figure 5 (see section 3.1 for a description of the original process):

Figure 5

Adjusted LS Process



Note. Adapted from ‘*Lesson study: A handbook*’, by P. Dudley, 2014, p. 5.

Figure 5 illustrates how the LS process took place during the last three sessions of the intervention. First, joint planning took place right after the training course was completed, and it was done outside class time; that is, right before session 10. Joint planning involved

reviewing the topic chosen from the Suggested Curriculum and designing a lesson plan for it. During session 10, each group turned in the written lesson plan and they had designed and implemented it, “demo class”, with the members of the other groups as audience. At the end of the session, a discussion took place. The groups received feedback and recommendations for the second lesson. The joint planning of lesson 2 took place in a similar fashion. It happened outside class time. Then the second “demo class” was held during session 11, during which feedback and comments were provided. Finally, joint planning of lesson 3 occurred, once again, outside class time, and the last “demo class” took place during session 12 of the course. This was followed by discussion and final comments regarding the LS process and the course in general.

As explained previously, the LS process implemented in this study deferred to a certain extent from the original design proposed by Dudley (2014). In the present research, the stages of observing, and interviewing did not take place for two reasons. First, the main purpose of the implementation of LS was not to focus on *case-students* but to give pre-service teachers the opportunity to receive training to better plan their lessons, especially when an area has proved to be complex to teach, as is the case of ICC. Second, this study dealt with pre-service teachers and not all of them were doing their practicum yet. For that reason, they would have not been able to teach the lessons they planned with actual school students, as is stated in the original model. As a result, the stages of the process took place in a different way.

LS was chosen because it represents a process that has proved to improve teaching practices, specifically when these involve problematic areas (see Karabuga, 2021; Yazdanifar & Khazaeenezhad, 2020). In addition, as Dudley (2014) claims, participants may benefit from one another in their lesson planning, as this becomes a consciousness-raising exercise that helps them see the areas they need to improve. This practice was essential for them, especially considering that incorporating ICC in their lessons was recent.

Even though the main purpose of the course was to track the participants' progress in terms of ICC level and their teaching practices, assessment of the course also took place. In some sessions, the students enrolled were given specific tasks in order to check understanding. For instance, when addressing direct vs. indirect communication, the students were presented with statements featuring indirect communication, and they had to turn them into more direct statements. As for the LS sessions, the students' progress was assessed considering their ability to incorporate elements aiming at the development of ICC in their lessons plans. The assessment of the lessons was done using the rubric below.

Table 12

Rubric Used to Assess the Lessons Designed During LS Sessions by the Experimental Group.

Criteria	Session 1 Lesson 1	Session 2 Lesson 2	Session 3 Lesson 3	Average
Total number of lesson plans				
1 A cultural component is evident in the lesson. 2 The main task addresses shallow cultural aspects. 3 The main task addresses deep cultural aspects. 4 The main task addresses shallow and deep cultural aspects. 5 The task may promote stereotyping.				
Principles/Elements of ICC present in the lessons				
6 Awareness of diversity/similarities/differences 7 Critical thinking 8 Self-awareness 9 Values of tolerance and respect 10 Reflection 11 Empathy 12 Pragmatic awareness				

As can be seen, the rubric was divided into two parts; the first one addressed general aspects such as whether the lesson included a cultural component, whether the types of aspects the lesson included were shallow, deep, or both, and whether the lesson or any of its parts was

likely to promote stereotypes. The second part aimed to assess the type of activities designed to develop ICC. The data collected through the rubric were also considered as part of the analysis for this research, as it constituted an indicator of the participants' ability to integrate ICC in their teaching practice.

5.4.3. Post-test

In order to ensure comparability, the post-test followed the same parameters as the pre-test. That is, it comprised the parts of the INCA project chosen for the diagnosis, except for the demographic questions, as the information collected in the pre-test sufficed to characterize the participants. However, the instrument suffered some adjustments to avoid practice effects (i.e., participants doing better due to their familiarity with the questions) or “participant inattentiveness from the predictability of seeing the same test twice” (Mackey & Gass, 2022, p. 221). The changes included wording of some items in the intercultural profile questionnaire, as illustrated in Table 12.

Table 13

Examples of Adjustments Made to Some of the Items in the Intercultural Profile

Questionnaire in the Post-test

Items in Pre-test	Items in Post-test
Item 1: In restaurants I often eat dishes with ingredients that I don't know.	Item 2: When I eat out, I like to try new food.
Item 3: When other people don't feel comfortable in my presence, I notice it.	Item 3: I can tell when people around me are uncomfortable because of me.

The scenarios taken from the INCA project were also different but aimed to assess the same dimensions. The INCA project includes 10 scenarios; five of them were used in the pre-

test and the remaining five in the post-test. In the excerpt below, it is possible to see one of the scenarios included in the post-test (see Appendix C for pre-test and Appendix E for post-test).

Scenario 2: A social occasion

Your supervisor at the language center you work at has asked you to socialize with a young foreign worker of the same age and gender as yourself, who speaks your language quite well.

Answer the following:

1. What topics of conversation would you choose?
2. What kind of activities would you choose to do and why?

Finally, the situations described in the Intercultural Incidents Task were different but met the same parameters as in the pre-test, and the tasks participants had to complete were also the same. The incidents the participants had to analyze are described below.

Incident 1: Chocolates and wine was the first incident in which a girl from Russia, who we would call Ana, was invited over to a friend's home for dinner with her parents. Ana had brought some chocolates and wine as a present for the family. They were put on the table, but no one would eat or drink; there was just silence. Ana says that according to her culture, the host has to start eating, and the situation was just awkward until she decided to take the lead and take a piece of chocolate. Then all of them started eating. This incident depicts a clear sociopragmatic element that has to do with cultural differences. As for pragmalinguistic features, it is possible to highlight the lack of the speech act of request from both parties.

Incident 2: Jail vs. Yale involves an au pair in the process of interviewing a host family. The girl made a mistake when pronouncing *Yale*, as she had taken some courses there; instead, she pronounced it as *jail*, causing a huge misunderstanding. She laughed it out when she

realized, but the potential host family did not take it that well. The girl apologized and did her best to explain herself and clarify that it was a pronunciation mistake.

Incident 3: Emoji has to do with an interaction via Whatsapp between a girl from Latin America, Lucia, and one from Russia, Elena. They had recently started a friendship and kept in touch despite the distance between them. One day, Lucia told Elena that she was happy to be her friend and sent her a kiss emoji. Elena thought Lucia was flirting and that their friendship had been misunderstood; she told Lucia so. Then Lucia explained that she was simply showing affection, nothing beyond that.

Incident 4: Two girls from latin America working as au pairs in the USA went to a fast food restaurant. One of them went to the restroom while the other, who was not very proficient in English, stayed to order. The waiter asked her which size of drink she wanted, but she did not understand the word *size*. She remained silent in hopes her friend would return soon, which made the waiter mad. The waiter then realized what was going on and showed the girl different cups for her to choose.

Incident 5: The incident happened between an au pair and the host mom's mom. They were talking about animal hunting. The au pair said she did not understand why people are so irrational and hunt animals. The old lady got mad and stated how important hunting is for her country. There was a big argument in which none of the parties gave in (see Appendix E for complete post-test).

5.5. Data Collection

As stated earlier in this dissertation, the purpose of this study is to explore the impact of an intervention consisting of a training course and LS on the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. In this sense, the data, of quantitative and qualitative nature, were collected at three distinct stages of the study: pre-test, intervention, and post-test, making use of the instruments described in the section above.

5.5.1. Pre-test administration

Before its administration, when the participants were in their 6th semester, the pre-test was completed by five English teachers and five students who worked and studied, respectively, at the same institution where the instrument was to be delivered. The instrument was piloted in order to test it for any bias, ambiguity, or lack of clarity regarding the instructions and items. The group of teachers agreed that the pre-test was well designed, and they did not find any substantial problems. Their suggestions were with reference to the layout, especially in the part related to the scenarios of the INCA project, as some of the instructions were not salient enough, so the participants would tend to skip them. Students, in turn, had no suggestions, but from their responses, it was possible to tell that the layout was indeed misleading, a situation that agreed with what the group of teachers had found. Due to the organization of the scenarios and the follow-up questions, some of them were left unanswered. These results were taken into consideration, and then, each question was made more salient for the assesseees.

After incorporating the changes, the researcher first talked to the students in 8th and 9th semester: 48 and 41 students respectively, for a total of 89. The researcher explained to the students the purpose of the study and its generalities while showing them the consent form (see Appendix F) and going through each of the sections of the pre-test. Afterwards, the consent form and the pre-test were shared with them via email. They were told that the completion of the test was voluntary and were given one week to send all the forms back with the answers. As stated previously, they were explicitly instructed not to use any type of source to answer the questions in the pre-test, just their own knowledge and criteria. They were also told to clearly state that they did not have an answer if that was the case and were reminded that they could contact the researcher at any moment if they had any doubts. At this point, no one had been assigned to either the experimental or control groups. Due to their academic load, only 15 students had solved the pre-test after one week. Then it was necessary to give them more time

to complete it, and after two more weeks, 53 students had submitted it. It is important to clarify that this is not the final number of participants, as not all of them completed the pre-/post-test process. While working on the pre-test, no one contacted the researcher to solve any questions or doubts.

5.5.2. Intervention

This part of the study refers to the implementation of the course, whose theoretical background, contents, and objectives were first presented before the Director of the Linguistics and Languages Department who, together with the representatives of the undergraduate program, reviewed and accepted the proposal. With their approval, it was possible to offer the course as an optional activity for students in the last semesters of the Foreign Languages Program who were interested. This intervention started 3 weeks after 53 students had submitted the pre-test. This means that most of those students who were to take the course would have already taken the pre-test. This being said, 37 students were initially enrolled in the course. However, 5 of them dropped out, and 10 did not attend class regularly or did not submit either the pre-test or post-test. As a result, 32 pre-service teachers were enrolled in the course, but only 22 were part of the experimental group.

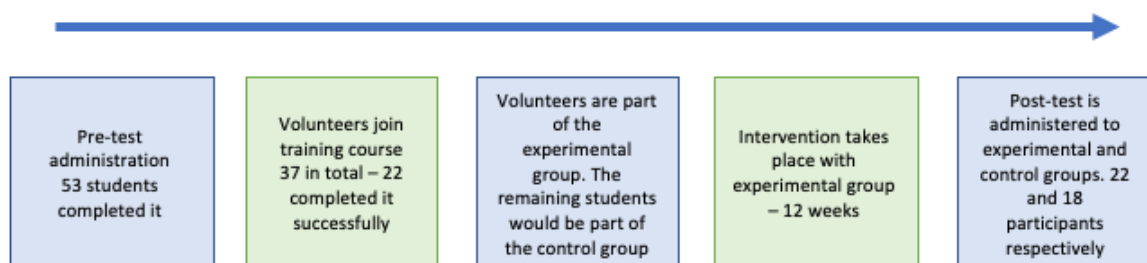
5.5.3. Post-test administration

The administration of the post-test involved both the control and experimental groups once again and took place a week after the intervention concluded. The students that completed the pre-test but did not receive the intervention (control group) were tracked down thanks to the personal information they had provided, and then were asked to complete the post-test, bearing in mind that this was a voluntary activity. Those who took the course (experimental group) were also asked to voluntarily complete the post-test, and were told that such a task was not part of the course. The forms were sent to the students in both groups via email and were given one week to send the forms back. At the end of this stage, it was possible to determine the final

number of students in each group, control and experimental. For the control group, it was necessary that the students had completed both tests; for the experimental group, two parameters had to be met: that they had completed the pre-test and post-test and also attended the course regularly. In this vein, the final number was 22 in the experimental group and 18 in the control group. After the data gathering process concluded, it was possible to start the analysis, which will be described in the following section. An overview of the complete data collection process can best be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Data collection process



5.6. Data Coding and Analysis

This stage of the study took place only after the exact number of participants that would stay in the study either in the control or experimental groups was determined. As stated previously, this number was 22 participants in the experimental group and 18 in the control group. On these grounds, an initial analysis was conducted considering the background information given in the questionnaire in order to create a demographic profile of the participants from both groups. They were classified taking into account their age and their prior intercultural experiences as to where they took place and how long. The purpose was to establish if there were major differences between the two groups regarding their previous experiences involving intercultural encounters, which could influence their level of ICC, thus affecting the results of

the study. However, the starting conditions were similar for both groups. The next step was to anonymize the participants of both groups. Each of them was assigned a number, and then other factors were considered to organize the information in a file: if the data were related to the pre-test or post-test and if the participant belonged to the control or experimental group. In this vein, the following codes were used:

PRE: Pre-test

POST: Post-test

CG: Control group

EXG: Experimental group

P00: participant and number

With this in mind, PRECGP01 would be understood as pre-test, control group, participant 01. Upon completion of this process, it was possible to start the analysis starting with quantitative data, as will be explained in the next section.

5.6.1. Quantitative Data

A quantitative analysis is defined as “any research that focuses on counting things and on understanding the patterns that emerge from those counts” (Brown, 2011, p. 192). In this study, this kind of data was collected through the Likert scale and the intercultural profile questionnaire. Before using any tests to make the corresponding statistical comparisons, the data from the experimental and control groups were initially analyzed by using descriptive statistics and then tested for normality using the Shapiro–Wilk’s test. The results of the test indicated that the data collected through the Likert scale and the intercultural profile questionnaire were not normally distributed: $W(462) = 0.74, p < .001$, a skewness of -0.7897, and a kurtosis of -0.6464 for experimental group and a $W(378) = .73, p < .00$, a skewness: -0.8564, and a kurtosis of -0.4867 for the control group. On this basis, non-parametric tests were used to analyze the information in terms of inferential statistics.

Concerning the data gathered through the Likert scale, its analysis was carried out per component (grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, culture, pronunciation) by averaging the scores each participant assigned (from 0 to 5). Then, different types of analysis were performed. First, since one of the purposes was to determine whether culture was given the same, lower, or higher relevance as the other components immersed in language teaching, it was necessary to compare the average scores across components per data set. To establish if the differences across the eight components was significant, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was used. The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a nonparametric tool that allows to determine statistically significant differences between two or more groups (i.e. the control and the experimental groups) of an independent variable, in this case, the perception of importance given to the eight components. Second, to establish differences between the groups, the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was used. This test yields information on whether the differences in the scores from the experimental and control groups were statistically significant or not. Third, to examine the differences between the pre-test and post-test within each group and ensure that any differences between one test and the other were significant statistically speaking, the Wilcoxon rank-sum test for paired samples was run. This test allowed establishing if the changes from pre- to post-test in each group were significant.

The next section to be analyzed was the intercultural profile questionnaire taken from the INCA project. As can be seen in the pre-test and post-test (see Appendix C and E), this section comprised a 21-item questionnaire in which the participants were required to select from three options: not applicable, applicable, fully applicable. In order to perform a statistical analysis, first, the options were assigned a numerical equivalent (not applicable = 1; applicable = 2; fully applicable: 3), suggested by Dornyöi and Taguchi (2010). Since 4 items in the questionnaire were negative statements, it was necessary to turn the scores around and give 3 points to the option not applicable and 1 to applicable. Later, the scores per item were added

up and their average was obtained. Upon completion of this phase, it was possible to continue with the analysis between the two groups and within each group following the same pattern as with the Likert scale; however, the items in this instrument were not examined for differences among them. The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the Wilcoxon rank-sum test for paired samples and the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples. The former was used to establish whether the differences between the pre-test and post-test within each group were significant or not. As for the latter, it was used to determine if the differences between groups were statistically significant.

5.6.2. Qualitative Data

Cohen et al. state that qualitative data analysis “involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (2007, p. 461). In this study, the three parts of the questionnaires that aimed at gathering qualitative data were open-ended questions, scenarios, and Intercultural Incidents Task. Each of these sections was first subject to thematic analysis. This process starts with the generation of a code scheme based on the theoretical underpinnings of the research (top-down approach) or on the patterns found in the data (bottom-up approach) (Riazi, 2016). In this research, the former was adopted. Nonetheless, as Riazi (2016) points out, as this process is on its way, the initial coding scheme may suffer variations; the codes may be expanded, modified, or deleted as the thematic analysis is performed, and once the codes are defined, categories and themes are developed. In this study, this stage of the qualitative data analysis was performed with the help of the software Atlas.ti, which facilitated the coding process and the visualization of code distribution. Having all the coded data available in Atlas.ti, it was possible to start the categorization and analysis of the information gathered through each of the three parts of the questionnaire mentioned above.

The first section involved open-ended questions aimed at finding out the participants' perceptions about culture, their approach towards the integration of this component in English lessons as part of their future teaching practice, and their knowledge of ICC. To analyze this part, first, the codes were generated for each question based on the literature, but they were expanded to include others that emerged as the answers were examined. For question 1, *What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words* six codes were generated to classify the answers depending on how these described the concept of culture: static/dynamic, essentialist/non-essentialist, and deep/shallow. For question 2, *How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?* The answers were classified into five types of activities: those that address purely superficial aspects, activities that expose learners to varieties of the target language (emerged from the answers), tasks that raise awareness on cultural diversity, activities that promote values, and activities that promote critical thinking. Regarding question 3, *Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?*, three codes were set: own culture, cultures where the target language is spoken as an L1, and multiple cultures. Finally, for question 4, *What is intercultural competence for you?*, three codes were initially proposed. Nevertheless, the participants came up with multiple definitions for which the initial codes fell short. Therefore, three more were added: awareness of differences across cultures, values of respect and tolerance towards others, ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures, ability to interpret and understand other cultures, and ability to adapt.

Having coded the data for this section, they were organized. Since they were open-ended questions, the participants gave more than one answer. For this reason, there was no correspondence between the number of participants and the number of answers; instead, the number of tokens per question were tallied. The next step consisted in the within-group and between-groups analysis that followed the same structure of the quantitative analysis.

The second section comprised the scenarios included in the INCA project, whose purpose was to assess five dimensions of ICC, namely behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy (communicative awareness is not included in the scenarios in the INCA project). Given that the INCA project does not specify which dimension each scenario is meant to assess, it was necessary to resort to two experts in the area who helped analyze each scenario and assign the dimension or dimensions that they intended to assess. Their assessment was confronted to that of the main researcher with a coincidence of 90%. The dimensions assigned for each scenario in the pre-test and post-test, as these were equivalent, were:

Scenario 1 – Knowledge discovery

Scenario 2 – Tolerance of ambiguity / behavioral flexibility

Scenario 3 – Respect for otherness / tolerance of ambiguity

Scenario 4 – Tolerance of ambiguity / empathy

Scenario 5 – Tolerance of ambiguity

On this basis, the codes used were the dimensions set in the INCA project divided into subcodes that referred to the three possible levels of competence that can be achieved: basic, intermediate, or full. The codes and subcodes were assigned to the answers given by the participants following the assessment guidelines provided by the INCA project. Upon coding, the data were organized and the number of tokens per dimension and per level were calculated so that they could be contrasted in the analysis within each group and between the groups.

The third section covers the analysis of the Intercultural Incidents Task, which points towards the assessment of ICC from a metapragmatic perspective. In this vein, for the assessment of the responses, the metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021) was used (see Appendix B for the complete rubric). Based on the parameters established in the rubric, the writing samples with the

participants' analysis of the 5 scenarios were examined, and each response was coded as belonging to one of the three categories: pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, or intercultural adaptability. Once in the categories, the responses were assessed to determine if the statements displayed an initial, intermediate, or mature level of competence. Then, the number of students per dimension and level: basic, intermediate, mature was also examined. Having this part of the analysis, it was possible to compare the results within and between the groups.

5.6.3. Data Triangulation

Once the quantitative and qualitative data were processed and analyzed independently, they were subject to triangulation. According to Mackey and Gass, triangulation involves “using multiple research techniques and multiple sources of data in order to explore the issues from a wide range of feasible perspectives” (2022, p. 322). There are 3 different types of triangulation: theoretical, investigator, and methodological. This study falls into methodological triangulation, as it involved “using different measures or research methods to investigate a particular phenomenon” (Mackey & Gass, 2022, p. 333). In this case, the data collected were of qualitative and quantitative nature, as indicated in the individual data analysis. Following these lines, in this research, the quantitative and qualitative results that addressed the same guiding question were grouped and contrasted. Thus, it was possible to give a more consistent answer to each of the four research questions proposed for this study.

Initially, for research question 1, to find out the perceptions of the participants regarding ICC, results from the open-ended questions and the Likert scale in the pre-test were triangulated for both the experimental and control groups independently. This way, it was possible to see if their answers matched their choices in the scale and have a clearer picture of the role of culture and ICC in their practice as future language teachers. Then, the results of both groups were compared.

Regarding the initial level of the participants ICC, which was immersed in research question 2, the information collected in the pre-test through the intercultural profile questionnaire, the scenarios, and Intercultural Incidents Task was also analyzed for the experimental and control groups independently first. Afterwards, the responses obtained from both groups were compared to check if there were any substantial differences between them.

To answer research question 3, related to the extent of the impact of the intervention on the participants' level of ICC, the results gathered through the intercultural profile questionnaire, the scenarios, and Intercultural Incidents Task in the post-test were included. For each group, the findings of these sections in the post-test were compared in order to establish the final level of ICC after the experimental group took part in the intervention and also for the control group 12 weeks after they had taken the pre-test. Then, the results of the experimental and control groups were confronted. Finally, for each group, the results of the post-test were compared to those of the pre-test to determine whether progress was made.

As for research question 4, which dealt with the impact of the intervention on the participants' practices, the data gathered through the open-ended questions and the Likert scale in the post-test were analyzed. This made it possible to have a clear picture of the participants' perceptions of culture, its importance in the language teaching process, knowledge of ICC, and the nature of the activities they would implement to develop the competence. Subsequently, the results of the experimental and control groups were compared. Finally, for each group, the results of these sections were contrasted to the initial perceptions they provided in the pre-test in order to establish any differences.

Since during the intervention, the experimental group engaged in LS, the lesson plans they created were also considered in the analysis. As explained previously, the lessons were assessed by means of a rubric (see section 5.5.2 for further details). Then, the types of tasks designed in the lessons were part of thematic analysis. An initial list was proposed, but as the

lessons were reviewed, this list was broadened. The activities that the participants in the experimental group proposed pointed at fostering: awareness of diversity, cultural similarities, and differences, critical thinking, self-awareness, values of tolerance and respect, reflection, empathy, and pragmatic awareness.

Once the assessment criteria were set, the lessons were evaluated per session in order to find out the most salient characteristics of the lessons in session 1, 2, and 3, and also to see if there was any progress or significant changes as time progressed. This part of the analysis, which only involved the experimental group, allowed finding out if the treatment and LS had enabled them to integrate activities leading to the development of ICC in their lesson plans. It is necessary to note that 32 students participated in the intervention, but not all of them made part of the experimental group due to several reasons; some of them include the fact that not all of them completed the tasks; some others did not attend regularly, and others did not complete the post-test. This situation explains the fact that in the final lesson plans that were collected, the number of people in the groups surpassed the number of participants in the experimental group, which was 22.

After processing the quantitative and qualitative data and answering the four research questions proposed in this study, it was possible to address the purpose of the study and finally determine the extent to which the intervention impacted the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of pre-service EFL teachers at a Colombian university. To better understand this process, Table 14 summarizes the four research questions together with the instruments used to collect the data to answer each of them, and the type of analysis conducted.

Table 14*Summary of Data Analysis in Each Research Question*

Research question that intends to answer	Instruments	Type of analysis	Comments
How does a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers conceive ICC?	Pre-test Likert scale	Descriptive analysis Statistical analysis using Kruskal-Wallis H test Mann Whitney U	Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to determine statistically significant differences between the 8 components.
	Pre-test Open ended questions	Thematic analysis based on traditional vs. more interculturally oriented conceptions of culture and practices.	Mann Whitney U was used to compare independent samples: control and experimental groups.
What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian in-service/pre-service EFL teachers?	Pre-test Intercultural profile questionnaire	Descriptive analysis Mann-Whitney U test	Mann-Whitney U test to analyze differences between control and experimental groups.
	Pre-test Scenarios Intercultural Incidents Task	Thematic analysis considering the parameters set in the INCA project and the metapragmatic and intercultural adaptability rubric respectively.	In the scenarios ICC is assessed in 5 dimensions and the level classified as basic, intermediate or full. In the critical incidents, 3 dimensions are assessed at initial, intermediate and mature level.
To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?	Pre-test and post-test Intercultural profile questionnaire	Descriptive analysis Statistical analysis using The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Mann Whitney U	The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank was used to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test for each group. The Mann Whitney U was used to establish any statistically significant difference between both groups.
	Pre-test and post-test Scenarios Intercultural Incidents Task	Thematic analysis considering the parameters set in the INCA project and the metapragmatic and intercultural adaptability rubric respectively.	The level displayed in each dimension is compared from pre-test to post-test and then between the control and experimental groups.
To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers	Pre-test and post-test Likert scale	Descriptive analysis Statistical analysis using Kruskal-Wallis H test The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Mann Whitney U	Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to determine statistically significant differences between the 8 components. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank was used to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test for each group. Mann-Whitney U test to analyze differences between control and experimental groups.
	Pre-test and post-test Open ended questions Lesson plans	Thematic analysis	For the open-ended questions, the number of participants in each category of thematic analysis in the pre-test was compared to the post-test to establish differences in the tendencies. The lesson plans were analyzed using a rubric that was initially established but broadened after thematic analysis.

5.7. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 5 presented the methodology adopted to conduct this study, which, due to its characteristics, was classified as action research with a mixed-methods design, and also as a quasi-experiment. To achieve the research objectives, an experimental and a control group took part in the process with 22 and 18 participants each who were in 8th and 9th semester of a foreign language teaching program at a public university in Colombia. Both the experimental and control groups were asked to complete a pre-test and post-test that included sections eliciting quantitative and qualitative data. The experimental group voluntarily enrolled in a 12-week intervention that combined a training course on ICC and LS to assist them in integrating theory and practice. The quantitative data were analyzed first followed by the qualitative data. Then, both types were integrated to answer each of the four research questions and finally address the purpose of the study: to what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the data gathered from the control and experimental groups through the questionnaires administered as pre-test and post-test. As stated in the methodology, the data collected was of quantitative and qualitative nature and their analysis aimed to answer the four research questions proposed for this study, and ultimately address the purpose of the study regarding the extent of the impact of an intervention, combining a training course and LS, on the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. In this vein, this chapter will address each of the research questions followed by the analysis and discussion of the results, which were obtained through specific sections of the pre-test and post-test.

In order to answer the first research question: *How does a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers perceive ICC?* data were collected through two sections of the pre-test. The first one was a Likert scale designed to assess the participants' initial perceptions of importance of culture, as the founding element of ICC. The second one was a set of questions that tapped into the participants' view of culture, knowledge of ICC, and the way in which they would incorporate cultural elements in their future teaching practice.

Regarding the second research question: *What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?* The data were gathered through the pre-test by means of three of its sections. The first part was the intercultural profile questionnaire, taken from the INCA project, whose purpose was to assess the participants' general ICC level. The second part comprised the analysis of five scenarios included in the INCA project. The objective was to determine the participants' starting ICC level in five dimensions: tolerance of ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy. The third part consisted in the analysis of five critical incidents, which were assessed using the metapragmatic and intercultural rubric. Once analyzed, the results of the three types of assessment were

contrasted within each group to have a thorough picture of their ICC, their strengths, and weaknesses. Then, the experimental and control groups were compared to determine the starting point, in terms of ICC level, of both.

The third research question was *to what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?* Put that way, this question intended to explore if any progress and of what type, on the part of the experimental group, was made as to their ICC level after the intervention. Following these lines, the information needed to answer the question was obtained from the pre-test and post-test, specifically through the three sections that gave an account of the participants' ICC level. In order to establish possible gains, especially in the experimental group, first, only the results of the post-test for both groups were compared. Second, for each group, the findings of the pre-test and post-test were also confronted.

With the purpose of answering the fourth research question: *to what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers*, which aimed to assess progress in terms of the participants' practices, information was collected through the pre-test and post-test. The sections that provided the data were the ones that intended to take a stock of the participants' perception of importance of culture, views of culture, knowledge of ICC, and insights into the way in which they would incorporate ICC in their future teacher practice. Regarding the latter, the lesson plans created by the participants in the experimental group while engaged in LS, as part of the intervention, were also analyzed. Following the process that took place to answer the third research question, the results of the post-test were first examined to determine any differences between the experimental and control groups. Then the findings of the pre-test and post-test were compared within each group. The aim of this analysis was to examine if any improvement was visible in the experimental group after the intervention. As for the lesson

plans, these were assessed to verify whether the participants of the experimental group were capable of incorporating principles of ICC in their teaching practice or not.

Considering the above, it can be seen that the analysis and discussion of each research question leads to attain the main purpose of this study. The aim was to explore the effects of the intervention not only on the participants' ICC level but also on their ability to integrate this competence in their future, which is in line with the current policies that need to be enforced in Colombia and worldwide. On this basis, the following section will address the first research question followed by the analysis of the results and discussion of findings.

6.1. Research Question 1

As mentioned previously, this section comprises the results of two sections of the pre-test: the Likert scale and the set of four open-ended questions. In tandem, they were meant to gather information on the participants' perceptions of the relevance of culture, familiarity with the concepts of culture and ICC, and their likelihood to incorporate practices conducive to the development of the competence. On these grounds, the first part of this section will first present and discuss the results of the pre-test related to the perception of relevance of culture in language teaching according to the participants in the experimental and control groups.

6.1.1. Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture in Language Teaching

To find out how relevant culture was in the teaching practice of participants in the experimental and control groups, the participants were asked to provide a score, from 0 to 5, to a list of eight components that are generally included in a regular language lesson. These were grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, culture, and pronunciation. The data collected through this section were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to find out the perceptions of the participants in relation to the importance of the eight components previously mentioned in the language teaching/learning process. Considering the nature of question 1, the

aim at heart was to establish if culture, the building block of ICC, was given the same, higher, or lower relevance as the others. Table 15 presents the mean and standard deviation for each of the eight components the participants were asked to rate.

Table 15

Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture and Other Components in Language

Teaching- Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test

		Experimental	Control
Grammar	Mean	3.18*	3.89*
	SD	0.91	0.90
Vocabulary	Mean	4.45	4.67
	SD	0.51	0.59
Speaking	Mean	4.91	4.56
	SD	0.29	0.70
Listening	Mean	4.52	4.61
	SD	0.74	0.61
Reading	Mean	4.23	4.22
	SD	0.69	0.81
Writing	Mean	3.82	4.17
	SD	0.85	0.79
Culture	Mean	4.36	4.17
	SD	0.73	0.86
Pronunciation	Mean	4.27	4.28
	SD	0.88	0.83

*Difference is significant at <0.05 (Mann-Whitney U test)

Before conducting the statistical analysis, the data gathered from the experimental and control groups, summarized in Table 15, were tested for normality. To do so, a Shapiro–Wilk’s test was performed. This test states that the significance value should be greater than 0.05 for the data to be considered normal. In addition, the skewness and kurtosis statistic values should be less than ± 1.0 to be considered normal. Against this background, it can be said that the results from the Shapiro–Wilk’s test showed that the distribution of the scores given to the eight components departed significantly from normality for all eight components in both groups. The values obtained for the data from the experimental group were $W(176) = .79, p <$

.001, a skewness of -0.9, and a kurtosis of -0.04. As for the control group, the findings showed a $W(144) = .77, p < .001$, a skewness of -0.8949, and a kurtosis of 0.008683. As a consequence, the scores concerning the perceptions of the eight components were analyzed using statistical non-parametric tests, which are methods that do not require a distribution to meet the required assumptions to perform the analysis.

On this basis, the first analysis was performed within each group separately. With regard to the experimental group, we can see in Table 15 that grammar ($M = 3.18$; $sd = 0.91$) and writing ($M = 3.82$; $sd = 0.85$) received the lowest scores in the pre-test when it comes to how relevant they were perceived. Speaking, in turn, received the highest scores ($M = 4.91$; $sd = 0.29$), indicating that this component was highly relevant to the participants. Meanwhile, the scores assigned to the remaining components did not vary greatly from one another, and in descending order, these are arranged as follows: listening ($M = 4.52$; $sd = 0.74$), vocabulary ($M = 4.45$; $sd = 0.51$), culture ($M = 4.36$; $sd = 0.73$), pronunciation ($M = 4.27$; $sd = 0.88$), and reading ($M = 4.23$; $sd = 0.69$). With these results as a basis, it could be affirmed that when it comes to culture, its relevance more or less equates to that of vocabulary, listening, reading, and pronunciation.

To determine statistically significant differences among the eight components, the data were examined using the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was chosen due to the no normality of the data. The results showed that the difference among the eight components was statistically significant, $\chi^2(7) = 52.49, p < .001$, with a mean rank score of 37.93 for grammar, 97.27 for vocabulary, 129.55 for speaking, 107.43 for listening, 84.89 for reading, 64.55 for writing, 94.57 for culture, and 91.82 for pronunciation. The Post-Hoc Dunn's test using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.0018 indicated that the mean ranks of the following pairs were significantly different: grammar - vocabulary, grammar - speaking, grammar - listening, grammar - reading, grammar - culture, grammar - pronunciation, speaking - writing. This

means that the participants perceived varied degrees of relevance of the different aspects immersed in language teaching/learning, with speaking being the most relevant and grammar being perceived as the least relevant.

Similar results were obtained in the control group, in which grammar received the lowest scores ($M = 3.89$; $sd = 0.90$). That is, grammar was seen as the least important component in language teaching/learning. In contrast, vocabulary ($M = 4.67$; $sd = 0.59$) was seen as the most relevant. Concerning the remaining five components, from the one with the highest to the one with the lowest score the results were: listening ($M = 4.61$; $sd = 0.61$), speaking ($M = 4.56$; $sd = 0.70$), pronunciation ($M = 4.28$; $sd = 0.83$), reading ($M = 4.22$; $sd = 0.81$), and writing ($M = 4.17$; $sd = 0.79$) and culture ($M = 4.17$; $sd = 0.86$) with the same score. In this vein, regarding culture, it could be said that its relevance was somewhat comparable to that of the other five.

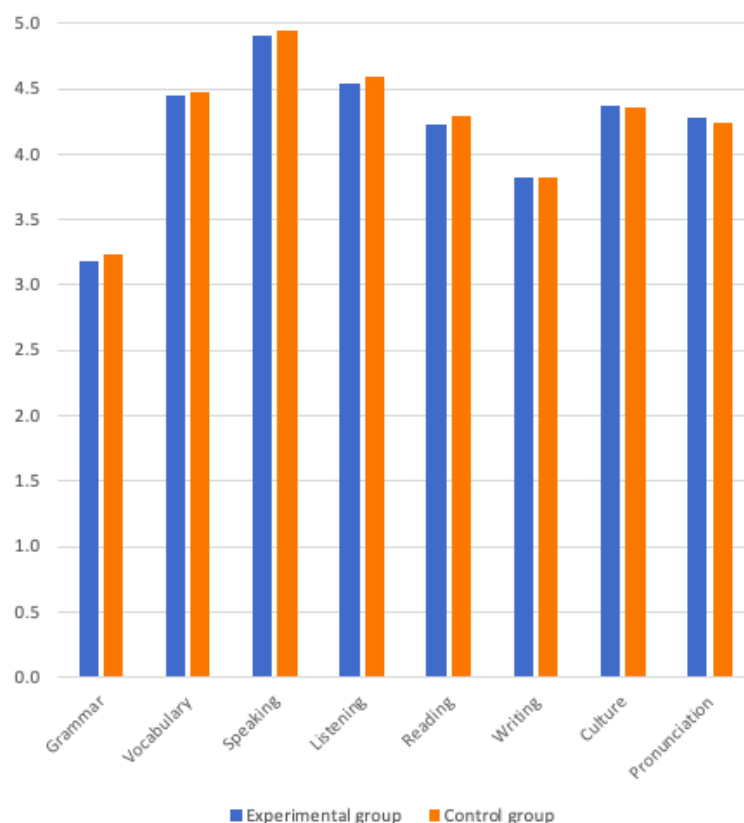
Statistically speaking, the difference across the eight components proved to be significant as per the Kruskal-Wallis H, $\chi^2(7) = 14.86$, $p = .038$, with a mean rank score of 52.5 for grammar, 89.78 for vocabulary, 84.5 for speaking, 86.42 for listening, 67.22 for reading, 63.86 for writing, 65.14 for culture, and 70.58 for pronunciation. The Kruskal-W, indicated, however, that the multiple comparisons did not show enough evidence for a statistical difference between any pair of groups.

In addition to the analysis performed within each group, it is also possible to examine the differences between both groups in terms of their perception of the different skills, as can graphically be seen in Figure 7 and also in Table 15.

Figure 7

Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture and Other Components in Language

Teaching- Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test



In Figure 7 and in Table 15, it can be observed that in the pre-test, the experimental group assigned remarkably higher marks to speaking ($M = 4.91$; $sd = 0.29$) and the lowest scores to grammar ($M = 3.18$; $sd = 0.91$) and writing ($M = 3.82$; $sd = 0.85$) whereas the remaining six were rated similarly. The control group, in turn, considered vocabulary ($M = 4.67$; $sd = 0.59$) as the most relevant and grammar ($M = 3.89$; $sd = 0.90$) as the least important component in language teaching. This finding indicates that both groups coincided in the perception that grammar was not as important as the other seven components. The difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups for grammar were examined with the Mann-Whitney U test, which is a non-parametric test used for independent samples. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups

in terms of their perceived importance of grammar ($U = 112$, $z = -2.4339$, $p = .015$). That is, the scores obtained for the perception of relevance for grammar among the participants in the experimental group were significantly lower than the ones gathered from the control group.

As for the other components, the scores assigned concerning their importance in language teaching varied between the experimental and the control groups. However, when comparing the means of each component between both groups, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that the differences were not statistically significant: vocabulary ($U = 245$, $z = 1.46$, $p = 0.14$), speaking ($U = 148$, $z = -1.93$, $p = 0.053$), listening ($U = 203$, $z = 0.16$, $p = 0.87$), reading ($U = 201$, $z = 0.07$, $p = 0.94$), writing ($U = 242$, $z = 1.25$, $p = 0.2$), culture ($U = 174$, $z = -0.68$, $p = 0.5$), and pronunciation ($U = 196$, $z = -0.04$, $p = 0.96$).

Considering the results, it can be affirmed that the starting conditions for the experimental and control groups were somewhat similar. They coincided in that grammar was less important than the others, and this perception was more salient in the experimental group. Regarding the participants' perception of culture, which is of primary concern for this research, there was no statistical difference when compared to the other components in each group. That is, culture was seen as an equally important component as the others. In this regard, both groups displayed similar results, which indicates that neither group outperformed the other.

6.1.2. Participants' Perceptions of Culture, Teaching Practices, and Knowledge of Intercultural Communicative Competence

In order to delve into the participants' conception of culture, the way in which they would incorporate this aspect into their teaching practice, and their knowledge of ICC, four open-ended questions were formulated. The data gathered through this brief questionnaire yielded information not only on the participants' approach to culture and ICC but also on how coherent their theoretical grounds and views were with their future practice. To achieve this objective, the data were subject to a thematic analysis in which the answers were categorized by linking

the participants' responses to the concepts provided by the literature. Other categories were created based on the most recurrent answers. Table 16 indicates the categories set to organize the responses given to each of the four questions.

Table 16

Questions and Categories Regarding Views and Teaching Practices about Culture and ICC

Questions	Categories
1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words	Static
	Dynamic
	Essentialist
	Non-essentialist
	Deep
	Shallow
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?	Activities that tackle superficial aspects or facts.
	Activities that expose learners to varieties of a language
	Activities that raise awareness on the diversity of cultures.
	Activities that promote values of respect, tolerance, and empathy
	Activities that foster critical thinking
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?	Own culture
	Cultures of countries where the language is spoken as an L1.
	Multiple cultures
4. What is intercultural communicative competence for you?	Awareness of differences across cultures
	Values of respect and tolerance towards others especially from other cultures
	Ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures.
	Ability to interpret and understand other cultures
	No knowledge of the concept

In Table 16, it can be observed that for question 1, there were six categories which could be grouped into static vs. dynamic, essentialist vs. non-essentialist, and deep vs. shallow, which are opposite pairs. These categories were taken from the different definitions of the concept found in the literature. Traits such as static, essentialist, and shallow tend to be more

in line with traditional views of culture whereas dynamic, non-essentialist, and deep are more coherent with an intercultural perspective.

A static view refers to culture as an unchanging system in which all of those who share it think, act, and behave in the same way (Barletta, 2009). A dynamic view, on the contrary, acknowledges that culture is not simply a set of traditions that can be transmitted. As González-Plasencia (2019) claims, culture is the collective construction of meanings, and these are created, transformed, or rejected through interaction. An essentialist stance tends to assign specific stereotypical features to a country; this would imply that those who share the same nation are homogeneous beings (Kovács, 2017). A non-essentialist view acknowledges individual differences which are not necessarily tied to a national culture; this avoids overgeneralizations and the promotion of stereotypes (Spitzberg, 1989). Finally, seeing culture as a shallow construct suggests that culture is the composite of mere superficial features that can be seen at first sight; these involve festivals, food, music, traditional dresses, etc. Conversely, deep culture goes beyond and involves values, behaviors, and ways of thinking that a certain group may share.

For question 2, five categories were established, especially based on the responses provided by the participants. The categories were organized from one that involves more declarative knowledge and is in line with a traditional view of culture to others that make room for the incorporation of deeper elements of culture and ICC. It can be seen that among the categories, there was one promoting awareness of cultural diversity, which is a positive start that moves away from traditional practices. Then there were two more that are coherent with the activities that lead towards the development of ICC. They promote values and also critical thinking, which are crucial in the process of educating interculturally competent individuals.

As for question 3, three categories emerged. The first one: *cultures of countries where the target language is spoken* goes hand in hand with an essentialist and static paradigm. In

this strand, especially the British and American cultures are promoted and seen as the norm bearers. Generally, perceiving cultures as such implies that language learners need to imitate them. Therefore, native speakerism is usually promoted; a type of “standard language” is to be learned, and as stated earlier in this dissertation, even pragmatic norms are dictated. Nonetheless, it has been argued that these cannot be simply transmitted; they are constructed in interaction and are clearly influenced by culture (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). The other two categories for question 3 were the product of the respondents’ idea that their own culture and several others are worth discussing and examining, a practice that is linked to a more intercultural stance.

The last question, number 4, yielded five categories; they were definitions of ICC and were created based on the most recurrent terminology used by the participants. Although the participants’ contributions to the conceptualization were valued, they were judged against Deardorff’s (2020), which was the one adopted in this research. The author claims that ICC is “the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to improve interactions across differences whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders” (Deardorff, 2020, p. i). In this vein, it could be said that the one that is closest to Deardorff’s is: ICC is the ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures. Even though the remaining three include traces of what ICC comprises, they are vague and lack elements such as interaction. Also, the three definitions give the feeling that ICC is one-sided instead of being reciprocal.

In all, it can be seen that the four questions targeted the participants’ perceptions and conceptualizations of culture and ICC and also their potential practices. It could be said that the questions sought to determine if there was coherence between the theoretical grounds of the participants and the way in which they would realize them in the classroom. This is a pivotal aspect, as one of the most problematic parts and the claim made in this dissertation is the fact

that language teachers may have the will and the theoretical knowledge but are unable to bridge theory and practice. Having described the particularities of the categories for each question, it is now possible to turn to the results gathered from each group in the pre-test. In this vein, Table 17 presents the consolidated results of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test as to their views and practices about culture and ICC. As stated previously, the data collected were of qualitative nature. Therefore, the percentages can be taken as a guide and only show tendencies within each group. It is important to note that the percentages correspond to the number of participants that provided a given answer within the category compared to the total number of participants in each group: control (N= 18) and experimental (N=22).

Table 17

*Participants' Perceptions of Culture, Teaching Practices, and Knowledge of ICC -
Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test*

Questions	Categories	Pre-test			
		Experimental		Control	
		N	%	N	%
1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words	Static	17	77.3	16	88.9.4
	Dynamic	2	9.1	2	11.1
	Essentialist	10	45.4	10	55.5
	Non-essentialist	10	45.4	6	33.3
	Deep	10	45.4	9	50
	Shallow	7	31.8	8	44
		56		51	
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?	Activities that tackle superficial aspects or facts.	16	72.7	18	100
	Activities that expose learners to varieties of a language	1	4.5	1	5.5
	Activities that raise awareness on the diversity of cultures.	5	22.7	4	22.2
	Activities that promote values of respect, tolerance, and empathy	0	0	0	0
	Activities that foster critical thinking	2	9.1	0	0
		24		23	
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?	Own culture	6	27.3	5	27.8
	Cultures of countries where the language is spoken as an L1.	13	59.1	12	66.7
	Multiple cultures	5	22.7	5	27.8
		24		22	
4. What is intercultural communicative competence for you?	Awareness of differences across cultures	11	50	5	27.8
	Values of respect and tolerance towards others especially from other cultures	8	36.4	8	44.4
	Ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures.	6	27.3	7	38.9
	Ability to interpret and understand other cultures.	4	18.2	4	22.2
	No knowledge of the concept	3	13.6	1	5.5
		32		25	
	Overall number	126		121	

Based on the information presented in Table 17, an analysis per question for each group was made, and then the results of both groups were compared and discussed. To begin, it can be seen that in question number 1, the experimental and control group followed a similar pattern with a number of differences. In the experimental group, a static view of culture prevailed with 77.3% over a dynamic perspective (9.1%). Similarly, in the control group, the vast majority of the participants (88.9%), defined culture as a static construct. Regarding the dichotomy essentialist vs. non essentialist, both views obtained the same percentage, 45.4%, in the experimental group. In this regard, most of the participants in the control group took an essentialist stance with 55.5%. As for deep and shallow elements immersed in culture, it is seen that most participants in the experimental and control groups favored the former with 45.4% and 50% respectively.

The findings above indicate that in the experimental and control groups, a static perception overpowered a dynamic view. A static view translates into a perception of culture as a set of unchanging traditions, behaviors, and customs, which are passed down from generation to generation, a perspective that does not leave any room for evolvement and change and is in line with a very traditional conception of culture. Concerning essentialist and non-essentialist interpretations of culture, there were mixed opinions in the experimental group, and both were observed in an equal percentage. The control group, in turn, had a predominantly essentialist viewpoint. An essentialist view understands culture as a set of practices linked to a specific geographic region (generally a country) whereas a non-essentialist perspective, in broad terms, conceives culture as a group of characteristics shared by a social group. The types of definitions given by the experimental and control groups are illustrated in Examples 1, 2, and 3 below. As a reminder, the codes used in the examples are: PRE: Pre-test, POST: Post-test, EXG: Experimental group, CG: Control group, P00: participant and number (see section 5.9 for complete explanation of the codes used).

Example 1. Definition of culture by PREEXGP18

For me, culture is the different ideas, traditions, customs, and behavior that each country has.

Example 2. Definition of culture by PRECGP02

Culture is a variety of things that make us who we are, for example I think it starts with nationality, language, and all the different things that make a place unique, like; music, food, landscapes, people, etc.

Example 3. Definition of culture by PREEXGP22

Culture is all the things that define and identify a society. For instance, their language, customs and traditions, religious beliefs, artistic expressions and others.

In Examples 1 and 2, given by one participant of the experimental group and by one in the control group respectively, it is possible to see that they mentioned a clear link between culture and nationality, a common feature in essentialist perceptions. Example 3, on the contrary, one participant from the experimental group referred to the concept of culture as a group of characteristics that are shared by a society. This participant did not relate culture to national boundaries.

As for deep vs. shallow aspects of culture, it was seen that although the participants in the experimental and control groups referred to festivals, ways of dressing, food, among others, as the most representative features of a culture, the majority of respondents were able identify elements such as attitudes, behaviors, and values as part of culture (45.4% in the experimental group - 50% in the control group). This finding is positive, and it is an indication that the

participants thought beyond the visible aspects. To illustrate the characteristics of the definitions of culture addressed so far, two examples will be discussed.

Example 4. Definition of culture by PREEXGP16

Culture includes a quite big range of historical, social, political, religious, economic, and linguistic features and items that are part of a country's identity.

Example 5. Definition of culture by PRECGP13

For me culture refers to all the features that belong to the people who live in a specific city or country, it includes music, traditions, food, fashion, and manners.

Example 4, taken from the experimental group, shows how the participant listed a number of aspects, which go beyond the surface, as constituents of culture. Nonetheless, the definition can also be considered essentialist, since the participant associated such aspects to a country. Example 5, from the control group, depicts an answer with the characteristics previously described. The participant stated that culture comprises mainly visible aspects (shallow) and pointed out that such aspects were particular to a specific place (essentialist).

With respect to question 2, the same trend as in number 1 was found. The majority of the participants in the experimental group claimed they would include activities featuring essentially factual information (72.7%); only a few of them would include activities that raise awareness on diversity (22.7%), and a very small percentage would try to foster critical thinking or reflection on the matter (9.1%) or would expose learners to varieties of the target language (4.5%). As for the control group, similar results were obtained. All of the participants in the control group indicated that they would address superficial features (100%); just a few of them mentioned that they would also incorporate activities that raise awareness on diversity

(22.2%) or would expose learners to varieties of the language (5.5%). To illustrate the answers provided by both groups, Examples 6 and 7 depict some of the ideas the participants from the experimental (PREEXGP22) and control (PRECGRP10) groups gave regarding their future teaching practices and the way in which they would incorporate culture. As can be seen, they mostly mention shallow aspects as the ones they would address.

Example 6. Practices to include culture by PREEXGP22

I would include activities that make students understand and get to know specific aspects of the culture. For instance, doing a research [*sic*] and presentations about celebration of the world. Reading traditional stories from the culture we are studying.

Example 7. Practices to include culture by PRECGRP10

Probably I would bring to the class some videos and movies related to cultural stuff such as tourist places, traditional food, etc.

Example 6, from a participant in the experimental group, shows that teaching culture comes down to showing information about a country, emphasizing on traditional celebrations. It can be inferred that what the participant seeks is to familiarize his/her students with the most common traditions worldwide but does not go beyond declarative knowledge. No discussion, reflection, or critical thinking seem to be involved. In Example 7, the dynamics behind what the participant of the control group proposes is similar to the previous example. In this case, the participant maintains a very transmissionist approach; it only differs in the kind of information that would be included, but this still comprises shallow aspects such as tourist places, traditional food.

Continuing with question 3, a similar tendency as in the previous ones was found in that a very traditional paradigm was observed. In general, it can be seen that when teaching about culture, the majority of participants in the experimental group would be likely to address cultures, or actually countries, where the target language is spoken as a first language (59.1%). The cultures they mentioned were predominantly the USA, England, the UK, and France for those who will opt for teaching French. The likelihood to address such cultures in the participants' lesson is followed by practices that include their own culture (27.3%), and finally other cultures (22.7%); although by cultures, they generally refer to other countries. Regarding the control group, similar trends were found. For the participants, including cultures where the language is spoken as an L1 was the option that predominated (66.7%). As for the other two options, the same number of participants from the control group (27.8%) stated that they would include their own culture and others from diverse backgrounds in their lessons. The following are examples of answers given in the experimental (Example 8) and control (Examples 9 and 10) groups, in which the participants are adamant that cultures that speak the target language as an L1 should be the ones worth discussing.

Example 8. Cultures to include in teaching practices by PREEXGP14

The American culture and maybe European (but in Europe, just countries that speak English).

Example 9. Cultures to include in teaching practices by PRECGP08

I feel that as an English teacher, it is hard to incorporate my culture in a language. That is not common, as when I teach I think that I should incorporate more the American or British culture because they do speak the language.

Example 10. Cultures to include in teaching practices by PRECGP02

Taking into account the field of teaching that I am studying, the most common culture that I would address is the American culture.

In the three examples, it can be observed, in the first place, that an evident essentialist conception of culture predominates. In other words, the participants in both groups associate culture to a specific country or region, especially the USA and Great Britain; although, there is doubt about whether by British, they do refer to Great Britain or England. It is generally uncommon among learners to think about Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. In the second place, it could be affirmed that both groups tend to favor native-speakerism. Participant PREEXGP14, from the experimental group, for instance, clarifies that he/she would include cultures from Europe, but only those that speak English. Likewise, Participant, PRECGP08, from the control group, emphasizes that the American and British ‘do’ speak the language. These results point to a deep-rooted misconception that promotes historically dominant cultures. In addition, it neglects others that, despite being native speakers of the language, are never considered as such, let alone others that are not.

As for question number 4, on the participants’ knowledge of the concept of ICC, it could be said that in the pre-test, in the experimental group, the conceptualization that prevailed dealt with awareness of differences across cultures (50%) followed by values of respect and tolerance (36.4%), ability to communicate and function appropriately with other cultures (27.3%), and ability to interpret and understand other cultures (18.2%). In this group, three participants claimed not having any knowledge of the concept (13.6%). With respect to the control group, a slight variation was perceived. The definitions that predominated were those that linked ICC to the promotion of values of respect and tolerance towards others (44.4%). These were followed by the ability to communicate and function appropriately across different

cultures (38.9%), awareness of differences across cultures (27.8%), and finally, the ability to interpret and understand other cultures (22.2%). In the pre-test, one person claimed not having any knowledge of the concept (5.5%).

The evidence above suggests that the majority of participants in both groups had notions of what ICC involves. They referred to diversity, values, awareness of differences, appropriate communication, among others, which are aspects that are definitely immersed in ICC. In both groups, the definition that was closest to Deardorff's (2020), which was adopted as a benchmark in this research, was less recurrent and is in third place for both groups. Examples 11 and 12, from the experimental group, and 13, from the control group, show the insights the participants had regarding ICC.

Example 11. Definition of ICC by PREEXGP15

I think it is related to the performance that someone can have in different context
[sic].

Example 12. Definition of ICC by PREEXGP10

Intercultural competence is a skill for having a global vision about the world,
and identify these characteristics in the specific groups and communities.

Example 13. Definition of ICC by PRECGP05

For me, intercultural competence is when people from other countries exchange
different aspects of their culture such as traditions, costumes, ideas...

As can be seen in the examples above, the results regarding the participants' knowledge of ICC indicate that their definitions both in the experimental and control groups were incipient

and, in general, were far from the one adopted in this research: “ICC is the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to improve interactions across differences whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders” (Deardorff, 2020, p. i). It is clear that the participants were aware of cultural differences, values, and adequate communication. However, their perceptions of ICC were not coherent with the founding definition the majority of them had of culture and the way this should be incorporated and addressed in language lessons. In spite of these initial conditions, the fact that the participants in both groups had some insights into ICC is, without a doubt, a positive outcome, and it represents a good starting point to build on.

6.1.3. Discussion of Findings

Thus far, the analysis of part of the pre-test, comprising a Likert scale and four open-ended questions, has yielded information as to the participants’ perceptions of culture and its relevance in language teaching, their theoretical knowledge of culture and ICC, as well as their approach to the integration of culture in their future practice. On this basis, it is now possible to answer research question number 1: *How do pre-service EFL teachers perceive ICC?* In this vein, the findings show that, in the pre-test, the participants in both groups had a positive view regarding the foundations of the competence: culture. They acknowledged that the construct is as important as other aspects included in foreign language lessons. Nonetheless, their potential practices and perceptions as to how culture should be addressed adhered to a very traditional view that is not completely in line with the principles thought to foster ICC. In addition, when asked about their knowledge of ICC, the participants did not seem to have full understanding of the competence. In this sense, the ideal scenario would be to reach consensus and consistency among the elements involved in ICC, its conceptualization, and its effective development.

To discuss the above in depth, it is pertinent to first address the participants' view of culture and the place it has in their future practice given that culture represents an underlying principle of ICC. Following these lines, it can be said that from the perspective of the participants in both groups, culture has a place in language teaching, and for them, the construct is as important as any other element involved in the process such as grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, or pronunciation.

The findings regarding the cultural component suggest that culture is, at least from the participants' point of view, seen as an element worth including in English lessons, and it is given the same relevance as others. This outcome contradicts what Barletta (2009) found in her study, which pointed at the paramount role of the linguistic system over culture in language teaching/learning. It is consistent to a certain extent, however, with the findings in Peña-Dix' (2018) study. The results in her study indicated that the participants viewed culture as a relevant component of language lessons, but they tended to treat language and culture as separate elements; they were not likely to be integrated in the lessons. In all, Peña-Dix' (2018) study and this research converge in the fact that the participants acknowledged the important place of culture in language teaching.

The results up to this point are positive, and they reflect, at least, the willingness to incorporate culture in language teaching. As this chapter evolves, it will be possible to establish if such perceptions match the participants' practices. In this respect and with the aim of gathering further information that would support the findings collected so far, the participants were asked to answer four open-ended questions. They inquired about the participants' knowledge and views of culture and ICC and how they would integrate both in their future teaching practices.

In line with the above, it is necessary to take a look at the results concerning the participants' understanding of the concept of culture. In this regard, it was seen that a traditional

conception of culture was commonplace among participants in both groups, as they favored a static and essentialist view. A positive aspect was the fact that several participants in the two groups did include deep aspects in their definition of culture; at least half of them did in the experimental group, and a few of them in the control group, in which the majority defined it as the composite of superficial features. The findings of both groups are consistent with those obtained by Atmojo and Putra (2022), in which the pre-service teachers that made part of their study linked culture to cultural products and had a primarily essentialist perspective of the construct. Bearing these results in mind, it could be affirmed that even though the participants were motivated to include culture in their lessons, their view of the concept would possibly perpetuate practices such as the transmission of factual and, at times, stereotyped information, generally about a country where the target language is spoken as an L1.

As for how the participants would incorporate culture in their teaching, their answers were coherent with their conception of the construct. Among the majority of them, in both groups, the most common practice was the implementation of activities that tackle superficial aspects. In this respect, the results are in line with the findings of research conducted by Rojas-Barreto's (2019) and Olaya and Gómez (2013). In these studies, the participants, who were also pre-service language teachers, showed that they would limit their teaching to the transmission of knowledge about a specific culture as presented in the textbook. Likewise, when asked about the cultural topics they studied in class and the ones they would address, the vast majority mentioned aspects related to surface culture.

Section 2.6 reviewed a number of principles that have been put forward to develop ICC; they include awareness of cultural similarities and differences, (critical) reflection, and critical thinking from the beginning of the language teaching/learning process. Taking such principles as a basis and the fact that a transmissionist trend was found among the participants

in this study, it could be inferred that it is not possible to predict whether their potential practices will contribute to the development of ICC.

The outcome concerning the participants' future teaching practices is not surprising, as it has been a long-held trend in language lessons, in which teaching cultures generally equals presenting information on festivals, music, or food that are found in a specific country (see Esteban-Nuñez, 2021; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018; Olaya & Gómez, 2013). Shallow elements and oversimplified cultural manifestations are commonplace in most textbooks and teaching materials that claim to incorporate the cultural component. Therefore, the most usual practice in language lessons when it comes to culture is the mere presentation of facts and at times misleading information. As a consequence, that approach to culture is what the majority of language learners have as a benchmark.

Based on the results obtained and also those found in other studies (e.g., Chao, 2016; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021), it seems that among language teachers, there was a clear misconception when it comes to the incorporation of culture in language lessons. At this point, it is important to consider that the way in which culture is addressed in the language classroom sets the ground for the development of ICC. As a result, it is necessary to start shifting the paradigm and promote a view of culture beyond the surface. That way, there would be plenty of opportunities to discuss the context, values, and traditions behind what is visible, thus influencing the way in which people communicate and relate to others.

Turning the focus to the cultures that the participants would include in their teaching practice, another aspect that stood out, which is also in line with the view of culture that the participants of the experimental and control groups had. The vast majority of the participants in both groups made it clear that the cultures, or more specifically countries, in which the target language is spoken as an L1 were the ones they would most likely tackle in class. This outcome is coherent with the findings of prior research. In Olaya and Gómez' study (2013), for instance,

the participants affirmed that they were indeed interested in learning about culture and searched for cultural aspects outside the classroom on their own. However, they focused only on finding factual information on the American or British cultures. Likewise, Peña-Dix (2018) interviewed pre-service language teachers regarding the cultures they would incorporate in their lessons. Their answers revealed that they would address cultures of countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, and Canada.

On this basis, it is possible to affirm that the results obtained in this part of the present study are not unusual among pre-service language teachers. Additionally, it can be said that the results are in line with the predominantly static and essentialist definition of culture that the participants in both groups had previously given. This result indicates that the potential teaching practices involving culture are alike for both groups in the pre-test. In fact, the seemingly obvious answers from the participants' point of view, may be the result of the wrongfully deep rooted idea that native speakers of a language are to be imitated, especially the British and Americans when it comes to English (Barletta, 2008). This situation has long been encouraged in textbooks and also within foreign language teaching programs. With regard to the latter, it is common to find courses such as American cultural studies, British cultural studies, Intercultural communication in English, Intercultural communication in French, to name a few, as Cabrales-Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo (2018) found in their study. The evidence provided by the authors suggests that specific cultures are viewed as the benchmark in the curriculum of foreign language programs.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that when asked about their conceptualization of ICC, the participants in the experimental and control groups included only traces of what the competence actually involves. For the vast majority, ICC was a fuzzy concept. A number of them did acknowledge that ICC has to do with awareness of and respect and tolerance for cultural differences. Some of them also pointed out that it is the ability to

communicate effectively with people from other cultures. However, they were still unable to elaborate on the subject, as it has also been seen in other studies in which the pre-service teachers interviewed had a limited understanding of the competence, gave a partial definition, or did not provide a concept at all, therefore, were unable to operationalize it (see Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018).

The overall results from the analysis of the two sections of the pre-test used to answer the first research question are consistent and reflect the predominance of a traditional paradigm when it comes to what culture is and how it should be included in language lessons. As a result, there is no clarity regarding ICC, what it implies, and how it should be brought to practice among the pre-service teachers. These findings prevailed among the participants of the experimental group, the focus of this research, and were comparable to those of the control group. That is, both started out under the same conditions. This is an aspect that should be factored in when the impact of the intervention is analyzed.

6.2. Research Question 2

The previous section provided a general overview of the initial perceptions that the participants of the experimental and control groups had regarding ICC and also the grounds of this competence and the possibilities for this to be developed in the classroom. The results showed that the participants had some insights of ICC, but they did not have either a clear idea of the concept of ICC nor clarity on how to foster it in the classroom. What is more, it is uncertain if they have developed this competence themselves. In this vein, this section will be devoted to examining the initial level of ICC that the participants of the experimental and control groups displayed and answer the second research question: *What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?* To do so, three sections of the pre-test were used: 1) The intercultural profile questionnaire, taken from the INCA project, that provides a general measurement of the participants' ICC, 2) the analysis of five scenarios included in the INCA

project, which offer a more comprehensive view of the participants ICC by examining five constituent dimensions (behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy), and 3) the analysis of five critical incidents targeting the participants' metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability.

6.2.1. Participants' General Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence

To have a glimpse of the participants' general level of ICC, the intercultural profile questionnaire, adapted from the INCA project, was administered. The 21 items in this instrument address the six dimensions of ICC (see section 2.3.1 for description of six dimensions). However, they are not discriminated against to indicate which dimension each one belongs to. In line with this, it is important to remark that the results of the intercultural profile questionnaire provide a general picture of the ICC level, but it does not delve into each of the dimensions that are part of ICC. Along these lines, Table 18 presents the mean and standard deviation for each of the 21 items included in the questionnaire as well as the overall scores obtained from the experimental and control groups. In order to understand the level of ICC of the participants, it is necessary to bear in mind the scale that was used: 1 = basic level, 2 = intermediate, 3= full (see section 5.8.1 for complete description).

Table 18*Participants' General ICC Level - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test*

	Pre-test			
	Experimental		Control	
Item	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 Try new food	2.09	0.68	2.17	0.62
2 Seek contact with new people	2.41	0.67	2.39	0.70
3 Notice when people do not feel comfortable	2.82	0.39	2.50	0.71
4 Difficult to adapt	2.23	0.75	2.56	0.51
5 Ask when people behave differently	2.32	0.78	2.33	0.59
6 Think about people when they undergo a catastrophe	2.64	0.58	2.39	0.78
7 Observe to learn new rules	2.41	0.59	2.61	0.70
8 Ask when there are communication breakdowns	1.82	0.73	2.11	0.76
9 Ignore unfamiliar gestures	2.55	0.67	2.61	0.61
10 Watch body language	2.50	0.60	2.78	0.55
11 Use unambiguous words	2.50	0.67	2.56	0.62
12 Get confused with unreliable transport	2.09	0.87	1.94	0.64
13 Guess how others feel	2.05	0.72	1.94	0.64
14 Change plans while on holiday	1.86	0.64	2.00	0.59
15 Avoid contact when behaviors alienate	2.09	0.87	2.22	0.73
16 Switch to another language easily	2.45	0.74	2.78	0.43
17 Follow rules of own culture when not sure how to behave	2.14	0.64	1.94	0.73
18 Adopt work habits of new culture	1.32	0.48	1.33	0.59
19 Make up for inappropriate behaviors	2.86	0.35	2.56	0.62
20 Involve minorities in majority group	2.77	0.43	2.50	0.62
21 Change work habits when criticized	2.27	0.70	2.28	0.57
Overall mean score	2.29	0.65	2.31	0.63

* Difference is significant at <0.05 (Mann-Whitney U)

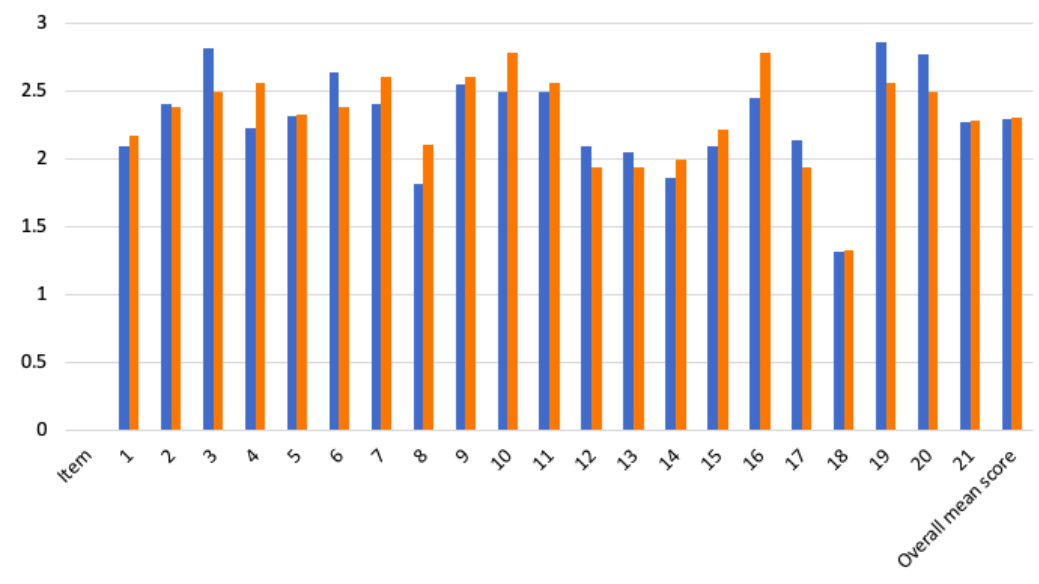
As shown in Table 18, the overall mean score obtained by the experimental group was 2.29. This score indicates that the participants in this group displayed an intermediate level of

ICC. In addition, it can be observed that most of the scores per item were over the 2 points that were required to be placed at an intermediate level. Only 3 items were below 2; that is, they were closer to a basic level (8: Ask when there are communication breakdowns, 14: Change plans while on holiday, 18: Adopt work habits of new culture); and 5 were closer to 3, or a full level of competence (3: Notice when people do not feel comfortable, 6: Think about people when they undergo a catastrophe, 9: Ignore unfamiliar gestures, 19: Make up for inappropriate behaviors, 21: Change work habits when criticized). With regard to the control group, a similar trend was observed. The overall score in this group was 2.31, which implies that the participants had an intermediate ICC level as well. In this group, however, 4 items were below 2, displaying a level closer to basic competence (12: Get confused with unreliable transport, 13: Guess how others feel, 17: Follow rules of own culture when not sure how to behave, 18: Adopt work habits of new culture); and 7 items were closer to 3; that is, they almost showed a full level of competence (4: Difficult to adapt, 7: Observe to learn new rules, 9: Ignore unfamiliar gestures, 10: Watch body language, 11: Use unambiguous words, 16: Switch to another language easily, 19: Make up for inappropriate behaviors).

Figure 8 illustrates the mean scores per item and overall mean obtained by the experimental and control groups in the pre-test with regard to their general ICC level.

Figure 8

Participants' General ICC Level - Mean per Item in the Questionnaire - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test



As can be seen in Figure 8, the mean scores for the 21 items were similar for both groups and placed them at an intermediate level of ICC. At this stage of development, according to the descriptors in the INCA project, individuals have “begun to induce simple principles to apply to the situation, rather than improvise reactively in response to isolated features of it. There will be evidence of a basic strategy and some coherent knowledge for dealing with situations” (INCA Project Team, 2004, p. 9).

In order to perform a further statistical analysis and determine whether the differences regarding the overall ICC level between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant, the scores obtained were first tested for normality. In this vein, a Shappiro-Wilk test was run, and the results for experimental group indicated a $W(462) = 0.77, p < .001$, a skewness of -0.53, and a kurtosis of -1.01. When it comes to the control group, the test showed a $W(378) = .77, p < .001$, a skewness of -0.52, and a kurtosis of -0.88 for the data in the pre-

test. These results revealed that the data collected deviates from normality. Therefore, non-parametric tests were required to analyze the information in terms of inferential statistics.

Based on the results above, the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was used to explore the differences between the experimental and control groups. The test indicated that the differences between the overall means of both groups were non-significant: experimental ($M = 2.29$) and control ($M = 2.31$), $U = 209$, $z = -0.290$, $p = 0.77$. A deeper descriptive analysis (see Table 18) suggests that the control group slightly outperformed the experimental group in 13 out of the 21 items, which represents 61.9%. However, this difference did not prove to be significant after performing the Mann-Whitney U test for each of the items. These outcomes suggest that the starting level of ICC, intermediate, for both groups was statistically equal.

6.2.2. Participants' Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence per Dimension

Hitherto, it has been possible to assess the general ICC level of participants in the experimental and control groups. According to the results, the level for both groups was set as intermediate. However, it is also important to deepen into the dynamics within each dimension of the competence. To meet this purpose, in a subsequent section of the pre-test, the participants were presented with five different scenarios, taken from the INCA project, that were formulated to assess the participants' level of ICC in terms of behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy²². Since the participants were free to analyze the scenarios according to their personal opinion, dimensions that were not meant to be analyzed emerged in some of the answers. These were tallied and rated as basic, intermediate, or full as per the parameters established in the INCA project. Consequently, 171 tokens from the experimental group and 133 tokens from the control group were obtained. Table 19 shows the results of the experimental and control groups regarding how the tokens

²² This section of the INCA Project is designed to assess five out of the six ICC dimensions; Communicative Awareness is not included.

were distributed in the five dimensions as well as the level they were assigned. This way, it was possible to determine the level that predominated in each dimension.

Table 19

Participants' ICC Level per Dimension - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test

Dimension	Level	Experimental		Control	
		N	%	N	%
Behavioral flexibility	Basic	12	57.1	8	42.1
	Intermediate	8	38.1	11	57.9
	Full	1	4.8	0	0
		21		19	
Tolerance of ambiguity	Basic	57	66.2	43	62.3
	Intermediate	24	28	26	37.7
	Full	5	5.8	0	0
		86		69	
Knowledge discovery	Basic	13	59.1	16	94.1
	Intermediate	8	36.4	1	5.9
	Full	1	4.5	0	0
		22		17	
Respect for otherness	Basic	16	76.2	12	75
	Intermediate	5	23.8	4	25
	Full	0	0	0	0
		21		16	
Empathy	Basic	15	71.4	9	75
	Intermediate	5	23.8	3	25
	Full	1	4.8	0	0
		21		12	
Total		171		133	

As can be seen in Table 19, in the pre-test, the majority of participants in the experimental group had a basic level of competence across the five dimensions, namely behavioral flexibility (57.1%), tolerance ambiguity (66.2%), knowledge discovery (59.1%), respect for otherness (76.2%), and empathy (71.4%). It is also worth noting that in the experimental group, there was a marked difference between the values obtained at basic level and those at intermediate level. With respect to the control group, the participants had a basic level in four dimensions: tolerance ambiguity (62.3%), knowledge discovery (94.1%), respect for otherness (75%), and empathy (75%). When it comes to behavioral flexibility, more than half of the participants displayed an intermediate level (57.9%), but the value obtained does not differ greatly from that in the basic level (42.1%).

At large, it can be asserted that there were commonalities between the experimental and control groups, and only subtle differences were found. First, the experimental group had at a basic level in all five dimensions. The control group, in contrast, showed a basic level in four out of the five dimensions and an intermediate level in one of them. Second, only the experimental group, although very few, produced answers that corresponded to a full level. That is evident for behavioral flexibility (4.8%), tolerance of ambiguity (5.8%), knowledge discovery (4.5%), and empathy (4.8%).

Interpreting the results using the parameters established by the INCA project, it can be said that when it comes to tolerance ambiguity, in the experimental group, most participants lacked a systematic approach to deal with intercultural encounters and felt uneasy when facing ambiguous or unclear situations. As for behavioral flexibility, they were likely to adopt a reactive approach to situations and learn only from experience. Concerning knowledge discovery, the majority of participants had limited factual knowledge about other cultures and learned about them in an unsystematic way. When it comes to respect for otherness, the experimental group had a tendency to judge other cultural behaviors based on their own perception of good or bad. Finally, regarding empathy, most participants saw differences as strange, and these were a source of confusion. Examples 14 and 15, corresponding to participants in the experimental group, present two answers, classified as basic, that tackle behavioral flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity respectively.

Example 14. Answer to scenario 2 (Accommodation) by PREEXGP09

The main reason for my decision is for my comfort, I am very used to being alone, living alone and doing my things alone.

Example 15. Answer to scenario 5 (Feeling confused) by PREEXGP05

I find it difficult because it is frustrating not to understand what others say and to be excluded ... I think that when you don't feel safe enough in something you don't understand, it's better to get away from it.

In Example 14, it can be observed that when the participant was presented with a situation in which he/she had to choose where to live, he/she selected the conditions that best fit the ones he/she had in his/her home country. Therefore, the answer was assigned basic behavioral flexibility. The second example depicts a situation in which the participant from the experimental group displayed basic tolerance of ambiguity. Instead of proposing a strategy to deal with the situation, he/she opted for avoiding it.

As for the control group, the findings lead to infer that with regard to behavioral flexibility, in which the majority of the participants had an intermediate level, they probably applied their previous experience to deal with intercultural situations in a way that they are willing to conform to other cultural patterns. Regarding the remaining four dimensions, in which a basic level prevailed, the results can be understood as follows. For tolerance of ambiguity, the participants dealt with the incident on the spot, without any previous plan or strategy and felt somewhat overwhelmed by situations that represent some degree of ambiguity. Concerning knowledge discovery, the group lacked deep knowledge about the other culture and systematic strategies to acquire it; they learned by incidental discovery. With regard to respect for otherness, in intercultural encounters, participants tended to be judgmental, and evaluate differences as good or bad based on their cultural mindset. In terms of empathy, most participants were likely to get confused about behaviors that did not match their standards of 'normality'. An example of an answer framed into respect for otherness and behavioral

flexibility which were classified as basic can be seen in Example 16, from a participant in the control group.

Example 16. Answer to scenario 3 (Finding your place in a team) by PRECGP08

I don't understand why this people [*sic*] are so formal, to me it makes more sense my way as we spend so much time together we could cut the formalities, I'm trying to stay calm and not saying anything that could cause problems but I'm really bored about this situation.

Example 16 shows that the participant was judgmental and did not seem to see things from the perspective of the culture of the host country, which are characteristics of a person who does not display acceptance or tolerance for behaviors or customs that are different from his/hers. In addition, this participant did not make the slightest effort to comply with the new rules. Therefore, it can be concluded that his/her level of behavioral flexibility was basic.

With the results above as a basis, it can be inferred that the overall level of competence among participants of the experimental and control groups was basic. That is, in general, the participants will eventually display willingness to deal with the intercultural encounter, but for the time being, they try to find short-term solutions for intercultural misunderstandings and incidents using coping strategies that are rather unsystematic and improvised. This result indicates that their starting level was comparable in the pre-test. Nonetheless, despite the insights into the participants ICC level per dimension gained up to this point, it is also important to review the participants' ICC level from another perspective, in this case, from a pragmatic and metapragmatic point of view. In this way, it will be possible to come to an agreement as to the most accurate measure of the participants' level of ICC.

6.2.3. Participants' Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability

Thus far, section 6.2 has presented the results and analysis of two types of data. These have provided information on the overall ICC level of participants in the experimental and control groups as well as their level in each of the five dimensions of the competence. When it comes to overall ICC, it was seen that the participants in both groups had an intermediate level. However, when they were tested in the five dimensions, divergent results were obtained, and it was seen that the participants in both groups displayed a basic level of competence in all dimensions, except for behavioral flexibility in the control group. In spite of these contradicting results, it was possible to have an approximation of the participants' level of competence in the pre-test. However, the instruments used to collect data and therefore the analysis fall short when it comes to assessing metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability.

In this dissertation, metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability are conceived as indicators of ICC, following the claims of authors such as McConachy (2018), McConachy and Liddicoat (2016), and Sánchez-Hernández and Maíz-Arévalo (2021). For this reason, and as explained in section 2.3, the analysis of the Intercultural Incidents Task (Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021) was chosen to investigate the participants' ICC level from the metapragmatic stance by assessing their pragmatic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, and intercultural adaptability. To attain this objective, the participants were asked to critically evaluate five intercultural incidents. Their answers were first classified into the categories: pragmatlinguistic awareness (PL), sociopragmatic awareness (SP), and intercultural adaptability (IA), and were then rated as initial, intermediate, or mature. Table 20 shows the results of the level of metapragmatic awareness, and ultimately ICC, of the participants in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test. Particularly, the table describes the number of students displaying initial, intermediate, or mature level for each competence (pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic, and intercultural adaptability) per incident.

The percentages obtained are the product of the overall number per competence in each level compared to the total number of students in each group (N= 18 in the control group – N=22 in the experimental group).

Table 20

Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability- Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test

		Pre-test							
		Experimental				Control			
	Incident	PL	SP	IA		PL	SP	IA	
Initial	Uber	1	5	10		3	0	8	
	Christmas	1	13	10		1	7	10	
	Professor	0	4	11		0	3	9	
	Girls	4	2	13		4	0	11	
	Shoes	0	5	8		2	2	11	
	N	6	29	52	87	10	12	49	71
	%	5.4	26.4	47.3	40.5	11.11	13.3	54.4	42
Intermediate	Uber	6	0	10		7	2	8	
	Christmas	3	1	12		1	6	8	
	Professor	3	13	9		5	11	6	
	Girls	14	15	9		3	10	7	
	Shoes	13	3	12		7	9	5	
	N	39	32	52	123	23	38	34	95
	%	35.4	29.1	47.3	57.2	25.5	42.2	37.8	56.2
Mature	Uber	0	0	1		0	0	0	
	Christmas	0	1	0		0	0	0	
	Professor	0	1	0		0	0	1	
	Girls	1	0	0		2	0	0	
	Shoes	0	0	1		0	0	0	
	N	1	2	2	5	2	0	1	3
	%	0.1	1.8	1.8	2.3	2.2	0	1.1	1.8

Table 20 presents the consolidated results of the experimental and control groups with regard to metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability in the pre-test. To understand the findings obtained in detail, the results of the experimental group will be first discussed. Following these lines, it can be said that in terms of overall competence, the majority of the participants in the experimental group, 57.2%, had an intermediate level of ICC, followed by 40.5% of them with an initial level of the competence, and 2.3% with a mature level, which represents a very small percentage. An analysis within each of the constituents of ICC reveals

that the majority of those in the experimental group displayed an intermediate level in terms of pragmalinguistic competence with 35.4%; a smaller percentage had an initial level, with 5.4%; and only 0.1% of the participants had a mature level. The differences in the percentages suggests that there was a clear tendency among these participants towards an intermediate level. With respect to sociopragmatic competence, it is seen that 29.1% of the participants in the experimental group showed an intermediate level. This was followed by 26.4% with an initial level and 1.8% with a mature level. In this case, it can be observed that there is not a marked difference between the number of participants with intermediate and initial level of sociopragmatic awareness. Lastly, in regard to intercultural adaptability, an even number of participants displayed an initial and intermediate level with 47.3% each. These findings indicate that it is not possible to say that the level shown by the experimental group is clear-cut. Nevertheless, the overall levels displayed in each competence give an account of certain prevailing features among participants.

As for the intermediate level observed in pragmalinguistic awareness, it can be said that the participants were capable of pointing out the linguistic source of the intercultural misunderstanding and could provide a linguistic strategy to deal with it, as indicated in Example 17, from a participant in the experimental group.

Example 17. Pragmalinguistic awareness (Incident 4) by PREEXGP14

In this case, the misunderstanding was due to a confusion in the meaning of a word, which was misinterpreted as an insult when it was intended as a compliment.

In Example 17, it can be seen that the participant in the experimental group indicated that the source of the misunderstanding was of linguistic nature. He/she also identified a perlocutionary act, which was an offense; however, he/she did not explicitly state it.

When it comes to sociopragmatic awareness, most of the participants in the experimental group identified the types of relationships between the interactants and their influence in communication as well as elements such as social distance, power, or cultural similarity. These aspects are illustrated in Example 18.

Example 18. Sociopragmatic awareness (Incident 3) by PREEXGP10

I would have asked the teacher if she felt comfortable receiving something in the form of thanks before deciding. Beyond being an aspect of culture, it can also be a factor of identity, there are people who simply do not like to receive gifts or prefer not to have interactions beyond the academic context.

The participant quoted in Example 18 pointed out two aspects. One refers to the role of culture; although he/she downplayed it, he/she mentioned it as a potential source of misunderstanding. The second one is distance between the student and the professor, which could have influenced the misinterpretation of the student's actions.

As for intercultural adaptability, in which the same number of participants in the experimental group obtained an initial and an intermediate level, it can be affirmed that those in the initial tier seemed to be unwilling to adapt to the situation, expressed that the misunderstanding could not have been avoided, proposed unhelpful solutions, or displayed traces of ethnocentrism. In contrast, participants in the intermediate tier were apparently more willing to adapt communicatively or psychologically to the situation, put forward adaptation strategies of their own, and took a neutral stance towards the target culture. The contrast between initial and intermediate levels of intercultural adaptability can be observed in Examples 19 and 20, from two participants in the experimental group.

Example 19. Intercultural adaptability – initial level (Incident 4) by PREEXGP06

It could have been avoided as well if the woman had had an open mind and tried to understand that even if the language is the same, some things can be different.

Example 20. Intercultural adaptability – intermediate level (Incident 2) by PREEXGP13

I would have explained to them about the traditions in Colombia, about “Natilla” and how this is made, and maybe give them just a little bit to try because Natilla is a new dish for them.

In Example 19, it can be observed that the participant put the blame on the interlocutor and did not show any willingness to negotiate or suggest another type of solution. In contrast, in Example 20, the participant showed that he/she did not want to impose his/her traditions; he/she tried to somehow explore and negotiate to make his/her traditions fit in the new ones.

Concerning the control group and their general level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, the results in Table 20 show that most participants, which equals 56.2%, had an intermediate level of competence, 42% an initial level, and only 1.8% a mature level of competence. Taking a closer look at each of the competences, it can be observed that when it comes to pragmalinguistic awareness, most participants showed an intermediate level (25.5%), a smaller number displayed an initial level (11.11%), and no participants with a mature level. As for sociopragmatic awareness, a similar trend was found; 42.2% of the participants in the control group had an intermediate level, 13.3% an initial level, and 0% a mature level of competence. With regard to intercultural adaptability, the tendency remained, and the majority of participants displayed an intermediate level of competence (56.2%), followed by 42% of them with an initial level, and 1.8% with mature level. Perhaps, the smaller

difference in the number of participants with intermediate and initial level was seen in the strand concerning intercultural adaptability.

The scores regarding the level of the participants' ICC in each competence can be explained as follows. In terms of pragmalinguistic awareness, the majority of participants in the control group were able to identify the linguistic misunderstanding and were capable of proposing a linguistic strategy to solve it, including implicit reference to speech acts, address forms, politeness or impoliteness. Answers of this kind are illustrated in Example 21.

Example 21. Pragmalinguistic awareness (Incident 4) by PRECGP16

The misunderstanding could have been avoided if he had used more formal vocabulary instead of slang.

As can be observed in Example 21, the participant from the control group mentioned that the intercultural misunderstanding has a linguistic source; he/she specifically pointed out that the use of a colloquial word resulted in the misinterpretation of a message.

As for sociopragmatic awareness, the results show that most participants were aware of the relationship between the interlocutors and how this affected the conversation. Also, they implicitly indicated aspects such as social distance, power, or cultural similarity/difference, as it is possible to see in Example 22.

Example 22. Sociopragmatic awareness (Incident 3) by PRECGP13

The student thought that buying a cup of coffee for his professor was a good gesture since he wanted to show some gratitude to him, but he did not expect that his professor was not allowed to receive any gifts from his students because in the student's culture it was quite normal to give something small as a gesture of gratitude.

In Example 22, it is possible to see that the participant from the control group acknowledged that distance (student – professor) and cultural differences played a role in effective communication, especially in the professor’s interpretation of the student’s actions.

In terms of intercultural adaptability, most participants displayed one or more of these characteristics: unwillingness to adapt communicatively or psychologically to the situation, feeling that the misunderstanding could not have been avoided, offer of unhelpful solutions, or signs of ethnocentrism. Examples 23, 24, and 25 illustrate one or more of such features:

Example 23. Intercultural adaptability (Incident 2) by PRECGP18

No, there is simply no way to avoid a cultural shock in this case, since people are not used to the customs of other languages, thus they wouldn’t know they do something wrong or right.

Example 24. Intercultural adaptability (Incident 2) by PRECGP03

I would try to say that these traditions are very important to me, so they might understand.

Example 25. Intercultural adaptability (Incident 5) by PRECGP06

Yes, it could have been avoided if only she would have respected other people’s preferences and the fact that she is in another country, not in her house.

Example 23 indicates how the participant from the control group did not offer any type of solution to the situation he/she was presented with. Example 24 represents the participant’s ethnocentrism. He/she did not make any effort to adapt either psychologically or

communicatively; instead, he/she expected his/her interlocutors to understand her position and hinted at the fact that they should be the ones who had to adapt. In Example 25, the participant attempted to offer a way out, but this was of no use.

After the analysis of the results of the pre-test for the experimental and control groups, it is possible to see that the level of competence obtained in the three components (pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, intercultural adaptability) was similar for both groups. When it comes to pragmalinguistic awareness, an intermediate level prevailed among participants, with 35.4% for the experimental group and 25.5% for the control group. An initial level was also seen in 5.4% of the participants in the experimental group and 11.11% in participants in the control group. This outcome suggests that there is a marked difference as to the number of participants that displayed an intermediate and an initial level of competence. Finally, only 0.1% and 0% of the participants in the experimental and control groups, respectively, showed a mature level. Considering the distribution of the percentages across the levels of competence, it could be said that the experimental group may have performed slightly better than the control group when it comes to pragmalinguistic awareness.

Concerning sociopragmatic awareness, it can be observed that an intermediate level of competence predominated among the majority of the participants in the experimental (29.9%) and control (42.2%) groups. A smaller percentage of participants displayed an initial level with 26.4% for the experimental group and 13.3% for the control groups, and only 1.8% of the participants in the experimental group had a mature level. Looking at the percentages obtained by each group in each level, it can be seen that there is not a significant difference between the number of participants in the experimental group with intermediate and initial level of competence. The difference between those two levels, however, is evident in the control group. This finding suggests that an intermediate level of sociopragmatic awareness may be more solid in the control group than it is in the experimental group.

Regarding intercultural adaptability, a more visible variation between both groups can be perceived. In the experimental group, the same percentage of participants with an initial and an intermediate level was observed, with 47.3% in each. In contrast, the majority of participants in the control group showed an initial level followed by an intermediate level with 54.4% and 37.8% respectively. As for a mature level of intercultural adaptability, both groups were very close, with 1.8% of participants in the experimental group and 1.1% of participants in the control group. From the results, it can be inferred that there were no striking differences in the number of participants with initial and intermediate levels of intercultural adaptability.

Delving into these results of the experimental and control groups, it can be affirmed that both groups coincided in several aspects. Thus, it could be said that they showed similar characteristics regarding metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability at the start of the research. With regard to pragmalinguistic competence, it seems that in both groups, the participants could identify that a misunderstanding of linguistic nature had occurred or proposed a linguistic solution to deal with it; nonetheless, they were still unable to make explicit reference to linguistic aspects. Likewise, considering sociopragmatic competence, the participants in both groups were aware of the relationship between interlocutors and how that affected the interaction; yet, they did not make explicit reference to the type of relationship. Finally, in terms of intercultural adaptability, with respect to the experimental group, it is worth noting that an even number of participants displayed a basic and an intermediate level. As a result, those whose level was classified as intermediate were more willing to adapt to the situation either psychologically or communicatively, offer feasible strategies to cope with the incidents, and adopt a more neutral cultural stance. As for the participants with an initial level, they were not likely to adjust to the situation portrayed in the incidents nor did they propose a feasible solution. These features also applied to the control group, in which the majority of participants had an initial level.

To conclude, upon the analysis of the results of the pre-test for the experimental and control groups, a common tendency was evident in both. It has to do with the fact that even though the answers classified as pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic were assigned an intermediate level, the number of this type of answers was relatively low compared to those framed within intercultural adaptability. If the total in that category is contrasted to that of pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic nature, it is seen that for the last two, the total number of elements was relatively low.

6.2.4. Discussion of Findings

Section 6.2 presented the results of three parts of the pre-test that provided information on the participants' overall ICC level, their level in each ICC dimension, and their level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability. The results of the three were analyzed and compared to answer the second research question: *What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?* In this sense, altogether, it was seen that in terms of overall ICC, the participants of the experimental and control groups showed an intermediate level of competence. When the five dimensions of ICC were examined, the experimental and control groups displayed a predominantly basic level in all of them, except for the control group, which showed an intermediate level in behavioral flexibility. As for metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, both groups had an overall intermediate level. The only difference that stood out had to do with intercultural adaptability, in which the experimental group had an equal number of participants with an initial and an intermediate level. In the control group, in turn, most participants showed an initial level.

In a more detailed analysis, it can be said that with regard to the participants' general ICC level, which was established by the intercultural profile questionnaire, both the experimental and control groups showed an intermediate level. The data analyzed up to that point provided a glimpse of the participants' likelihood to deal with intercultural situations and

misunderstandings. However, the results regarding ICC level can be taken as a basis despite not knowing the specific strengths and weaknesses that the participants had, as the instrument used to measure their level did not delve into specific dimensions or areas of ICC.

Concerning the participants' competence in five dimensions of ICC, examined through the analysis of five scenarios in the INCA project, the level displayed by both groups was initial in almost all dimensions except for behavioral flexibility. In this dimension, the control group showed an intermediate level. These results contrasted with the ones obtained when the overall ICC was measured and suggest one possible situation. It has to do with the need to inquire into the components of the competence to have a more accurate appraisal of the individuals' ICC level. Having this kind of detailed information at hand may lead to more focused pedagogical practices intended to improve the weak areas that the participants displayed.

Finally, the analysis of the level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability yielded results that were consistent with the ones related to the participants' overall ICC, in which an intermediate level prevailed in both groups. Nonetheless, the results differed from those involving the five dimensions of ICC, in which a basic level prevailed across dimensions in both groups. It is worth pointing out that when the competences (pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, intercultural adaptability) were analyzed individually, both groups showed an intermediate level in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness. With regard to intercultural adaptability, in the experimental group, the same number of participants had an initial and an intermediate level of competence. In the control group, in turn, the majority displayed a basic level.

In short, two of the three instruments used to establish the level of the participants' ICC yielded consistent results, and that is the fact that the experimental and control groups had an intermediate level. Conversely, when their competence was analyzed considering the five dimensions, the findings revealed an initial level of competence in both groups. In this sense,

it is worth taking a closer look at the instruments and its particularities to try to understand where the results diverged and where they converged. As mentioned earlier in this document, the first instrument used to assess ICC level gives a general picture of the participants' ICC. However, the other two tackled additional details of ICC. The way in which the five dimensions of ICC (behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy) are conceived in the INCA project point to the use of strategies in distinct areas. These move from impromptu attempts to well-planned schemes, to cope with and adapt to intercultural encounters for the sake of effective interaction and communication. In that sense, it could be said the dimensions, and especially, behavioral flexibility, resembles intercultural adaptability, which is one of the competences assessed in the third test through the Intercultural Incidents Task. In fact, the assessee version of the INCA Project groups behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness within a strand called *adaptability* (see section 1.3.1 for description of the INCA project). In addition, researchers such as Garrote-Salazar (2016) had already tackled the similarities between both: adaptability and behavioral flexibility.

This could be a meeting point between both tests; that is, they address similar areas of ICC that deal with one's capability to adjust communicatively or behaviorally to an unfamiliar situation. From that perspective, it can be affirmed that the results that the participants of the experimental and control groups obtained in the five dimensions of ICC and those obtained in the intercultural adaptability part coincide to a great extent. The level of competence in the five dimensions was basic for both groups, and the level seen in the section devoted to intercultural adaptability was basic for half the experimental group and the entire control group.

Regarding pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness, the participants in both groups showed an intermediate level. This result indicates that the participants displayed strengths in these areas in the field of pragmatics, a fact that translates into their ability to pin-

point linguistic sources of misunderstandings and also provide solutions of the same kind. When it comes to sociopragmatic competence, the outcome implies that the participants were capable of identifying power, social distance, and cultural differences/similarities as factors that may interfere with proper interactions. Nonetheless, this point needs further analysis. Based on the results for both areas, even though most of the answers were assigned an intermediate level, the overall number of responses of such kind was low when compared to the number obtained in intercultural adaptability.

One reason that may explain the scenario described above is the fact that in order to identify or put forward pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic aspects, the participants should have received prior instruction on the field. That was not the case in the undergraduate program the participants were enrolled in, where it seemed that explicit pragmatic instruction was scarce, or at least it was not evident in the curriculum (see section 5.3 for description of the context of the study). In this regard, Liddicoat (2014) argues that incidental teaching/learning is not enough to develop pragmatic knowledge; language educators must purposefully create the proper scenarios for this to take place. What is more, in cases in which pragmatics is involved, research has shown that explicit teaching is preferred, as it has shown to lead to noticeable changes in the learners' pragmatic competence. This would include enhanced pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness (Ishihara & Cohen, 2022). As for intercultural adaptability, learners relied on their own opinion or prior experiences instead of formal knowledge acquired through instruction.

In all, considering the previous analysis, it can be said that in the pre-test, the participants in the experimental and control groups displayed an initial to intermediate level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability. In addition, it is possible to affirm that in both groups, the participants' level of competence varied according to the areas that were explored. That is, the participants in both groups seemed to lack systematic strategies that

would allow them to explore, understand, empathize, and adapt to situations that were unfamiliar for them or their cultural mindset. They were, however, capable of identifying pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic sources of intercultural clashes, to a certain extent, as well as adapting to avoid or deal with burdens of those two types.

6.3. Research Question 3

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 addressed the first two research questions and offered an early account of the participants' perceptions of culture, knowledge of ICC, their potential practices integrating these constructs, and their level of ICC. In order to answer the first two questions, it was necessary to analyze the data gathered through the pre-test. Following the design of this study, upon the administration of the pre-test, the experimental group was subject to an intervention in the form of a training course accompanied by LS. The purpose of the former was to set and build the foundations of ICC taking into account the principles established by Liddicoat (2004) Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) and Peyman et al. (2016) (see section 2.6 for detailed description of theoretical grounds of the course). The objective of the latter was to serve as a pedagogical approach that could assist the participants in the experimental group in integrating the knowledge of ICC they acquired in the course into their teaching practices. Once the intervention was completed, the post-test was administered to the experimental and control groups. The information collected after the intervention allowed giving an answer to research questions 3 and 4. This section will focus on number 3: *To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?*

The parts or instruments within the post-test used to establish the level of the participants' ICC were the same as in the pre-test with a few adjustments described in section 5.7. In this vein, the results were analyzed and discussed as follows: in the first place, the results gathered through the intercultural profile questionnaire, which gave an overview of the

participants' ICC; second, the scenarios that were part of the INCA project, which tackled five different dimensions of ICC; third, the results of the analysis of the Intercultural Incidents Task that assessed the participants' pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness as well as their intercultural adaptability. Against this background and with the purpose of examining any gains in the level of ICC, specifically in the experimental group, the information collected through the pre-test and post-test through each of the three parts was contrasted.

6.3.1. Changes in Participants' General Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence

As stated earlier, the instrument used to determine the participants' overall ICC level in the post-test was the intercultural profile questionnaire, with the adjustments indicated in section 5.7 of the methodology. The objective of its administration was to obtain a general view of the participants' ICC competence 12 weeks after the pre-test was administered and after the experimental group received the intervention. The results collected at this stage made it possible to make two types of comparisons, first, the scores of both groups in the post-test; then the results of the pre-test and post-test for each group. Analyzing those data allowed determining the extent of the progress of each group and also the effects and reach of the intervention on the general ICC of the participants in the experimental group. Table 21 presents the results of the pre-test and post-test for the experimental and control groups. The mean for each of the 21 items in the intercultural profile questionnaire and the overall scores can be observed as well as the difference between the pre-test and post-test for both groups.

Table 21

Participants' General ICC Level - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test and Post-test

	Experimental			Control		
Item	Pre-test	Post- test	Diff	Pre-test	Post-test	Diff
1 Try new food	2.09	2.64	0.55*	2.17	2.72	0.55*
2 Seek contact with new people	2.41	2.77	0.36*	2.39	2.89	0.5*
3 Notice when people do not feel comfortable	2.82	2.27	-0.55*	2.50	2.17	-0.33
4 Difficult to adapt	2.23	2.23	0	2.56	2.39	-0.17
5 Ask when people behave differently	2.32	2.32	0	2.33	2.39	0.06
6 Think about people when they undergo a catastrophe	2.64	2.68	0.04	2.39	2.39	0
7 Observe to learn new rules	2.41	2.82	0.41*	2.61	2.83	0.22
8 Ask when there are communication breakdowns	1.82	2.50	0.68*	2.11	2.44	0.33
9 Ignore unfamiliar gestures	2.55	2.27	-0.28	2.61	2.61	0
10 Watch body language	2.50	2.64	0.14	2.78	2.67	-0.11
11 Use unambiguous words	2.50	2.23	-0.27	2.56	2.33	-0.23
12 Get confused with unreliable transport	2.09	2.32	0.23	1.94	2.00	0.06
13 Guess how others feel	2.05	1.95	-0.1	1.94	2.17	0.23
14 Change plans while on holiday	1.86	2.32	0.46	2.00	2.61	0.61*
15 Avoid contact when behaviors alienate	2.09	1.82	-0.27	2.22	2.22	0
16 Switch to another language easily	2.45	2.68	0.23	2.78	2.72	-0.06
17 Follow rules of own culture when not sure how to behave	2.14	1.95	-0.19	1.94	2.06	0.12
18 Adopt work habits of new culture	1.32	2.09	0.77*	1.33	1.94	0.61*
19 Make up for inappropriate behaviors	2.86	2.86	0	2.56	2.78	0.22
20 Involve minorities in majority group	2.77	2.73	-0.04	2.50	2.50	0
21 Change work habits when criticized	2.27	2.59	0.32*	2.28	2.56	0.28
Overall mean score	2.29	2.41	0.12	2.31	2.45	0.14*

*Difference is significant at <0.05 (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank)

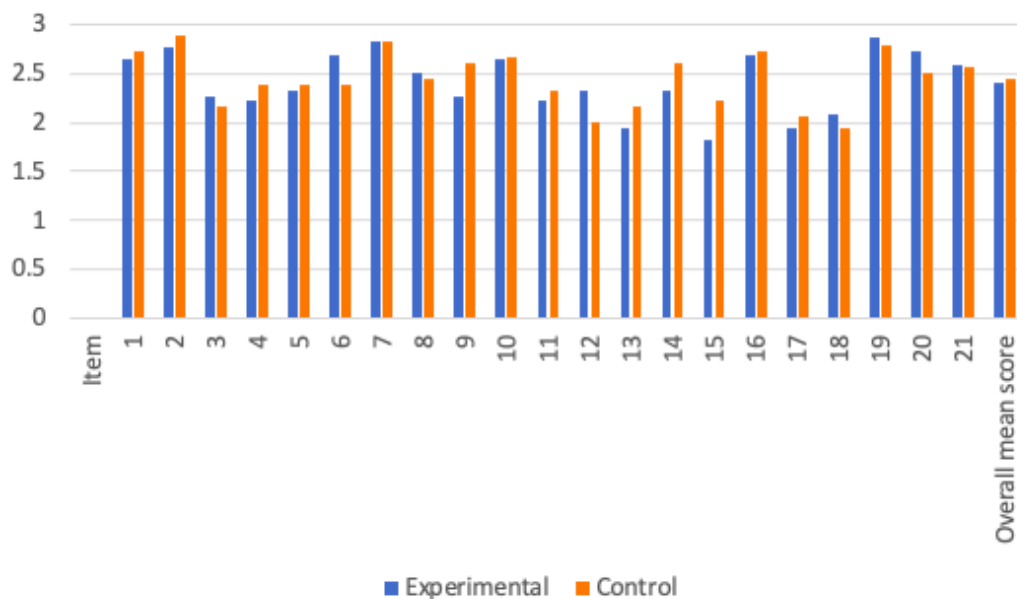
Note. The values for the difference column are the changes from the pre-test to the post-test.

As discussed earlier in section 6.2.1, and as we can see in Table 21, in the pre-test, both groups showed an intermediate level of ICC, with an overall mean score of 2.29 for the experimental group and 2.31 for the control group. Turning to the results of the post-test, it is observed that the experimental group displayed an overall intermediate level of competence, with 2.41. In this group, 18 items obtained a score of over 2, which, according to the scale, indicated an intermediate level. However, 9 out of the 18 were closer to 3, almost reaching a full level, and the remaining 3 received a score under 2, which points to an initial level. Similar scores were obtained in the control group, in which an intermediate level of ICC prevailed, with 2.45. Analyzing the results per item, it is seen that the participants in this group showed an intermediate level in 20 items. In a similar fashion, 9 out of the 20 obtained a score closer to 3, and the only item remaining was classified as basic.

Figure 9 provides a visual representation of the results of the post-test, which were displayed in Table 21. The figure illustrates the mean scores for each of the 21 items as well as the overall score obtained from both groups in the post-test

Figure 9

Participants' General ICC Level - Mean per Item in the Questionnaire - Experimental and Control Groups in Post-test



As can be seen in Figure 9, the scores obtained from both groups in the post-test were alike. The control group slightly outperformed the experimental group, yet both had an overall intermediate level of ICC, with a mean score of 2.41 for the experimental group and 2.45 for the control group. With the aim of determining any significant differences with the help of a statistical test, it was necessary to establish the normality of the data using the Shappiro-Wilk test. The results yielded a $W(462) = 0.74, p < .001$, a skewness of -0.7897, and a kurtosis of -0.6464 for experimental group and a $W(378) = .73, p < .00$, a skewness: -0.8564, and a kurtosis of -0.4867 for the control group. These results indicate the non-normality of the data. As a result, non-parametric tests were used to analyze the information in terms of inferential statistics.

Along these lines, the overall mean scores of the post-test for both groups were compared using the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples. The results of the test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and the

control groups ($U = 217.5$, $z = -0.07$, $p = 0.94$). When it comes to the analysis per item in the post-test, the findings indicate that the control group did slightly better than the experimental group in 12 out of the 21 items, which represents a 57,14%. Nonetheless, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples showed that, when comparing both groups, this difference was not statistically significant. Altogether, the results imply that the performance of both groups in the post-test was virtually the same. This finding applies to overall ICC and also to the analysis per item. In other words, in spite of the intervention the experimental group received, their ICC level did not display any apparent gains, at least when their general competence was measured.

In addition to the analysis of the post-test between the experimental and control groups, the difference between the pre-test and post-test for each group was also examined. The comparison between both tests for each group allowed identifying any changes in the participants' ICC level from the onset of the study up until its completion. To begin, Figure 10 graphically displays the mean scores for each of the 21 items as well as the overall score obtained from the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test. These data can also be examined in Table 21.

Figure 10

Participants' General ICC Level - Mean per Item in the Questionnaire - Experimental Group in Pre-test and Post-test

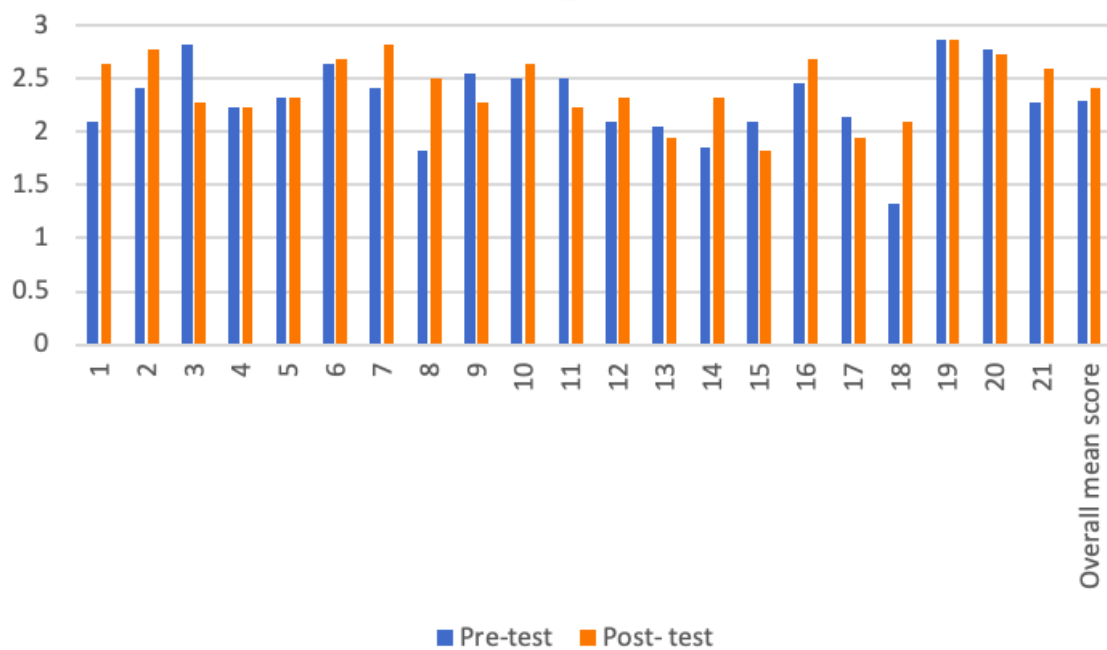


Figure 10 and Table 21 indicate that a slight increase of 0.12 in the overall ICC level in the experimental group was perceived when comparing the pre-test and post-test. Nevertheless, after running the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank for paired samples, this difference did not prove to be significant when comparing both tests ($z = 1.5$, $p = .144$, $r = 0.3$). This outcome implies the absence of any substantial gains in the participants' ICC after the intervention, which remained the same, at an intermediate level.

Taking a closer look at individual items, it was seen that, in the post-test, the group gave higher scores to 11 out of the 21 items in the questionnaire, which equals 66.7%. The variation between the pre-test and post-test, calculated using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test for paired samples, was significant for 6 of the 11 items: 1(Try new food) ($z = 2.6$, $p = .009$, $r = 0.8$), 2 (Seek contact with new people) ($z = 2.1$, $p = .037$, $r = 0.6$), 7 (Observe to learn new

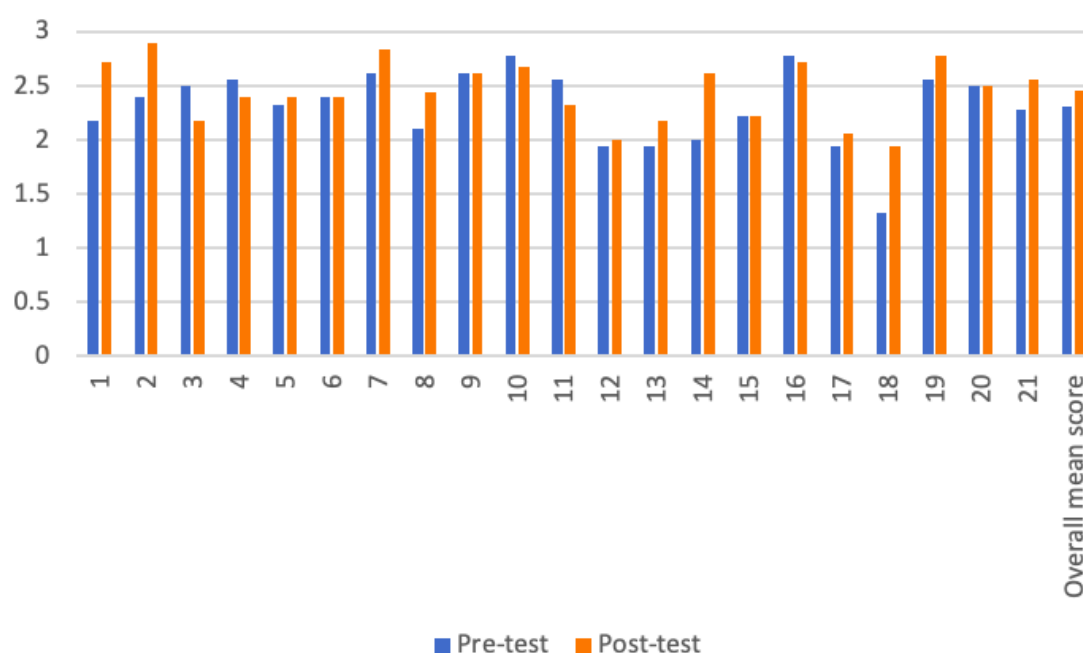
rules) ($z = 2.4, p = .015, r = 0.8$), 8 (Ask when there are communication breakdowns) ($z = 2.9, p = .004, r = 0.8$), 18 (Adopt work habits of new culture) ($z = 3.5, p < .001, r = 0.9$), and 19 (Make up for inappropriate behaviors) ($z = 2, p = .042, r = 0.7$). In turn, items 3 (Notice when people do not feel comfortable), 9 (Ignore unfamiliar gestures), 11 (Use unambiguous words), 13 (Guess how others feel), 15 (Avoid contact when behaviors alienate), 17 (Follow rules of own culture when not sure how to behave), and 20 (Involve minorities in majority group), which represent 33.3%, obtained lower scores in the post-test. Nonetheless, the difference was found to be significant only for item 3 (Notice when people do not feel comfortable) ($z = -2.9, p = .004, r = -0.9$).

Considering that 6 items, that is 28.5%, showed a statistically significant difference, it could be said that some progress was perceived only in specific situations portrayed in the intercultural profile questionnaire. However, the overall ICC level of the participants in the experimental group did not suffer any improvement following the intervention.

At this point, the results of the pre-test and post-test for the control group need to be investigated as well. Following these lines, Figure 11 illustrates the mean scores for each of the 21 items and the overall score in both tests for the control group, information that can also be seen in Table 21.

Figure 11

Participants' General ICC Level - Mean per Item in the Questionnaire - Control Group in Pre-test and Post-test



As can be observed in Figure 11 and Table 21, the results for the control group suggest that even though their level of competence stayed at the intermediate level, there was a moderate improvement of 0.14 when comparing the overall means of the pre-test and post-test. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test ($z = 2, p = .042, r = 0.5$) in the control group.

The changes related to the participants' ICC level were observed in 13 out of the 21 items, which represents a 76.2%. After running the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test for paired samples, the increase in the 13 items was found to be statistically significant for 4 items: 1 (Try new food) ($z = 2.5, p = .014, r = 0.7$), 2 (Seek contact with new people) ($z = 2.6, p = .008, r = 0.9$), 14 (Change plans while on holiday) ($z = 2.4, p = .019, r = 0.7$), and 18 (Adopt work habits of new culture) ($z = 2.3, p = .023, r = 0.7$).

In all, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test regarding the control group indicate that the participants obtained significantly higher scores in specific items of the

questionnaire. The gains observed were reflected in their overall level of competence, which improved even though they did not receive any additional instruction involving ICC in between the tests.

In general, the results obtained at this stage suggest that the level of ICC of the participants of the experimental group did not seem to suffer any significant changes after the intervention they took part in. When comparing the results pre and post intervention, it could be affirmed that the experimental group appeared to make progress in six items only. Conversely, the control group displayed significant changes in spite of not having received any type of treatment. This was evident in four items of the questionnaire and their overall competence. Nonetheless, when the data of the post-test for both groups was contrasted, no significant differences were found between both and their ICC remained at the intermediate level.

6.3.2. Changes in the Participants' Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence per Dimension

The previous section presented the analysis of the overall ICC level of the participants in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test. The individual examination of the results of both tests allowed making comparisons regarding general ICC level between and within the groups. Along these lines, this section provides a more detailed analysis which explores the five constituents of ICC: behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy. Following the same pattern as with the pre-test, the answers given per scenario were classified into a dimension and then assigned a basic, intermediate, or full level of competence based on the descriptors established in the INCA project.

To illustrate the findings, Table 22 presents the results concerning the level that the participants of the experimental and control groups displayed in each of the five dimensions in

the pre-test and post-test. In addition, the changes from the pre-test to the post-test for each group are shown in the difference column. In order to interpret the results from Table 22, it is important to mention that the N columns refer to the number of answers related to each category (behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy) across the different levels (basic, intermediate, full). Since the number of answers reflecting each category was not the same in the pre-test and the post-test, percentages have been included to show the difference between pre and post-test scores more accurately.

Table 22

Participants' ICC Level per Dimension - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test and Post-test

Dimension	Level	Experimental group						Control group					
		Pre-test		Post-test		Diff		Pre-test		Post-test		Diff	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Behavioral flexibility	Basic	12	57.1	9	32.2	-3	-24.9	8	42.1	8	53.3	0	11.2
	Inter.	8	38.1	15	53.5	7	15.4	11	57.9	7	46.7	-4	-11.2
	Full	1	4.8	4	14.3	3	9.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
		21		28		7		19		15			-4
Tolerance of ambiguity	Basic	57	66.2	35	57.4	-22	-8.8	43	62.3	41	78.8	-2	16.5
	Inter.	24	28	26	42.6	2	14.6	26	37.7	11	21.2	-15	-16.5
	Full	5	5.8	0	0	-5	-5.8	0	0%	0	0	0	0
		86		61		-25		69		52			-17
Knowledge discovery	Basic	13	59.1	14	63.6	1	4.5	16	94.1	15	83.3	-1	-10.8
	Inter.	8	36.4	8	36.4	0	0	1	5.9	3	16.7	2	10.8
	Full	1	4.5	0	0	-1	-4.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
		22		22		0		17		18		1	
Respect for otherness	Basic	16	76.2	9	39.1	-7	-37.1	12	75	13	76.5	1	1.5
	Inter.	5	23.8	12	52.2	7	28.4	4	25	4	23.5	0	-1.5
	Full	0	0	2	8.7	2	8.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
		21		23		2		16		17		1	
Empathy	Basic	15	71.4	7	30.4	-8	-41	9	75	14	73.7	5	-1.3
	Inter.	5	23.8	14	60.9	9	37.1	3	25	5	26.3	2	1.3
	Full	1	4.8	2	8.7	1	3.9	0	0	0	0	0	0
		21		23		2		12		19		7	
	Total	171		157		-14		133		121		-12	

As seen in section 6.2.2, and also in Table 22, the level displayed in the pre-test was basic in all dimensions for both groups. The exception was behavioral flexibility, in which the

control group had an intermediate level. To find out any differences between the groups, the results of the post-test were first examined. Then, the results of the pre-test and post-test for each group were scrutinized to determine if any changes were evident, paying close attention to the experimental group, which received the intervention.

In line with the above, when comparing the results of the experimental and control groups in the post-test, a clear difference in terms of the ICC level was seen in both groups. As shown in Table 22, the participants in the experimental group displayed a basic level in two dimensions: tolerance of ambiguity with 57.4% and knowledge discovery with 63.6%. The group showed an intermediate level in the remaining three: behavioral flexibility with 53.5%, respect for otherness with 52.2%, and empathy with 60.9%. Conversely, the control group remained at the basic level throughout the five dimensions: 53.3% for behavioral flexibility, 78.8% for tolerance of ambiguity, 83.3% for knowledge discovery, 76.5% for respect of otherness, and 73.7% for empathy. This overview of the results suggests that the experimental group outperformed the control group in three out of the five dimensions. It can also be seen that the former produced answers that met the parameters of a full level whereas the latter did not.

Taking a closer look at the results obtained from the experimental group, it is possible to see some degree of improvement when contrasting the results of the pre-test and the post-test. In the post-test, the participants moved from a basic to an intermediate level of competence in three out of the five dimensions: behavioral flexibility (53.5%), respect for otherness (52.2%), and empathy (60.9%). Besides, a considerable difference between the values at the intermediate and those at the basic level was perceived. This indicates that the participants in this group had a sound intermediate level. Additionally, it can be seen that the percentage of full level increased for 3 dimensions: behavioral flexibility (from 4.8% in pre-test to 14.3% in post-test), respect for otherness (from 0% in pre-test to 8.7% in post-test), and empathy (from

4.8% in pre-test to 8.7% in post-test). Nonetheless, for knowledge discovery, the percentage of answers at the full level came down to zero.

When the changes in each dimension are examined individually, it is observed that for behavioral flexibility, the number of tokens with basic level decreased, with a difference of 24.9%; at the intermediate and full levels, the number increased, with a 15% and 9.5% difference respectively. Concerning tolerance of ambiguity, the number of answers classified at a basic and a full level lowered, indicating a difference of -8.8% and -5.8% correspondingly. In turn, the number of answers assigned an intermediate level slightly rose, with a variation of 14.6%. As for knowledge discovery, a different situation was perceived. In this dimension, the number of answers at the basic level increased, with a difference of 4.5% from pre-test to post-test. It remained the same regarding the intermediate level, and the number of answers decreased at the full level, with a variation of -4.5%. When it comes to respect for otherness, the answers at the basic level decreased in number from pre-test to post-test, with a difference of -37.1%. In contrast, the number of answers at the intermediate level went up in the post-test, which points at a variation of 28.4%. The same trend, a rise, was seen concerning answers displaying a full level, with a difference of 8.7%. Finally, with respect to empathy, similar changes to the ones seen with the previous dimension took place. At the basic level, the number of answers decreased, which represents a difference of -41% from pre-test to post-test. Meanwhile, the number at the intermediate and full level rose in the post-test, indicating a difference of 37.1% and 3.9% respectively. Examples 26 and 27, from the same participant in the experimental group, show the differences between pre-test and post-test for behavioral flexibility.

Example 26. Reply to scenario 1 – (Accommodation) by PREEXGP14

Well, I chose the first one because first of all I consider myself as an independent person, in my daily life, I am very used to be [sic] alone and I don't like to be surrounded by many people, besides the fact that I am very shy, I think I would avoid living with people.

Example 27. Reply to scenario 5 – (Feeling confused) by POSTEXGP14

What you could do in this case is to adapt with patience, it was obvious that they were not going to behave the way I do, and it is also natural that one is not always going to adapt to people so fast (or at least in my case) then, what I would do is try to ask them to explain their jokes or what they want to say and then try to look on the internet, as it is now a great tool to help us.

Examples 26 and 27 depict a difference in terms of behavioral flexibility. In the first one, classified as basic, the participant was reluctant to change or refused to adapt to the new conditions. He/she chose the situation that best fit his/her preferences and that decision would probably prevent him/her from experiencing the new culture. Contrarily, in Example 27, the same participant showed willingness to adjust and was aware that fitting in takes time and effort. In addition, the participant came up with some strategies that may ease his/her adaptation process. For these reasons, Example 27 was assigned an intermediate level. These differences in the way in which the participant handled the situation from one situation to another are indicators of progress in terms of his/her behavioral flexibility. Regarding respect for otherness, in which the participants in the experimental group moved from initial to an intermediate level, changes such as the ones seen in Examples 28 and 29 were observed.

Example 28. Reply to scenario 3 – (Finding your place in a team) by PREEXGP21

Dear Alisson,

I miss you and our colleagues every day. Here, things are upsettingly different, I feel left out. People are not friendly I feel like I have to walk on eggshells around my superiors or otherwise I'll be fired or at least scolded. I have to think about what I'm going to wear at work the night before because the dress code is insufferably strict. I miss the warmth of our environment but it's fine. It's only my second week here and I'm pretty sure I'll get used to it sooner or later.

Example 29. Reply to scenario 3 – (Feeling confused) by POSTEXGP21

My dearest friend Alisson,

I am having a great time in this new job that I prayed and cried for. I'm kidding, there are things I don't understand. My boss loves to give me backhanded compliments and when she makes suggestions she expects me to do everything just like she suggested. She could use the word "must" you know? This has been the hardest part I think. I don't think she does this on purpose as it seems that everyone here behaves that way. Saying things they don't really mean. I just have to get used to it.

Although other dimensions are immersed in Examples 28 and 29, they were analyzed in terms of respect for otherness. Regarding this dimension, it can be seen that in Example 28, which was assigned a basic level in the pre-test, the participant from the experimental group used a wide range of adjectives and adverbs to negatively describe people and their actions at his/her new workplace. It is evident that the participant felt uncomfortable, and it seems that the differences he/she encountered affected him/her. In Example 29, assigned an intermediate level in the post-test, the same participant was aware of differences and acknowledged that the

behavior of people at his/her new workplace was different from what he/she was used to. However, he/she did not judge it as being better or worse; he/she even stated that he/she will have to comply with the way things worked in the new setting.

Assessing the results obtained against the criteria provided by the INCA project, it is possible to characterize the participants in the experimental group in terms of their strengths and weaknesses in each dimension. In the case of the dimensions in which they had an intermediate level, the following can be affirmed: regarding behavioral flexibility, the participants drew on prior experiences to face new intercultural situations, and they were also more willing to adapt. With regard to respect for otherness, the majority of participants in the experimental group tended to avoid judging the other's values, norms, and behaviors as good or bad. Concerning empathy, they were capable of seeing things from the other's perspective and started anticipating the way in which the other may perceive or react toward a particular situation. As for those dimensions in which they displayed an initial level, namely tolerance of ambiguity and knowledge discovery, it can be said that, for the former, most participants lacked a systematic approach to deal with intercultural encounters and felt uneasy when facing ambiguous or unclear situations. With respect to knowledge discovery, the majority of participants had limited factual knowledge about other cultures and learned about them in an unsystematic way.

With regard to the control group, the results obtained in the pre-test and post-test reveal that the participants' level of competence was predominantly basic in the five dimensions in both tests. What is more, their level regarding behavioral flexibility went from primarily intermediate in the pre-test (57.9%) to mostly basic in the post-test (53.3%). Another aspect to point out is the fact that none of the participants provided an answer at a full level in either test. These findings suggest that the characteristics most of the participants displayed in the post-

test were in line with the ones described in the pre-test, as no changes in their level of competence were apparent except for behavioral flexibility.

In order to have a thorough view of the trends within the dimensions for the control group, each dimension was inspected individually. Following these lines, in Table 22, for behavioral flexibility, it can be seen that there was a difference in the percentages obtained at the basic level, with a subtle increase. At this level, there was a variation of 11.2% from pre-test to post-test. When it comes to the intermediate level, the number of answers dropped, indicating a difference of -11.2%. Concerning the full level of behavioral flexibility, no answers were obtained in either test (0%). As for tolerance of ambiguity, there was a rise in the percentage of answers at the basic level, with a difference of 16.5% from pre-test to post test. As for those in the intermediate level, it is seen that number was notoriously lower, representing a variation of -16.5%. In line with the prior dimension, no answers were classified as displaying full level. In terms of knowledge discovery, there was a slight decline in the number of answers at the basic level, reflected in a -10.8% difference. The opposite happened with the answers at the intermediate level, whose number increased, indicating a variation of 10.8%. At the full level, no answers were found. In relation to respect for otherness, there was a modest rise in the percentage of answers at the basic level, with a difference of 1.5% from pre-test to post-test. At the intermediate level, the difference in the percentages was -1.5%, representing a subtle decrease. The answers reflecting full level remained at 0%. Lastly, concerning empathy, an increase was seen in the answers at the initial and intermediate levels; the differences were -1.3% and 1.3% respectively, and no answers with full level were found neither in the pre-test nor in the post-test.

In all, taking the descriptors proposed by the INCA project into account, it can be stated that the participants in the control group did not cope with ambiguity smoothly. They faced intercultural situations defensively. They displayed poor knowledge of other cultures and

learned mainly by discovery. The participants adopted a judgmental position when encountering cultural differences and saw differences as unusual, which caused confusion among the group members. Examples 30 and 31 depict the answers from a participant of the control group in the pre-test and post-test. The answers given feature a basic level of respect for otherness, behavioral flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity.

Example 30. Reply to scenario 3 – (Finding your place in a team) by PRECGP10

Things here are so different, they are very formal when talking, the dress code is totally different, and they never say my first name, they call me by my last name, I am not used to hearing that, so can you imagine how strange I feel? I believe it was much more pleasant when I was in Colombia because we used to eat together, we could talk informally even to the director, and you could dress as you wanted; I really miss my old job, however, now I have to get used to this new environment.

Example 31. Reply to scenario 3 – (Feeling confused) by POSTCGP10

People here say things in a crazy way, they always use phrases that mean the opposite to what they want to say. I don't understand why they can't just say what they actually mean, instead of saying confusing and sarcastic things. They are also too exaggerated when talking about a certain topic, and that's bothering me. These things drive me crazy, I like when people say what they really want to say, in a clear and honest way, but here, I don't even know what they really want to tell me when talking about something.

The reply to scenario 3 in the pre-test, represented by Example 30, indicates that the way in which the new culture operates represents a burden for the participant. He/she

emphasizes the differences and how he/she longs for the way in which things worked in his/her country. In this sense, the reply suggests a basic level of respect for otherness. Furthermore, the answer points at a basic level of behavioral flexibility. In this regard, the participant states he/she will have to adapt, but it sounds as if it were against his/her will. In a similar fashion, Example 31, taken from the same participant in the post-test shows that he/she was upset about situations that represented some degree of ambiguity. He/she even went on to say that the situation drove him/her crazy. In addition, the participant used qualifying adjectives such as *confusing* and *sarcastic* to refer to what people in the host country said, which could be taken as a judgmental. Finally, the answer can also be assessed in terms of behavioral flexibility; it also reflects the participant's unwillingness to adapt, and he/she specifically stated his/her preference towards the way in which things should be said. Given these characteristics, the reply is classified as basic.

On the whole, considering the results of the experimental and control groups, it is possible to affirm that in the participants of the experimental group, some gains concerning ICC were perceived after the intervention, at least in specific dimensions. It seems that they particularly improved in areas that allowed them to adjust to unfamiliar situations, take a more neutral stance when encountering differences, and put themselves in other people's shoes. The analysis conducted in this section yields relevant information as to the participants' level of competence in each of the five constituents of ICC. Nevertheless, it is important to investigate the probable progress made by the experimental group and the stagnation in the control group further. As a consequence, in the next section, the participants' ICC will be analyzed from a metapragmatic perspective, which will provide a different view of their competence.

6.3.3. Changes in the Participants' level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability

Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 gave an account of the general ICC level as well as a more detailed overview of the level in each of the dimensions by the experimental and control groups after the former received the intervention. Thus far, the information collected and analyzed has made it possible to start outlining a profile regarding the participants' level of ICC and also to establish the changes in the experimental and control groups, especially after the former took part in the intervention. To conduct a further examination in that regard, this section presents the analysis of the level of ICC of the participants in the experimental and control groups from a metapragmatic perspective. Along these lines, Table 23 presents the results of the experimental and control groups regarding their level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability in the post-test. As can be seen in Table 23, the number of students with initial, intermediate, or mature level for each competence per incident is presented. Following the way in which the data obtained in the pre-test was processed (see Table 20), the percentages displayed are the product of the overall number per competence in each level compared to the total number of students in each group (N= 18 in the control group – N=22 in the experimental group).

Table 23

Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability- Experimental and Control Groups in Post-test

Post-test									
		Experimental				Control			
	Incident	PL	SP	IA		PL	SP	IA	
Initial	Chocolates	1	3	4		0	3	8	
	Yale vs Jail	5	0	9		9	0	6	
	Emoji	0	3	7		1	3	8	
	Restaurant	0	0	11		0	0	12	
	Hunting	0	2	4		0	2	12	
	N	6	8	35	49	10	8	46	64
	%	5.4	7.3	31.8	23	11.11	8.9	51.1	35.9
Intermediate	Chocolates	13	14	11		12	7	11	
	Yale vs Jail	11	4	12		6	0	11	
	Emoji	6	10	14		7	9	7	
	Restaurant	14	1	4		14	0	3	
	Hunting	10	12	12		9	4	5	
	N	54	41	53	148	48	20	37	105
	%	49.1	37.3	48.2	69.5	53.3	22.2	41.1	59
Mature	Chocolates	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	Yale vs Jail	6	0	0		2	1	1	
	Emoji	0	3	0		1	1	0	
	Restaurant	0	0	0		0	0	0	
	Hunting	0	0	7		1	0	2	
	N	6	3	7	16	4	2	3	9
	%	5.5	2.7	6.4	7.5	4.4	2.2	3.3	5.1

The results of the post-test for the experimental and control groups presented in Table 23 indicate that the majority of the participants in both groups displayed an overall intermediate level of ICC with 69.5% and 59% respectively. These results were followed by 23% of the participants in the experimental group and 35.9% in the control group with an initial level of ICC, and 7.5% in the experimental 5.1% in the control group with a mature level. These findings suggest a similar trend in both groups regarding the percentage of participants in each tier in the post-test.

If each competence is analyzed individually, it can be seen that in the post-test, regarding pragmlinguistic awareness, an intermediate level prevailed among most of the participants in the experimental group, with 49.1%. The number of participants with an initial

and mature level was significantly smaller, with 5.4% and 5.5% correspondingly. Concerning sociopragmatic awareness, the results obtained were alike. Most of the participants displayed an intermediate level (37.3%), followed by a notoriously smaller percentage with an initial level (7.3%) and a mature level (2.7%). This marked difference between the levels in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness indicates a consistent tendency towards an intermediate level. In a similar fashion, an intermediate level prevailed in terms of intercultural adaptability in the experimental group (48.2%). However, in contrast to the previous two, only a slightly smaller number of participants had an initial level (31.8%) and a significantly lower number a mature level (6.4%).

In the individual analysis per tier, with respect to the control group, it can be affirmed that the participants displayed similar trends in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness. When it comes to the former, it can be seen that most of the participants in the control group had an intermediate level (53.3%). The number of participants at this level was notoriously higher than that at the initial (11.11%) and mature (4.4%) level. With regard to the latter, sociopragmatic awareness, the results show that most participants had an intermediate level, with 22.2% and a smaller percentage an initial and a mature level with 8.9% and 2.2% correspondingly. Lastly, regarding intercultural adaptability, it can be observed that the majority of the participants in the control group displayed an initial level with 51.1%, followed by a smaller percentage with an intermediate level (41.1%), and a significantly lower percentage with a mature level (3.3%).

Having discussed the results of both groups in the post-test in each component (pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, and intercultural adaptability), it is possible to affirm that the experimental and control groups coincided in some aspects concerning pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness, in which a clear intermediate level was seen in both. The difference between the groups lies in the level of intercultural

adaptability. In this component, most of the participants in the experimental group displayed an intermediate level whereas a notoriously smaller number showed an initial and mature level. In this regard, the control group differed to a certain extent, as it notably had an initial level of intercultural adaptability. On this basis, it can be said that the findings point towards some gains on the part of the experimental group, at least in terms of intercultural adaptability. This result differentiates it from the control group, which did not suffer any significant changes.

To examine the changes that took place within the groups, the results of the pre-test, the post-test, and the difference between the two in each tier and level will be discussed for each group separately. In this vein, the data gathered from the experimental group will be presented in Table 24, and those corresponding to the control group in Table 25.

Table 24

Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability for the Experimental Group in Pre-test and Post-test

Experimental															
	Pre-test					Post-test					Difference				
	Incident	PL	SP	IA		Incident	PL	SP	IA		Incident	PL	SP	IA	
Initial	Uber	1	5	10		Chocolates	1	3	4		1	0	-2	-6	
	Christmas	1	13	10		Yale vs Jail	5	0	9		2	4	-13	-1	
	Professor	0	4	11		Emoji	0	3	7		3	0	-1	-4	
	Girls	4	2	13		Restaurant	0	0	11		4	-4	-2	-2	
	Shoes	0	5	8		Hunting	0	2	4		5	0	-3	-4	
	N	6	29	52	87		6	8	35	49		0	-21	-17	-38
	%	5.4	26.4	47.3	40.5		5.4	7.3	31.8	23		0	-19.1	-15.5	-17.5
Intermediate	Uber	6	0	10		Chocolates	13	14	11		1	7	14	1	
	Christmas	3	1	12		Yale vs Jail	11	4	12		2	8	3	0	
	Professor	3	13	9		Emoji	6	10	14		3	3	-3	5	
	Girls	14	15	9		Restaurant	14	1	4		4	0	-14	-5	
	Shoes	13	3	12		Hunting	10	12	12		5	-3	9	0	
	N	39	32	52	123		54	41	53	148		15	9	1	25
	%	35.4	29.1	47.3	57.2		49.1	37.3	48.2	69.5		13.7	8.2	0.9	12.3
Mature	Uber	0	0	1		Chocolates	0	0	0		1	0	0	-1	
	Christmas	0	1	0		Yale vs Jail	6	0	0		2	6	-1	0	
	Professor	0	1	0		Emoji	0	3	0		3	0	2	0	
	Girls	1	0	0		Restaurant	0	0	0		4	-1	0	0	
	Shoes	0	0	1		Hunting	0	0	7		5	0	0	6	
	N	1	2	2	5		6	3	7	16		5	1	5	11
	%	0.1	1.8	1.8	2.3		5.5	2.7	6.4	7.5		5.4	0.9	4.6	5.2

Based on the data displayed in Table 24, at first glance, when examining the overall competence of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test, it can be observed that it remained at the intermediate level. However, some gains can be perceived. Initially, it can be seen that the percentage of answers classified as intermediate increased, indicating a difference of 12.3%. In addition, the number of participants showing an initial level decreased in the post-

test, with a difference of -17.5%. The opposite happened with the number of participants that had a mature level, which in the post-test rose; the variation in this case was 5.2%.

Reviewing the three components individually in the post-test, it can be observed that in terms of pragmalinguistic awareness, the majority of the participants in the experimental group displayed an intermediate level. The percentage of participants with this level increased from pre to post-test, with a difference of 13.7%. As for the number of answers with an initial level, it remained exactly the same in the post-test (0% variation), and with a mature level, the variation was equivalent to 5.4%. When it comes to sociopragmatic awareness, the results of the post-test indicate that the majority of participants displayed an intermediate level as well. In fact, the percentage of participants with this level increased, indicating a difference of 8.2%. In this category, it can also be observed that the number of participants with an initial level lowered after the intervention, which represents a variation of -19.1%. In addition, the number of participants with a mature level of sociopragmatic awareness slightly rose, with a difference of 0.9% from pre-test to post-test. Finally, with respect to intercultural adaptability, in which the same percentage of participants had an initial and intermediate level in the pre-test (47.3%), in the post-test, the majority of them displayed an intermediate level, equivalent to a 0.9% variation. Regarding the two remaining levels, a similar trend to the one seen above was found. That is, the number of participants with an initial level dropped from pre to post-test, with a -15.5% difference, whereas the number of them with a mature level increased, indicating a variation equal to 4.6%.

As for the number of elements in each competence and level, a similar tendency to that present in the pre-test was found. This has to do with the fact that the participants were more likely to identify and produce those aspects related to intercultural adaptability, but they identified fewer elements linked to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness. Nonetheless, it was seen that within the level that predominated in each competence,

intermediate, the number of aspects increased for the three when comparing the pre-test and post-test.

In all, the prevailing intermediate ICC level of the participants in the experimental group indicates that, in the pre-test and post-test, in terms of pragmalinguistic awareness, most of the participants were capable of pointing out the linguistic misunderstanding and put forward a linguistic strategy to deal with it. As stated previously, the type of approach included implicit reference to speech acts, address forms, politeness, or impoliteness. Example 32 has been taken from a participant from the experimental group to illustrate some of those features.

Example 32. Pragmalinguistic awareness – (Incident 4) by POSTEXGP09

The main solution, and the most obvious, is to have kindly asked the waiter for a little more time.

Example 32, from the post-test, shows how the participant proposed a solution of pragmalinguistic type. In the example, it can be observed that the participant dealt with the misunderstanding by implicitly referring to a speech act (request) and politeness (kindly).

When it comes to sociopragmatic awareness, the findings suggest that most participants in the experimental group were able to point out how the relationship between the interlocutors could cause misunderstandings. This implies that they identified, although not explicitly, aspects such as power, social distance, and cultural differences. This implicit capacity of most participants can be seen in Examples 33 and 34. In them, two participants point out factors immersed in the interlocutors' relationship as the ones affecting the interaction .

Example 33. Sociopragmatic awareness – (Incident 5) by POSTEXGP02

The misunderstanding occurred because she gave her opinion in a context in which

she was obviously at a disadvantage and in which she as a guest should have avoided, so as not to go over the beliefs and ways of thinking of her hosts.

Example 34. Sociopragmatic awareness – (Incident 5) by POSTEXGP21

People with different beliefs had a one-sided argument. I think you have to be ready to collect as much information of your [*sic*] surroundings whenever you go to another country and live with a different family. There is always something that will upset you, and since your paycheck comes from these people there is little you can do until you can move out. I would have said that I don't think it's ok and I would have stood my ground but I wouldn't have taken It any further.

In Examples 33 and 34, it is possible to see that the participants pointed out the fact that the relationship between the people involved in the misunderstanding was not symmetrical. These conditions put the guest, who was an au pair, at a clear disadvantage. For both participants, this asymmetry affected the interaction and should have even prevented the au pair from voicing her opinion. Even though the participants in these two examples were aware of sociopragmatic aspects, they did not overtly specify which ones using metalanguage.

With regard to intercultural adaptability, in which an intermediate level predominated, it can be affirmed that the majority of participants had the desire to adjust to the situation either communicatively or psychologically. Nevertheless, they took a neutral stance. In other words, they did not display signs of ethnocentrism or appreciation for another culture. Examples 35 and 36 feature different strategies of intercultural adaptability: communicative and psychological.

Example 35. Intercultural adaptability– (Incident 2) by POSTEXGP11

I think the misunderstanding could have been avoided if the girl had given a short description, context, or a specific word that would allow her interlocutors to be on the same page and know that they were talking about the same thing. For example, I would have said “I took an online course on environmental studies at Yale University”.

Example 36. Intercultural adaptability– (Incident 5) by POSTEXGP13

I would have said that I respect her beliefs even if I don’t share the same principles. I expect that as I show respect for her beliefs she shows respect for my beliefs and culture. Also, I would have apologized if maybe my words were inappropriate.

Example 35 indicates how the participant from the experimental group adapts communicatively. The participant states that to cope with pronunciation problems, the girl in the story should resort to giving more context. That way, her interlocutors could infer what she means even if certain words are mispronounced. In this example, the participant is resourceful and tries out useful strategies to get meaning across. Regarding Example 36, it shows how the participant proposed psychological and communicative adaptation strategies in addition to adopting a neutral position towards the beliefs held in each culture; yet, he/she still did not manifest the skill to see the incident from two different perspectives.

Upon the analysis concerning the level of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability of the participants of the experimental group, the findings obtained from the control group will be examined. In this respect, Table 25 shows the results of the pre-test and post-test for the control group as to the level observed in terms of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability and in each of its constituent parts. Moreover, the table displays

the difference from pre-test to post-test with regard to the number of participants that had a specific level in a given component.

Table 25

Level of Metapragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Adaptability for the Control Group in Pre-test and Post-test

Control															
	Pre-test					Post-test					Difference				
	Incident	PL	SP	IA		Incident	PL	SP	IA		Incident	PL	SP	IA	
Initial	Uber	3	0	8		Chocolates	0	3	8		1	-3	3	0	
	Christmas	1	7	10		Yale vs Jail	9	0	6		2	8	-7	-4	
	Professor	0	3	9		Emoji	1	3	8		3	1	0	-1	
	Girls	4	0	11		Restaurant	0	0	12		4	-4	0	1	
	Shoes	2	2	11		Hunting	0	2	12		5	-2	0	1	
	N	10	12	49	71		10	8	46	64		0	-4	-3	-7
	%	11.11	13.3	54.4	42		11.11	8.9	51.1	35.9		0	-4.4	-3.3	-6.1
Intermediate	Uber	7	2	8		Chocolates	12	7	11		1	5	5	3	
	Christmas	1	6	8		Yale vs Jail	6	0	11		2	5	-6	3	
	Professor	5	11	6		Emoji	7	9	7		3	2	-2	1	
	Girls	3	10	7		Restaurant	14	0	3		4	11	-10	-4	
	Shoes	7	9	5		Hunting	9	4	5		5	2	-5	0	
	N	23	38	34	95		48	20	37	105		25	-18	3	10
	%	25.5	42.2	37.8	56.2		53.3	22.2	41.1	59		27.8	-20	3.3	2.8
Mature	Uber	0	0	0		Chocolates	0	0	0		1	0	0	0	
	Christmas	0	0	0		Yale vs Jail	2	1	1		2	2	1	1	
	Professor	0	0	1		Emoji	1	1	0		3	1	1	-1	
	Girls	2	0	0		Restaurant	0	0	0		4	-2	0	0	
	Shoes	0	0	0		Hunting	1	0	2		5	1	0	2	
	N	2	0	1	3		4	2	3	9		2	2	2	6
	%	2.2	0	1.1	1.8		4.4	2.2	3.3	5.1		2	2.2	2.2	3.3

From the information presented in Table 25, it can be inferred that the overall competence of the participants in the control group followed the same trend as in the pre-test. The general level in this group was predominantly intermediate. In fact, some gains were also observed although not as notorious as the ones displayed by the experimental group. For

instance, the number of participants with an overall intermediate level increased, with a difference of 2.8%. Furthermore, the percentage of participants with an initial level lowered, which indicates a variation of -6.1%. Meanwhile, the percentage of participants with a mature level grew; in this case, the difference equaled 3.3%.

Examining each of the three components separately for the control group, it can be seen that concerning pragmalinguistic awareness, the number of participants with an intermediate level in the post-test more than doubled the results in the pre-test; that is, a difference of 27.8%. As for participants with a basic level, the same number was observed in both tests, with no variation. With a mature level, the percentage for pragmalinguistic awareness increased, indicating a difference of 2%. Regarding sociopragmatic awareness, even though an intermediate level prevailed in the pre-test and post-test, the percentages obtained lowered; this points at a difference of 20%. Likewise, the number of participants with an initial level decreased, with a variation of -4.4%, and the number of those with a mature level rose, indicating a difference of 2.2%. In relation to intercultural adaptability, the majority of the participants in the control group displayed an initial level, which subtly decreased from pre-test to post-test with a difference of -3.3%. Another slight change was seen in the number of participants with an intermediate level, which rose, representing a variation of 3.3%. As to the participants of the control group with a mature level of intercultural adaptability, the results indicate that the percentage of them increased from pre-test to post-test, pointing at a difference of 2.2%.

An aspect that stands out, as it did in the pre-test and was also evident in the experimental group, is the fact that, in general, the participants in the control group were able to identify and come up with remarkably more solutions to intercultural misunderstandings related to intercultural adaptability than to pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic awareness. In all, the level the participants of the control group displayed in each component suggests that

certain characteristics predominate among its participants. In terms of pragmalinguistic awareness, the prevailing intermediate level indicated that the participants are able to identify and solve misunderstandings of linguistic nature. The alternatives to solve them may include non-explicit reference to speech acts, degree of politeness, or address forms, as seen in Example 37 below.

Example 37. Pragmalinguistic awareness – (Incident 1) by POSTCGP16

Yes, probably I could have asked the host family in a polite way If they wanted to try some chocolates.

As can be observed in Example 37, concerning pragmalinguistic in the post-test, when asked whether he/she would have said anything to deal with the misunderstanding with regard to incident 1 in the post-test, a participant from the control group made implicit reference to requests (ask the host) and also politeness (in a polite way) as a way to deal with the misunderstanding.

With respect to sociopragmatic awareness, the results show that the majority of participants in the control group could identify how the relationship between the interlocutors affected the interaction. They implicitly highlighted aspects such as social distance, power, or cultural similarity, as can be seen in Example 38.

Example 38. Sociopragmatic awareness – (Incident 5) by POSTCGP01

Maybe a call for caution would have been the way to go. When sharing our beliefs, it is important to consider the audience, relationships, and context we are referring to.

In Example 38, it can be observed that the participant from the control group acknowledged that contextual and relational aspects between the interlocutors played a role in effective communication.

Regarding intercultural adaptability, since the participants in the control group did not show any progress, they kept the same characteristics as in the pre-test. In other words, they were either unwilling to adapt communicatively or psychologically to the situation; they stated that the misunderstanding could not have been avoided; or they may have offered unhelpful solutions or displayed signs of ethnocentrism. The following excerpts exemplify one or more of such features:

Example 39. Intercultural adaptability – (Incident 5) by POSTCGP05

It could not have been avoided because it was just a point of view. It is almost impossible to agree with everyone.

Example 40. Intercultural adaptability – (Incident 5) by POSTCGP07

She first had to understand the family's perspective and then give her appropriate opinion. However, Grandma had to understand that there are different positions and they are all fine. The most important thing is respect despite the differences.

Example 41. Intercultural adaptability – (Incident 5) by POSTCGP12

Would have told the lady that I respect her point of view and she must respect mine.

In Example 39, the participant from the control group bluntly stated that the incident was unavoidable. He/she was unable to provide the slightest solution to solve the problem, not even one that may not be of much use. In Example 40, participant POSTCGP07 initially offered

an unhelpful solution to the misunderstanding. However, he/she later blamed the interlocutor and laid the responsibility on her. In Example 41, the participant understood that there were divergent points of view but he/she was unwilling to adapt either psychologically or communicatively to the new situation.

In all, based on the results of both groups, it could be said that, when the overall metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability was measured in the post-test, the experimental and control groups displayed the same level of competence: an outcome that indicates no changes from pre-test to post-test. However, when pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, and intercultural adaptability were examined individually, differences were perceived from pre-test to post-test and also between the two groups. Such differences involved intercultural adaptability, in which the experimental group seemed to move from a level between initial and intermediate to a solid intermediate level. Meanwhile, the control group remained at an initial level in this particular aspect. This finding suggests that after the intervention, some gains were seen in the participants' ability to adjust either psychologically or communicatively when dealing with unfamiliar intercultural situations. In addition, it is possible that after the intervention, the participants in the experimental group developed more structured strategies to cope with misunderstandings and analyze intercultural situations from other perspectives.

6.3.4. Discussion of Findings

Throughout section 6.3, the results of three different parts of the post-test as well as the differences between the results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. Together, they provided a thorough view of the participants' ICC level, which was assessed from three diverse perspectives. Initially, the results of the post-test for the experimental group and the control group were compared. Then, the findings of the pre-test and post-test were examined for each group. At that stage, it was possible to answer the third research question: *To what extent does*

an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers? In the first place, based on the results of the pre-test and post-test, the experimental group did not suffer any significant changes when it comes to general ICC. Conversely, when the dimensions of ICC were explored, the group displayed some gains in terms of behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, and empathy, in which the group moved from a basic to an intermediate level of competence. As for the control group, no advances were seen; instead, this group went from an intermediate to a basic level with regard to behavioral flexibility. Finally, regarding metapragmatic awareness, although both groups remained at an overall intermediate level, only the experimental group advanced from an equally initial/intermediate level to a sound intermediate level of intercultural adaptability. In all, it could be affirmed that the intervention may have had a moderate effect on the ICC level of the experimental group, especially in the participants' ability adapt to unfamiliar situations, keep a non-judgmental stance, assess situations from different perspectives, and adjust either communicatively or physiologically when engaged intercultural interactions.

Initially, concerning the overall level of ICC, the results of the post-test showed no significant differences between the two groups despite the intervention the experimental group participated in. Comparing the scores of the pre-test and post-test for this group, statistically significant differences were seen for certain items (1: Try new food, 2: Seek contact with new people, 7: Observe to learn new rules, 8: Ask when there are communication breakdowns, 18: Adopt work habits of new culture, and 19: Make up for inappropriate behaviors). In spite of the modest improvement in the first stage with regard to overall ICC, when examining the five dimensions of ICC in the experimental group, different trends were observed. First, it was seen that this group displayed some gains in three dimensions: behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, and empathy. Based on these findings, it could be inferred that the areas of improvement were related to the participants' capability to adapt to new situations, show regard

for differences, and view situations from the other's perspective. This outcome closely resembles the results obtained by Cubukcu (2013). When exploring the intercultural sensitivity of a group of pre-service teachers, the researcher found that the participants' strengths were related to their ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations, respect and have positive attitudes towards differences, and be empathetic with others. Looking at these findings, it can be said that the strong areas found in Cubukcu's (2013) study mirror the dimensions in which the participants of the experimental group displayed gains.

In a similar manner, it could be said that the outcomes obtained in this study share some common ground with the findings obtained in Garrote-Salazar's (2016) research. The author investigated the level of ICC of a group of pre-service teachers from different institutions across Europe. ICC was measured in terms of openness (tolerance of ambiguity and respect for otherness), knowledge (knowledge discovery and empathy), and adaptability (behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness) through the INCA project. The results revealed that the participants scored the highest in adaptability and the lowest in openness. On these grounds, two commonalities can be found between the present study and Garrote-Salazar's (2016). First, in both, behavioral flexibility stood out for being the dimension in which the participants displayed greater strengths. Second, tolerance of ambiguity was the dimension with the lowest scores in the two studies. In sum, both studies agree on the fact that behavioral flexibility, framed into adaptability, was more prone to improvement. This path, which most of the participants in this group appear to have undertaken, indicates that they started to be in line with the grounds of ICC, which were addressed during the intervention.

A different scenario was evidenced in the control group, which was somewhat stagnated at an initial level and actually had a setback in behavioral flexibility. This result is not surprising, as all the participants relied on was their own experience, intuition, and possible incidental exposure to culture and ICC, which may not have been enough. As Mai and Binh

(2020) argue, cultural features need to be addressed explicitly and with care, not simply as an add-on while teaching linguistic aspects of the language. Likewise, Ingram and O'Neill (2002) state that learners may be unable to develop positive attitudes towards other cultures if they are not instructed or led to do so. That may have been the case of the participants in the control group, who may have engaged in culture-related discussions or in tasks tackling ICC while attending regular class sessions. However, neither culture nor ICC are made explicit in the curriculum; therefore whether they are addressed in class or not is uncertain, as Cabrales-Vargas and Loaiza-Trujillo (2018) found in their research, a need that was catered to in the experimental group through the intervention.

As for the results of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, it was seen that when the general competence was assessed, the experimental and control groups showed an intermediate level in the pre-test and post-test; that is, no apparent differences were identified. Delving into each of the competences, it was seen that in terms of pragmatic and sociopragmatic awareness, the experimental and control groups had an intermediate level in the pre-test and post-test. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the number of aspects of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic nature that the participants were able to identify and produce in those areas was relatively small given the number of incidents they were presented with and compared to the number of elements obtained for intercultural adaptability. As stated earlier, in spite of the level the participants displayed, the lower number of pragmatic and sociopragmatic elements may be accounted for by the participants' limited knowledge of the field of pragmatics. As explained in section 5.3 (Socio-cultural background and context of the study), the curriculum of the program the participants were enrolled in did not explicitly include pragmatics as an area of study. It is probably assumed that pragmatic instruction is part of English communication courses or others that lend themselves to do so. Perhaps, if the

participants had received pragmatic training, as recommended (Ishihara & Cohen, 2022), the number of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features would have been higher.

Regarding intercultural adaptability, a noticeable change was seen. In this specific competence, the experimental group made advances and displayed a solid intermediate level in the post-test, and that sets it apart from the control group, which had a basic level in the pre-test and post-test. This finding is of great relevance for this research, as it appears that the intervention had an effect on the participants' capacity to accommodate psychologically or communicatively when facing situations that are unfamiliar to them. Moreover, they may have developed useful strategies to deal with misunderstandings, and they may have become more capable of analyzing intercultural situations from their and the other's point of view.

The gains observed in terms of intercultural adaptability are coherent with the results obtained when the participants' ICC was measured considering its five dimensions. In that case, the findings indicated that the participants improved their behavioral flexibility, which is very similar in nature to intercultural adaptability (Garrote-Salazar, 2016).

In addition to finding consistencies within the areas of improvement measured through different instruments, the results of the experimental group are supported by those obtained in other studies. In this regard, Cubukcu (2013) and Garrote-Salazar (2016) found that adaptability was one of the areas in which the participants obtained the highest scores when the dimensions of ICC were examined. In this respect, the present study adds to the picture the fact that adaptability is also a skill that is likely to develop through instruction, a finding that has not been reported to date given the lack of longitudinal (or interventional) studies in this regard.

Based on the results of the three types of measurements (general competence, ICC dimensions, metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability), it can be inferred that there were changes in the level of ICC of the participants in the experimental group. This result

was more evident when the constituents of ICC were analyzed separately, as it was possible to pin-point which specific areas were weak or strong among participants. Considering the comparisons pre-test and post-test and also between the experimental and control groups, it is possible to affirm that the potential gains in the attitudes and behaviors of the participants in the experimental group could be attributed to the intervention they took part in. In this regard, Ingram and O'Neill (2002) explain that without instruction on the matter, learners are unlikely to develop positive attitudes immersed in ICC. Likewise, Liddicoat (2004) adds that when learners are not given the chance to reflect on and critically analyze their own and other cultures, they would be unable to acknowledge, respect, and tolerate differences, which was the case of the control group.

To conclude, it seems that the most remarkable change on the participants ICC was related to their ability to adapt, which was seen when examining their development in the five dimensions of ICC and the results of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability. There is still work to do in other areas such as tolerance and the improvement of systematic skills for the participants to discover and learn about other cultures. Furthermore, it is also important to continue working on the field of pragmatics. Language teaching in the context where this study took place needs to make room for that area by promoting interaction instead of transmission of norms and including the development of pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness which has been seen to go hand in hand with ICC. As different scholars have claimed, their fostering can eventually lead to more interculturally competent individuals willing and able to interact appropriately across differences (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

6.4. Research Question 4

The fourth research question intends to explore the views and practices regarding ICC of the participants in the experimental group after the intervention they received in the form of a

training course and LS. To determine if any changes took place and to establish if these were the product of the intervention, the results of two parts of the pre-test and their counterparts in the post-test were examined and compared for the experimental and control groups and also within each group. In addition, the outcomes of the intervention involving the experimental group will be discussed. In this vein, this section will first review the data concerning the perception of the relevance of culture in language teaching collected from both groups in the pre-test and post-test. The aim was to understand the place that culture, one of the components of ICC, has in the participants' future teaching practice. Then, the section reports the findings related to the perceptions of culture, ICC, and teaching practices of the participants in both groups in the pre-test and post-test. The purpose was not only to gain some insight into the participants' view of culture, knowledge of ICC, and pedagogical actions, but also to learn how they would implement the theory in the classroom. In addition, this section includes the results of the assessment of the lesson plans designed by the experimental group as part of the intervention they received, which was accompanied by LS. The purpose of this assessment was to determine if practices conducive to the development of ICC were evident in the participants' planning and finally answer the fourth research question of the study: *to what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?*

6.4.1. Changes in Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture in Language Teaching

This section comprises the results and analysis of the Likert scale the participants of the experimental and control groups were asked to complete in the post-test in order to compare them to the results of the pre-test. The aim was to examine the participants' perceptions regarding the relevance of culture compared to other components of language teaching. Following the steps taken to analyze the pre-test, the data collected in the post-test were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics and subsequently inferential statistics. Table 26

displays the means for each component the participants in both groups were required to rate in the pre-test and post-test: grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, culture, and pronunciation. In addition, the table displays the difference between the scores obtained in the pre-test and post-test for the experimental and control groups.

Table 26

Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture and Other Components in Language

Teaching- Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test and Post-test

		Experimental			Control		
		Pre-test	Post-test	Diff.	Pre-test	Post-test.	Diff.
Grammar	Mean	3.18	3.14	-0.04	3.89	3.78	-0.11
	SD	0.91	1.25	0.34	0.90	0.88	-0.02
Vocabulary	Mean	4.45	4.32	-0.13	4.67	4.72	0.05
	SD	0.51	0.78	0.27	0.59	0.57	-0.02
Speaking	Mean	4.91	4.91	0	4.56	4.72	0.16
	SD	0.29	0.29	0	0.70	0.57	-0.13
Listening	Mean	4.52	4.77	0.22	4.61	4.72	0.11
	SD	0.74	0.53	-0.21	0.61	0.46	-0.15
Reading	Mean	4.23	4.36	0.13	4.22	4.22	0
	SD	0.69	0.79	0.1	0.81	0.55	-0.26
Writing	Mean	3.82	4.14	0.32	4.17	4.11	-0.06
	SD	0.85	0.77	-0.08	0.79	0.47	-0.32
Culture	Mean	4.36	4.73	0.37*	4.17	4.39	0.22
	SD	0.73	0.46	-0.27	0.86	0.78	-0.08
Pronunciation	Mean	4.27	3.86	-0.41	4.28	4.17	-0.11
	SD	0.88	0.89	0.01	0.83	0.71	-0.12

*Difference is significant at <0.05 (Wilcoxon rank-sum test)

Before performing any analysis to determine the significance of the variations within each group and between them, the data from the post-test were tested for normality using a Shapiro–Wilk’s test, which yielded a $W(144) = .77, p < .00$, a skewness of -0.7463, and a kurtosis of -0.1765 for the control group; as for the experimental group, it showed a $W(176) = .76, p < .001$, a skewness of -1.2303, and a kurtosis of 0.9972 for the experimental group. The results indicate that the data collected from both groups deviates from normality. Therefore, the values obtained need to be analyzed using statistical non-parametric tests.

On this basis, the results of the post-test for the experimental and control groups, shown in Table 26, will be addressed first. Concerning the experimental group, it can be observed that in the post-test, speaking ($M = 4.91$; $sd = 0.29$) was rated as the most relevant component in the language teaching process. This skill was followed, from highest to lowest, by listening ($M = 4.77$; $sd = 0.53$), culture ($M = 4.73$; $sd = 0.46$), in third place, reading ($M = 4.36$; $sd = 0.79$), vocabulary ($M = 4.32$; $sd = 0.78$), and writing ($M = 4.14$; $sd = 0.77$). The least important components, according to the participants of the experimental group, were pronunciation ($M = 3.86$; $sd = 0.89$) and grammar ($M = 3.14$; $sd = 1.25$). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the differences were significant, $\chi^2(7) = 54.34$, $p < .001$, with a mean rank score of 42.05 for grammar, 87.36 for vocabulary, 123.05 for speaking, 114.93 for listening, 90.59 for reading, 76.02 for writing, 110.14 for culture, 63.86 for pronunciation. The Post-Hoc Dunn's test using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.0018 indicated that the mean ranks of the following pairs were significantly different: grammar- vocabulary, grammar – speaking, grammar – listening, grammar – reading, grammar – culture, speaking – writing, speaking – pronunciation, listening – pronunciation, and culture – pronunciation. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that, statistically speaking, grammar and pronunciation were the components regarded as the least important in the language teaching process. As for culture, it is an element as important as the others and more important than pronunciation from the participants' perspective.

With regard to the control group, at first glance, the results of the post-test revealed that for the participants, vocabulary ($M = 4.72$; $sd = 0.57$), speaking ($M = 4.72$; $sd = 0.57$), and listening ($M = 4.72$; $sd = 0.46$) were the most relevant components in the language teaching process. The three were followed by culture ($M = 4.39$; $sd = 0.78$), reading ($M = 4.22$; $sd = 0.55$), pronunciation ($M = 4.17$; $sd = 0.71$), and writing ($M = 4.11$; $sd = 0.47$) and grammar ($M = 3.78$; $sd = 0.88$) with the lowest mean scores.

To determine whether the differences across the eight components in the control group were statistically significant, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was run. The results revealed a significant difference between the components, $\chi^2(7) = 32.23$, $p < .001$, with a mean rank score of 45.75 for grammar, 93.83 for vocabulary, 93.83 for speaking, 92.36 for listening, 62.08 for reading, 55.03 for writing, 75.61 for culture, 61.5 for pronunciation. The Post-Hoc Dunn's test using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.0018 indicated that the mean ranks of the following pairs were significantly different: grammar – vocabulary, grammar – speaking, and grammar – listening. These findings suggest that only grammar was not perceived as being as important as the remaining seven.

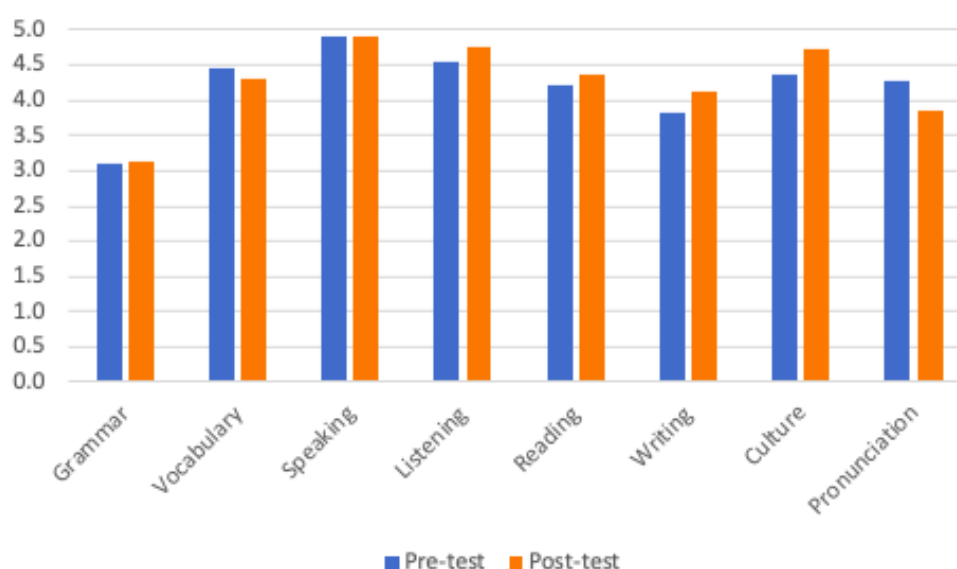
The findings suggest that there were differences as to how relevant the eight components were for the participants in both groups. It can be seen that the experimental group assigned higher scores to speaking, listening, reading, writing, and culture, which was slightly different from the findings obtained in the analysis conducted with the data from the pre-test. In turn, the control group did so with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Despite variations in scores, the inferential statistical analysis, using the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples, suggests that differences between experimental and control groups were not statistically significant for any of the components: grammar ($U = 255.5$, $z = 1.6$, $p = 0.1$), vocabulary ($U = 255.5$, $z = 0.180$, $p = 0.07$), speaking ($U = 171$, $z = -1.16$, $p = 0.24$), listening ($U = 181.5$, $z = -0.6$, $p = 0.55$), reading ($U = 166$, $z = -0.93$, $p = 0.35$), writing ($U = 189.5$, $z = -0.24$, $p = 0.8$), culture ($U = 155$, $z = -1.34$, $p = 0.17$), and pronunciation ($U = 235.5$, $z = 1.1$, $p = 0.28$). This outcome suggests that the experimental and control groups showed a similar perception about the different skills included in the curriculum.

In addition to the analysis of the post-test and the comparison of the experimental and control groups, the differences between the pre-test and post-test were explored for each group. The objective was to examine if the participants displayed any changes in their perception of

the relevance of culture in language teaching after the intervention took place. Following these lines, Figure 12 presents the mean scores for each of the eight elements according to the ratings given by the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test. This information can also be observed in Table 26.

Figure 12

Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture and Other Components in Language Teaching- Experimental Group in Pre-test and Post-test



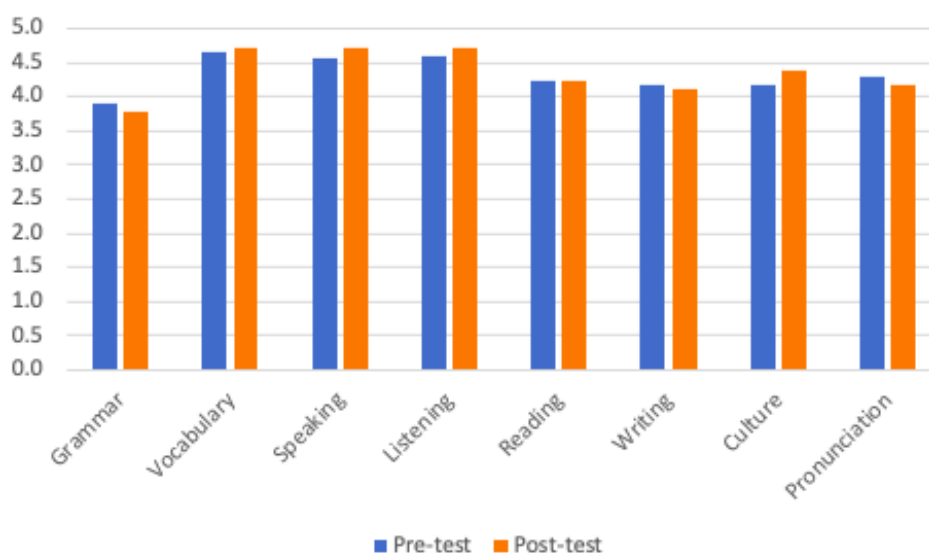
Based on the information illustrated in Figure 12, two aspects can be observed. First, the perception of importance involving the components listening (0.22), reading (0.13), writing (0.32), and culture (0.37) suffered a subtle increase from pre- to post-test. In contrast, grammar (-0.04) and pronunciation (-0.41) received lower scores in the post-test. Nonetheless, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, for paired observations, indicated that there was a significant difference of 0.37 between pre-test and post-test ($z = 2.2$, $p = .025$, $r = 0.7$), only for culture. As for the other components, the differences from pre-test to post-test did not prove to be statistically significant. It is important to note that the scores for speaking remained the same in both tests. Taking these results as a basis, it can be inferred that the participants' perceptions of the importance of culture in language lessons improved significantly after the intervention.

This finding is of primary importance for this research given that culture and the relevance it receives represents a starting point towards the possible development of ICC in the language classroom.

A comparative analysis of the results of the pre-test and post-test was also performed for the control group. This contributed to determining if the changes present in the experimental group were likely to be the product of the intervention they received. In this vein, Figure 13 shows the difference in the means of the eight components between the pre-test and post-test for the control group, information that can also be found in Table 26.

Figure 13

Participants' Perception of Relevance of Culture and Other Components in Language Teaching- Control Group in Pre-test and Post-test



As can be observed in Figure 13 and in Table 26, differences in terms of the participants' ratings of the eight components were seen when comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test for the control group. The differences indicated that four components received higher scores in the post-test (vocabulary = 0.05, speaking = 0.16, listening = 0.11, culture = 0.22) whereas three were given lower scores (grammar = -0.11, writing = -0.06, pronunciation = -0.11), and one was rated the same as it was in the pre-test (reading = 0). Nevertheless, when

the mean scores from the pre-test and post-test were examined using the Wilcoxon rank-sum test for paired samples, the differences were not found to be statistically significant.

From the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test, a general trend can be perceived. It is related to the fact that grammar was persistently seen as a less important component in the language learning/teaching process, and this view is then turned to vocabulary and pronunciation as well. As for culture, which is the main concern of this investigation, participants tended to see it as an essential component in the process. However, no significant difference was seen in the values obtained in the pre-test and post-test.

The examination presented up to this point allows drawing the following conclusions. First, it is possible to affirm that the major difference in the experimental group was perceived when the results of the pre-test and post-test were compared. In this vein, it was seen that the participants' positive perceptions concerning the relevance of culture in the teaching process improved considerably. This result represents an improved perception, on the participants' part, of the pivotal role this component plays in foreign language learning, and it can be seen as a gain. It is necessary to point out that when the results of the post-test for the experimental and control groups were compared, no significant differences were found.

6.4.2. Changes in the Participants' Perceptions of Culture, Teaching Practices, and Knowledge of Intercultural Communicative Competence

This section presents the results of four open-ended questions that aimed to find out the participants' view of culture, ICC and how they bring these constructs to practice. An identical set of questions was presented to the participants in the pre-test. Therefore, comparing the former results to those obtained at this stage will allow establishing whether the intervention had an effect on the participants of the experimental group in terms of their conceptualizations and practices. In order to make a consistent comparison, the information gathered through the questions was organized into the same categories used for the data collected in the pre-test and

was analyzed considering the same parameters. Table 27 presents the results obtained through the four questions that made part of the pre-test and post-test and their distribution across categories for the experimental and control groups. As stated earlier in this dissertation, the percentages indicate tendencies among participants and allow making further comparisons; for instance the differences between the pre-test and post-test for each group.

Table 27

Results Regarding Views and Practices about Culture and ICC - Experimental and Control Groups in Pre-test and Post-test

		Experimental						Control					
Questions	Categories	Pre-test		Post-test		Diff.		Pre-test		Post-test		Diff.	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words	Static	17	77.3	12	54.5	-5	-22.8	16	88.9	14	77.8	-2	-11.1
	Dynamic	2	9.1	4	18.2	2	9.1	2	11.1	0	0	-2	-11.1
	Essentialist	10	45.4	8	36.4	-2	-9	10	55.5	12	66.7	2	11.2
	Non-essentialist	10	45.4	14	63.6	4	18.2	6	33.3	2	11.1	-4	-22.2
	Deep	10	45.4	22	100	12	54.6	9	50	6	33.3	-3	-16.7
	Shallow	7	31.8	0	0	-7	-31.8	8	44	7	38.9	-1	-5.1
		56		60		-4		51		41		-10	
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?	Activities that tackle superficial aspects or facts.	16	72.7	1	4.5	-15	-68.2	18	100	11	34.4	-7	-65.6
	Activities that expose learners to varieties of a language	1	4.5	4	18.2	3	13.7	1	5.5	1	5.5	0	0.0
	Activities that raise awareness on the diversity of cultures.	5	22.7	17	77.3	12	54.6	4	22.2	2	11.1	-2	-11.1
	Activities that promote values of respect, tolerance, and empathy	0	0	9	40.9	9	40.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Activities that foster critical thinking	2	9.1	7	31.8	5	22.7	0	0	1	5.5	1	5.5
		24		38		14		23		15		-8	
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?	Own culture	6	27.3	7	21.8	1	5.5	5	27.8	7	38.9	2	11.1
	Cultures of countries where the language is spoken as an L1.	13	59.1	4	18.2	-9	-40.9	12	66.7	11	50	-1	-16.7
	Multiple cultures	5	22.7	17	77.3	12	54.6	5	27.8	4	22.2	-1	-5.6

		24		28		4		22		22		0	
4. What is intercultural communicative competence for you?	Awareness of differences across cultures	11	50	7	31.8	-4	-18.2	5	27.8	4	22.2	-1	-5.6
	Values of respect and tolerance towards others especially from other cultures	8	36.4	14	63.6	6	27.2	8	44.4	4	22.2	-4	-22.2
	Ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures.	6	27.3	19	86.4	13	59.1	7	38.9	7	38.9	0	0.0
	Ability to interpret and understand other cultures.	4	18.2	6	27.3	2	9.1	4	22.2	3	16.7	-1	-5.5
	No knowledge	3	13.6	0	0	-3	-13.6	1	5.5	2	11.1	1	5.6
		32		46		14		25		20		-5	
	Overall number	136		172		36		121		98		-23	

With the objective of determining any substantial differences between the groups, the results of the post-test were first analyzed. In general terms, the data displayed in Table 27 shows that in the post-test, the experimental group provided a notoriously larger number of answers for each question when compared to the control group, with 172 and 98 respectively. In the individual analysis per question, for number 1 it can be seen that when defining cultures, a static rather than a dynamic view prevailed in both groups (54.5% experimental group - 77.8% control group). Regarding the essentialist/non-essentialist duality, it is seen that the latter predominated in the experimental group (63.6%) and the former in the control group (66.7%). Concerning the shallow vs. deep aspects immersed in culture, it is clear that the experimental group favored deep aspects (100%). In fact, no answers referred to purely shallow elements. The control group, conversely, gave a similar number of answers involving both the fact that culture consists of merely superficial features (38.9%) and the idea that culture is a composite of superficial and deep elements (33.3%).

At this point, a subtle difference between the groups can be perceived, as only the experimental seemed to be more in consonance with a view of culture supported by the principles of ICC and the conceptualization that was adopted in this dissertation. From the results, it can be inferred that the participants in the experimental group became more aware of the fact that culture goes beyond the visible features, an aspect that was emphasized throughout the course. None of the participants in the experimental group defined culture as the composite of purely shallow characteristics of a social group. Nevertheless, that issue persisted in the control group.

As for question 2, in the experimental group, the vast majority of the participants affirmed they would include activities that raise awareness on the diversity of cultures (77.3%) followed by those that promote values, (40.9%), critical thinking (31.8%), and exposure to varieties of the target language (18.2%). Only one participant (4.5%) would prefer to implement activities that tackle purely superficial aspects. A completely different scenario is seen in the control group, in which most participants were inclined toward activities that tackle superficial aspects (34.4%) followed, to a notoriously lesser extent, by activities that raise awareness on diversity (11.1%), and those that expose learners to varieties of language (5.5%) and critical thinking (5.5%). Interestingly no participant in this group chose activities that promote values of tolerance and respect.

Based on the results of question 2, it can be affirmed that the experimental group stands out for the alleged way in which they would incorporate the cultural component in their future teaching practice, which withdraws from a transmissionist approach. The findings indicate that the strategies and tasks proposed by the experimental group were in line with the principles of ICC that were addressed during the training course, part of the intervention. The majority of the tasks designed included principles such as awareness, reflection, and critical thinking. The participants of the control group, in contrast, seemed to stay on a more traditional side,

consistent with their view of culture, explored in question 1. Among the participants of the control group, the activities that prevailed featured the most salient visible features of culture; by culture, most of the times, they referred to a country.

Question 3 yielded noticeable results as well. With respect to the experimental group, the majority of participants chose to address multiple cultures in their future teaching practice (77.3%), followed by own culture (21.8%), and a lower number would include only cultures where the target language is spoken (18.2%). In the control group, in turn, half of the answers supported the inclusion of only cultures that speak the target language as an L1 (50%). Among the answers given, the American, British, and French (those who opted to major in French) cultures were mentioned. The remaining number of answers referred to the inclusion of the participants' own culture (38.9%) and multiple cultures (22.2%). The results obtained for question 3 reveal that there is a significant contrast between both groups, and it appears that the perceptions of the participants in the experimental group embrace the conception that all cultures are a source for examination, discussion, and analysis.

In regard to question 4, first, it can be observed that the results of both groups somewhat matched. It is seen that the definition of ICC that prevailed in both groups was related to the ability to communicate and function appropriately across cultures in the first place (38.9% control group – 86.4% experimental group), followed by values of respect and tolerance (22.2% control group – 63.6 experimental group), awareness of differences across cultures (22.2% control group – 31.8% experimental group) and ability to interpret and understand cultures (16.7% control group – 27.3% experimental group). While 2 participants in the control group (10%) stated not knowing the concept, no one in the experimental group made such a claim.

The results obtained in question 4 can be seen as positive for both groups; nonetheless, it is worth considering that the experimental group provided over double the answers than the

control group, which could indicate that they were more prepared to define ICC and refer to its constituents. In addition, it was seen that the definitions the experimental group gave were more elaborate and more congruent with how ICC is conceived in this research. To investigate the changes in the understanding of culture and ICC in the experimental and control groups further, and especially in the former, the next part of this section will focus on the comparison between the pre-test and post-test for each group.

In this vein, regarding the experimental group, it can be said that for question 1 (What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words), the participants provided a greater number of answers in the post-test than they did in the pre-test. Concerning the analysis of the questions, it can be observed that for number 1, in the pre-test, a static definition of culture overpowered a dynamic one with 77.3% and 9.1% respectively. The same outcome can be perceived in the post-test with 54% of the participants referring to culture as a static concept and 18.2% as a dynamic one. However, differences from pre-test to post-test indicate that the percentage of participants with a static view dropped, with a difference of -22.8%, and it increased, with a variation of 9.1%, for those with a dynamic perspective. In turn, there were subtle changes concerning the duality essentialist vs. non-essentialist view of culture. In the pre-test, the same percentage of participants (45.4%) had an essentialist and a non-essentialist view of culture. In the post-test, the percentage of participants with an essentialist stance decreased, indicating a difference of -9%, whereas it increased for the non-essentialist view, with a 18.2% variation. An interesting finding has to do with the conception of culture as a construct that comprises shallow or deep aspects. It can be seen that although in the pre-test, deep (45.4%) and only shallow (31.8%) features were considered, none of the answers in the post-test made reference to merely shallow aspects; all of them (100%) mentioned deep features of culture. This finding represents a difference of 54.6% for deep elements of culture and -31.8% for shallow ones from pre-test to post-test. In Examples 42 and 43 below, taken

from the same participant in the experimental group, it is possible to observe the changes in the definitions provided before and after the intervention.

Example 42. Definition of culture by PREEXGP13

Culture is a group of traditions or habits that certain groups of people embrace. It is the way a country is represented.

Example 43. Definition of culture by POSTEXGP13

Culture is a set of costumes, beliefs, values, artistic expressions, languages and behaviors. Culture is what makes a society stand out and at the same time refers to how we define ourselves and the different perspectives we have of the world we live in.

As can be perceived, in Example 42 about the pre-test, the participant from the experimental group provided a more succinct definition, which did somehow take into account deep aspects of culture. However, it was essentialist given that it was limited to national barriers. In the definition given in the post-test (Example 43), the same participant referred to the shallow and deep aspects of culture and also to societies instead of countries, which is particular of a non-essentialist view. Finally, the participant acknowledges the influence that culture has on people's perspective of the world.

In regard to question 2 (How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?) the results indicate a remarkable change as for the type of strategies that the participants in the experimental group would use to promote the development of ICC in their lessons. It can be observed that before the intervention, most of the participants' practices would focus on transmitting facts (72.7%); a significantly smaller number of participants would include activities that raise awareness of diversity (22.7); only 8.3% would

foster critical thinking; and 4.5% would expose learners to varieties of languages. Conversely, in the post-test, the vast majority stated they would raise awareness on the diversity of cultures, which represents an increase, indicating a difference of 54.6%. Also, while in the pre-test none of the participants said they would promote values, in the post-test, a number of them stated they would do so; this points to a rise and a variation of 40.9%. Furthermore, when it comes to activities that would foster critical thinking and those that would expose learners to varieties of the target language, there was a variation of 22.7% and 13.7% respectively. Lastly, only a minority would teach purely superficial aspects of a culture. In this category, the percentage decreased, with a variation of -68.2% from pre-test to post-test.

The results obtained for question 2 indicate a transition from a traditional paradigm regarding the incorporation of culture in the language classroom towards one that goes more in line with strategies that promote the development of ICC, which at the same time could be interpreted as a gain in their level of competence. Examples 44 and 45, from the same participant in the experimental group, illustrate the shift from pre-test to post-test as to the types of practices he/she would implement in his/her future role as a teacher.

Example 44. Practices to include culture by PREEXGP19

I could incorporate cultural elements through some games or activities that involve cultural aspects and have the purpose of teaching culture.

Example 45. Practices to include culture by POSTEXGP19

I will include cultural topics that allow students to reflect on their own culture and also the culture of others and lead them to put themselves in the shoes of others. For this, I will make use of technological resources. For example, videos, movies, pictures, debates, etc.

As can be seen in Example 44, from the pre-test, the participant vaguely described what he/she would do to integrate culture in his/her future teaching practices. In essence, the participant does not specify how culture would be addressed in his/her lessons, nor does he/she state an aim. In Example 45, it is possible to see that the same participant is able to describe more precisely the types of tasks he/she would implement, which, in this case, promote reflection and the ability to see situations from different perspectives. This initiative is opposed to the initial view in which most participants affirmed they would talk about more superficial aspects of a culture.

With reference to question 3 (Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?), it is possible to see that in the pre-test, a larger part of the participants affirmed they would teach about cultures that speak the target language as an L1 (59.1%), followed by their own culture (27.3%), and other cultures in the third place (22.7%). These results took a turn in the post-test, in which the vast majority of the participants affirmed they would include other cultures in their lessons (77.3%), representing an increase and a difference of 54.6%. This was followed by their own culture (21.8%), a result that lowered with a variation of -5.5%. In the last place, they chose to include cultures of countries where the language is spoken as an L1 (18.2%); in this case the percentage obtained decreased, indicating a difference of -40.9%. Considering the differences between the pre-test and post-test, it is possible to see a clear move towards debunking the idea that only cultures that speak the target language are worth discussing in the language classroom. Instead, the language teacher can resort to multiple cultures to raise awareness on diversity, discuss different standpoints, and in general address several cultural realms conducive to the development of ICC. The changes in the participants' perceptions from pre-test to post-test about which

cultures should be addressed in their lessons can be seen in Examples 46 and 47, which were provided by the same participant in the experimental group.

Example 46. Cultures addressed in lessons PREEXGP14

American culture and maybe European cultures (But in Europe only countries where people speak English)

Example 47. Cultures addressed in lessons by POSTEXGP14

I would not choose any particular one, I would adapt the one that is needed in the situation I want to teach, could be the Colombian culture or any other.

In Example 46, it is possible to observe that in the pre-test, it is almost natural for the participant to include cultures that speak the target language as an L1. This phenomenon has been persistent, as teachers and learners tend to link the target language, generally English, to the American or British cultures (see Barletta, 2009; Olaya & Gómez, 2013). As for Example 47, it can be seen that in the post-test, the same participant conveys a different view regarding his/her future practices. The participant refrains from mentioning a particular culture as he/she did in the pre-test. In addition, he/she seems to acknowledge that his/her own culture as well as any other can be a source of learning. This change indicates that the participant probably understood that historically dominant cultures are not the only ones to be brought to the discussion in language lessons; all cultures are to be explored and analyzed.

Finally, concerning question 4 (What is intercultural communicative competence for you?), it can be observed that in the post-test, a greater number of definitions of ICC was produced when compared to the pre-test. In the pre-test, the majority of participants conceptualized or linked ICC first, to awareness of differences across cultures (50%); then, to

values of respect and tolerance (36.4%); to the ability to communicate and function appropriately with other cultures (27.3%); and to the ability to interpret and understand other cultures (18.2). In the pre-test, 13.6% of the participants stated they did not know the concept.

In the post-test, the definitions were mostly linked to the ability to communicate appropriately and function across different cultures, which is coherent with Deardorff's (2020) definition of ICC. This category obtained 86.4%, pointing to a difference of 59.1% after the intervention. A considerable number of answers, which equaled 63.6%, was connected to promoting values of respect and tolerance towards others. For this category, the percentage increased, with a difference of 29.2%. This conceptualization was followed by ICC as awareness of differences across cultures, indicating a decrease and a variation of -18.2%. The last definition of ICC was connected to the ability to interpret and understand other cultures (27.3%), with a difference of 9.1% from pre-test to post-test. At this stage, no participants claimed not knowing what ICC was, which contrasts the initial results and could be interpreted as a gain.

In addition to the evidence presented in Table 27 and taking a close look at the definitions of ICC provided for question 4 in the post-test, it could be said that these were more elaborate and incorporated features that were addressed during the intervention. The participants mentioned aspects such as moving beyond the recognition of various cultures to critically analyzing aspects other than superficial ones and reaching understanding. Examples 48 and 49 depict two definitions given by the same participant in the pre-test and post-test.

Example 48. Definition of ICC by PREEXGP12

ICC is the combination of reciprocal sharing of two or more cultures.

Example 49. Definition of ICC by POSTEXGP12

ICC for me is the ability to communicate and behave effectively in intercultural situations, which allows us to expand our knowledge about how other people behave according to their roots. ICC doesn't just mean to recognize the wide range of cultures but also implies developing skills as critical thinking, observing and listening, our attitudes and self-awareness towards cultures, and the most important, the different components of communication as behavior, non-verbal communication, and dialogues that help connect, recognize, and comprehend others.

After analyzing Examples 48 and 49, it is possible to realize that there was a change when it came to the participants' conceptualization of the ICC. Initially, his/her ideas were unclear and vague. In the post-test, a more elaborate definition was given. From line one of the participants' description of ICC, one can have a better idea of what the competence involves. Then he/she added further details that developing ICC entails, such as awareness of oneself and diversity, critical thinking, skills to observe, listen, and understand, and attitudes that contribute to successful interaction. This definition is congruent not only with the one that has been adopted in this dissertation, but also with the principles that were addressed during the intervention.

Regarding the control group and the information displayed in Table 27, it can be seen that, at a glance, for question 1, most participants were likely to define culture as a static construct in the pre-test (88.9%) and post-test (77.8%). This indicates a difference of 11.1%. Likewise, an essentialist view predominated in both tests; this category suffered an increase equal to 11.2% variation. It is worth noting that a non-essentialist perception decreased from pre-test to post-test with a difference of -22.2%. As for deep vs. shallow aspects, the results are somewhat similar in both tests. In this regard, definitions in which deep aspects of culture were

mentioned decreased, for a difference of -16.7%. Concerning the conceptualizations linking culture to purely shallow aspects, the number decreased as well; for this category, there was a difference of -5.1%. The fact that the percentage of the last pair of aspects (deep vs. shallow) decreased for both indicates that the definitions of culture given by the participants in the control group did not make reference to either deep not superficial elements. In general, the findings for question 1 suggest that the participants in the control group did not show signs of progress. In fact, they seemed to strengthen their former traditional view of culture. The features described up to this point can be observed in Examples 50 and 51, given by the same participant from the control group in the pre-test and post-test.

Example 50. Definition of culture by PRECGP02

Culture is the group of traditions that are characteristics of a specific region or town and its people.

Example 51. Definition of culture by POSTCGP02

For me, culture is a set of characteristics that people from a country share, and these characteristics can be taught and learned. Culture involves traditions, food, music, language, etc.

In Example 50, it can be seen that in the pre-test, the participant gives a somewhat basic definition of what culture is. In the definition, an essentialist view predominates, as the participant links culture to a specific geographical region. In the post-test (Example 51), the participant from the control group clearly stated that culture comprises mainly visible aspects (shallow) and pointed out that such aspects are particular to a specific place (essentialist). On

this basis, it could be said that the participant's understanding of culture did not suffer any changes from pre-test to post-test.

Question 2, which dealt with how the participants would integrate cultural aspects in their professional practice, was revealing. In the pre-test, all participants in the control group (100%) indicated that they would address superficial features; only 22.2% mentioned that they would also incorporate activities that raise awareness on diversity, and 5.5% would expose learners to varieties of the language. These results fluctuate in the post-test, with 34.4% of students stating that they would include superficial aspects, a difference of -65.6% when compared to the pre-test. This category was followed by 11.1% of participants who would raise awareness on diversity, a category in which the percentage also lowered, for a variation of -11.1%. Then 5.5% of the participants in the control group stated that they would expose learners to varieties of the target language and would include activities that foster critical thinking; that is, in both types of activities there was a difference of 0.0% and 5.5% correspondingly. Even though there were major changes from the pre-test to the post-test, it is worth considering that there were fewer answers in the latter. Examples 52 and 53 were taken from the same participant in the control group and correspond to the pre-test and post-test respectively. They illustrate the type of answers given when it comes to practices to integrate culture in language lessons.

Example 52. Practices to include culture PRECGP08

I love to embrace my culture, but I feel like as an English teacher it is hard to incorporate my culture in a language that is not common, as when I teach I think that I incorporate more the American or British culture because they do speak the language.

Example 53. Practices to include culture POSTCGP08

I feel that as an English teacher, it is very easy to incorporate culture in the classroom, as we get to talk a lot about holidays, nationalities, etc.

In Example 52, taken from the pre-test, it is possible to see that there is no clarity as to the types of strategies that the participant would implement to integrate culture in his/her teaching. An aspect that stands out is the fact that for the participant, The American and British cultures are, almost by default, the ones he/she would address. Also, immersed in the answer is the misconception that cultures that speak the target language as the L1 are the ones that should be part of the discussions that take place in the language classroom. In Example 53, from the post-test, the same participant indicates that he/she would tackle topics such as holidays and nationalities. Based on the answer in the pre-test, it could probably be inferred that holidays celebrated in America or Britain would be the source of discussion. From the answer in the post-test, it could also be said that mostly factual information would be presented.

Concerning question 3, the results suggest that among the participants of the control group, a traditional view of culture and teaching practices overpowered one that may be more in line with the development of ICC. It was seen that the majority of answers given in this part both in the pre-test and post-test, pointed towards including cultures (usually linked to countries) where the target language is spoken as an L1 in their language lessons with 66.7% in pre-test and 50% in post-test, a difference of -16.7%. This result goes in line with the answers given in the first question, as it is proof that the definition of culture was static and essentialist. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the participants also mentioned the incorporation of their own culture, with an increase, indicating a variation of 11.1%. In third place, the percentage of those participants that would address other cultures decreased, pointing to a

difference of -5.6%. Answers given by the same participant of the control group in the pre-test and post-test with regard to question 3 are presented below in Examples 54 and 55)

Example 54. Cultures to include in teaching practices by PRECGP03

In my practice, I would address the French culture, but also the American culture, it depends on which language I major in.

Example 55. Cultures to include in teaching practices by POSTCGP03

I would like to show cultures that really contrast with ours so it would be better to know how to be prepared to [*sic*] any situation. For example, European cultures such as French culture and British culture.

As Examples 54 and 55 illustrate, for the participant in the control group, as was the case of many others, cultures that speak the target language as an L1 should, by default, be the ones to address in a language lesson. From the answers given by the participant, it can also be inferred that his/her former misconception persists when it comes to integrating culture in a lesson. In addition, based on Example 55, it seems that some pre-service teachers believe that focusing on cultural differences, probably in the form of declarative knowledge, will enable their learners to better face intercultural scenarios.

When it comes to question 4, related to the participants' knowledge of the concept of ICC, it can be observed that in the control group, there were variations as to the features that the participants conceived as part of ICC. It is possible to see that in the pre-test, the participants emphasized on the idea that ICC promotes values of respect and tolerance towards others (44.4%), followed by the ability to communicate and function appropriately across different cultures (38.9%), awareness of differences across cultures (27.8%), and the ability to interpret

and understand other cultures (22.2%). In the pre-test, 5.5% of the participants stated that they did not know what ICC was.

As for the post-test, the definitions that prevailed associated ICC to the ability to communicate and function appropriately with people from other cultures, with no variation (0.0%) from pre-test to post-test. In second place were the definitions that associated ICC to awareness of differences across cultures and to values of respect and tolerance towards others especially from other cultures. The two categories displayed a difference of -5.6% and -22.2% respectively when compared to the pre-test. In the last place was the link of ICC to the ability to interpret and understand other cultures, indicating a difference of -5.5% from pre to post-test. Interestingly, in the post-test, 11% of participants stated they did not know the concept, which points to a difference of 5.6%. Examples 56 and 57 show the definitions given by one of the participants of the control group in the pre-test and the post-test respectively.

Example 56. Definition of ICC by PRECGP09

For me, it is the ability that someone might have to be and adapt to different cultures aside from their own.

Example 57. Definition of ICC by POSTCGP09

For me, intercultural competence means that there is a mixture of the foreign culture and the local one in order to see how different they are. Awareness of differences across cultures.

In Example 56, it can be seen that the participant implicitly points out the fact that ICC involves navigating across cultures. He/she uses the word *adapt*, but he/she only conceives it as a one-sided action; that is, the fact that one has to abandon one's own cultural mindset to

accommodate another. In Example 57, the same participant suggests that ICC has to do with awareness of differences across cultures, which is a crucial aspect, but it is just a part of what ICC involves. If the definitions given by the participant in the pre-test and post-test are put against the definition of ICC adopted in this dissertation, it could be said that they are not close to defining the competence.

It is true that ICC is not an easy construct to define, especially without being properly instructed. However, delving into the definitions provided by the control group, it was evident that those were very succinct and lacked elaboration. In all, bearing in mind the examination of the post-test between the experimental and control groups and then the analysis of the results obtained by each group in the pre-test, it can be concluded that both groups had the same initial conceptual and practical knowledge. However, it was clear from the results about the post-test that the experimental group displayed signs of improvement regarding their view of culture, their notions as to which cultures and how these could be included in their future teaching practices, and also their knowledge of ICC. After the intervention, it was possible to see that the experimental group diverged from their starting point. It was interesting to observe that their perceptions in all the aspects that the questions addressed shifted towards a more intercultural approach to language teaching, and that was evident in the degree of coherence they displayed in their theoretical and also practical responses.

6.4.3. Ability of the Participants of the Experimental Group to Incorporate Intercultural Communicative Competence in their Lessons

This section is concerned with the results obtained exclusively from the experimental group with regard to their capacity to merge the theoretical principles of ICC they studied during the intervention and their practical applications. Their ability to do so will be established by examining the lesson plans they designed as part of the intervention including LS. The lesson plans were assessed by means of a rubric that included parameters based on the principles

taught in class, paying close attention to those that were emphasized during the course. On this basis, the rubric used to assess the lesson plans was divided in two parts. The first part was related to general aspects addressed in class and intended to find out: 1) whether the lesson included a cultural component 2) if so, the types of aspects the lesson addressed were shallow, deep, or both, and 3) whether the lesson or any of its parts was likely to promote stereotypes. The three were some of the most salient aspects tackled during the course. The second part of the rubric focused on the type of activities that are thought to lead to the development of ICC. The list of activities was a product of thematic analysis. This was conducted using a coding scheme established considering the theoretical grounds of ICC and thinking processes that are claimed to assist in the development of the competence (see section 2.6 for review of principles and proposals to develop ICC). The assessment of the lesson plans, which given the number of students enrolled totaled 10, allowed determining if the participants in the experimental group were able to integrate tasks or activities in line with the principles conducive to the development of ICC. Table 28 presents the criteria to assess the lesson plans, the number and percentage of lessons per session that met the criteria, and the average lesson plans that met them.

Table 28

Assessment of Lessons Designed During LS Sessions by the Experimental Group.

	Criteria	Session 1 Lesson 1		Session 2 Lesson 2		Session 3 Lesson 3		Average	
	Total number of lesson plans	10		10		10		10	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	A cultural component is evident in the lesson.	7	70	9	90	7	70	7.7	76.6
2	The main task addresses shallow cultural aspects.	0	0	2	20	2	20	1.3	13.3
3	The main task addresses deep cultural aspects.	2	20	4	40	2	20	3.3	33.3
4	The main task addresses shallow and deep cultural aspects.	5	50	3	30	3	30	3.6	36.6
5	The task may promote stereotyping.	3	30	4	40	3	30	3.3	33.3
	Principles/Elements of ICC present in the lessons								
6	Awareness of diversity/similarities/differences	5	50	6	60	6	60	5.6	56.6
7	Critical thinking	4	40	4	40	3	30	3.6	36.6
8	Self-awareness	4	40	3	30	3	30	3.3	33.3
9	Values of tolerance and respect	1	10	4	40	1	10	2	20
10	Reflection	2	20	2	20	1	10	1.6	16.6
11	Empathy	1	10	3	30	0	0	1.3	13.3
12	Pragmatic awareness	1	10	1	10	0	0	0.6	6.6

Table 28 presents the results of the assessment of the lesson plans designed by the participants of the experimental group in three LS sessions that were part of the intervention. In each session, each group of three or four participants was asked to design one lesson plan, for a total of 10 per session and 30 overall. The lesson plans were examined considering the criteria created for their assessment, displayed in Table 28. Following these lines, it can be seen that overall, in 76.6% of all lesson plans designed, a cultural component, and probably an enabling characteristic, was evident. Considering each LS session individually, it was found that in session 1, 70% of the lesson plans met the first parameter in the rubric. The number increased to 90% in session 2, but decreased once again to 70% in session 3. The result indicates that the majority of groups were capable of including at least one task tackling the basis of ICC. The others, 30% in session 1, 10% in session 2, and 30% in session 3, mostly focused on grammatical aspects of the language or certain social issues, which although important, did not address cultural issues in any way.

Regarding the remaining parameters, it is possible to observe that in session 1, none of the lessons included merely shallow aspects of culture, but 20% of the lessons did in session 2, and the same percentage was obtained in session 3, for an average of 13.3%. When it comes to exclusively deep cultural aspects, an average of 33.3% was seen; 20% of the lessons included them in session 1, 40% in session 2, and 20% in session 3. As for tasks that included both deep and shallow elements, the average was 36.6%, which indicates that lessons with this feature prevailed. In this regard, it was observed that 50% of the lessons in session 1, 30% in session 2, and 30% in session 3 addressed both aspects of culture. Example 58 is an excerpt taken from a lesson designed by group 2 in the first LS session; it reflects how superficial and deep cultural aspects can be addressed.

Example 58. Session 1 - Group 2 - Deep and shallow aspects

Task description: learners are given a reading in the form of a letter written by a girl who went to Paris on holiday. Based on the reading, learners have to answer a set of questions:

- 1- Where did Maria go last summer?
- 2- How did she go?
- 3- What did she see in Paris?
- 4- Did Maria like Paris?
- 5- What differences did Maria find between French and Colombian culture?
- 6- What was something Maria disliked about Paris? Why do you think she disliked that particular aspect of French culture?
- 7- If you were María, what would you have done differently to make the experience better?

8. If a French person visited your city, what do you think this person would find strange and why?
9. What is something you would like to know about French culture?
10. Research information you would like to know about French culture and share it with your peers.

In Example 58, it can be seen that questions 1 through 4 elicit answers that can be drawn from the reading. However, they can serve to set the context. Then questions 5 through 10 address cultural aspects starting with differences. They move on to requiring learners to see the situation from the other's perspective by asking them to put themselves in María's or a foreigner's shoes, which is one of the skills that an intercultural competent individual needs to develop. The last two questions encourage learners to do their research on the target culture, which could probably allow them to explore aspects that go beyond shallow features.

In addition to the above, the results in Table 28 also show that 33.3% of all the lesson plans designed, or part of them, were likely to lead to stereotypes. In this vein, in session 1, 30% of the lessons were prone to promoting stereotypes, a percentage that increased to 40% in session 2, and came down to 20% in session 3. This finding is in line with the fact that some of the lessons the participants designed featured only shallow aspects, and these have proved to be linked to stereotyped views of a culture. However, it is also possible that not the entire lesson, but part of it, if not handled properly may lead to foster stereotypes. Example 59 depicts a task formulated by group 3 that could result in stereotyping. The task is based on a reading about Japanese culture, some of its most salient traditions in terms of activities and ways of dressing.

Example 59. Session 1 - Group 3 – Task that may result in stereotyping

Topic: Giving an opinion

Read the following paragraph about Japanese culture and answer the questions using the expressions to give an opinion studied in class. Work in pairs.

1. Which is the major difference between Colombia and Japan?
2. Do you think Japanese sports are more interesting than Colombian sports?
3. Do you think it is possible to wear a Japanese kimono in Colombia and where?
4. What do you think about Japanese religion?
5. Is religion important for Colombians?

In Example 59, it can be seen that the task can promote awareness of cultural diversity, as it prompts students to explore other cultures and their particularities. In addition, the task connects a grammar topic (expressions to give opinion) and cultural elements. That is, culture is integrated with other language skills, as Liddicoat (2002) suggests. Nevertheless, there are some aspects that can be improved. For instance, group 3 could have focused not only on differences but also similarities between Colombia and Japan. When comparing cultures, as Newton et al. (2010) highlight, it is advisable to focus not only on what sets cultures apart, but also on the aspects that they may have in common. For the authors, when learners engage in that practice, they may start seeing their culture the way others see it and move away from ethnocentrism. Another aspect to analyze in the task is the fact that Japanese culture is oversimplified. The group points at superficial features such as traditional clothing and sports, and the questions the participants formulated were shallow as well. Together, these factors may contribute to overgeneralizations and stereotypes about the Japanese. Perhaps if the questions had delved into deeper cultural aspects and had involved the ICC principles discussed in this dissertation namely, reflection, awareness, and critical thinking (see section 2.6), stereotyping

would have been minimized. When culture is part of language lessons, the risk of stereotyping is latent, and that is where the skillfulness of the teachers intervenes.

When it comes to specific ICC principles or elements immersed in the lessons, in the second part of the rubric in Table 28, it can be seen that the one that prevailed was awareness of diversity/similarities/differences, with an average of 56.6%. Lesson plans promoting awareness were followed by those that fostered critical thinking (36.6%), self-awareness (33.3%), promotion of values (20%), reflection (16.6%), ability to see things from different perspectives (13.3%), and finally, pragmatic awareness (6.6%). It was interesting to see that the participants incorporated a wide range of aspects they were taught with regard to the appropriate implementation of ICC. It can be said that none of them is more important than the other; in fact, each of them can contribute to developing ICC.

After reviewing the most recurrent ICC principles and elements found in the lesson plans the participants of the experimental group designed, it is worth taking a look at how some of them were integrated into two lessons. This allows seeing how the theory was actually brought to practice. Along these lines, Example 60 provides a summary of the stages of a task proposed by group 9 in which awareness, self-awareness, and reflection are immersed.

Example 60. Session 2 - Group 9 – Task that promotes awareness, self-awareness, and reflection

Task description: In pairs, learners introduce themselves including information such as name, age, sex, nationality, family role, religion, gender, ethnicity, job/study, taste in music, hobbies, sports, general likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and more. Learners are encouraged to ask additional questions. Once they finish exchanging information, they draw a mind map considering the 10 most relevant aspects of their identity. Then, they go around comparing their mind maps with classmates. They have

to jot down the name(s) of the person(s) beside the characteristic(s) they share with that person/those people.

2. Upon completion of the first stage, the learners report their findings to the class.

Afterwards, they have to answer:

Which aspects of identity do people have in common and which are unique?

How similar and how different are people in the group? Do people have more in common with each other than they have differences?

3. Finally, learners create a table with two columns. In one of them they have to write the aspects of their identity which they were born with, and in the other the aspects they consider are part of their experience and interactions with others.

Looking at the description of the task in Example 60, it can be affirmed that it was designed to promote self-awareness, when learners are prompted to ask themselves about their most outstanding personal features. In addition, it promotes awareness of similarities and differences by having learners compare the features that identify them to those of their classmates. Also, the task fosters reflection in two ways; first, by having learners think about what predominates amongst them, whether aspects in common or differences; second, by having them analyze which characteristics of their personality they were born with and which ones they acquired in the process of socialization. On this basis, it is important to highlight the fact that group 9 stepped away from focusing only on the aspects that make people different from one another. It is also worth mentioning that the participants in group 9 incorporated higher order thinking skills, not just description of shallow features of the learners' identity. Furthermore, they tackled an important aspect before addressing culture; it has to do with identity, which is influenced by culture, and both converge in the last part of the task.

Another task included in one of the lessons designed by the participants of the experimental group is described in Example 61. In the excerpt, it is possible to observe that group 7 created a task that integrates several ICC principles and goes beyond the presentation or exchange of factual information. In addition, it is not related to culture as a construct linked to a country but mostly to the different interpretations of reality that individuals can have.

Example 61. Session 2 - Group 7 - Task that integrates principles of ICC

Task description: this task was adapted by group 7 from an activity they engaged in during the intervention. In the task, learners are asked to imagine that Adam and Eve kept a diary when they came into this world, in which they shared their view of the world and each other. The learners work in groups. They first receive part of Adam's diary and have an idea of how he sees the world. After discussing Adam's part, the groups receive Eve's diary with her own interpretation of the world. The learners can see that the two visions of the world are completely opposed. Then the teacher leads a discussion, prompting learners to reflect on what they have just read.

As can be seen in Example 61, the participants in group 7 put forward a task that possibly fosters values such as tolerance and empathy, reflection, and critical thinking. In the first place, it is interesting to see that group 7 did not focus on comparing countries, which is usually thought to promote ICC. Instead, the participants emphasized on promoting values among individuals who are not necessarily from different nationalities but can have different cultural mindsets that influence the way in which they conceive reality. Furthermore, the task prompts learners to reflect on the idea that there is usually more than one interpretation of a situation; it generally depends on the cultural upbringing of the person. In this particular task,

it is the teacher's job to guide learners to discover that to establish not only effective communication but also positive relationships, it is necessary to see things from another angle.

On the whole, this section has provided an overview of the most salient elements that were found in the lesson plans the participants of the experimental group designed as part of the intervention, more specifically during the LS sessions. As could be seen in the results, most lessons were in line with the tenets of ICC, and a positive aspect to remark is the fact that the vast majority addressed deep or shallow and deep aspects of culture. This indicates that they understood the idea that teaching culture in foreign language lessons goes beyond the superficial features, a practice that has been perpetuated up to these days in most language classrooms. In addition, it was observed that only a few lessons or tasks included in them could end up promoting stereotypes. This finding suggests that culture should be handled with special care, as the least desired outcome would be to end up fostering biased information and pigeonholing a community into a shallow set of characteristics.

6.4.4. Discussion of Findings

To discuss the effects of the intervention on the practices concerning ICC of the participants of the experimental group, the results of two parts of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. Likewise, the experimental and control groups were compared. The sections that were analyzed inquired into the participants' knowledge and perceptions of culture and ICC as well as their views on how to materialize them in the classroom. This allowed establishing if their understanding of the concepts matched the way in which these would be implemented. In addition, the data gathered while the participants of the experimental group engaged in LS, which was part of the intervention, were also discussed. As a whole, the results gave an answer to research question 4: *to what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?* Following these lines, it can be said that the analysis pre-test and post-test and between the

groups indicates that the experimental group showed signs of improvement. First, this was evident in their shift towards a new view of culture, what culture comprises, the cultures that could be integrated in classroom discussions, and their conception of ICC. Second, such improvement could also be seen in the participants' ability to put the theoretical bases into practice, which was reflected in the lesson plans they designed while taking part in LS. It was possible to see that the lessons addressed culture in a way that was in line with the principles of ICC.

To begin, the place of culture in language teaching, according to the participants, was first investigated to understand if this construct, as the basis of ICC, would be a potential part of their future teaching practices. The results of the post-test indicated that for the experimental and control groups, culture was considered important and worth including in their lessons. In fact, in both groups, culture was perceived as an element that is as relevant as others that generally make part of language lessons (grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing, pronunciation). When the results of the two groups in the post-test were compared, no significant differences were found. This finding suggests that for the participants of the experimental and control groups, culture should be part of language teaching, and it is congruent with what Peña-Dix (2018) found in her study. Part of the results obtained by Peña-Dix (2018) indicated that the participants conceived culture as a fundamental element in the foreign language teaching process.

Continuing with the analysis of the results of the present study, the contrast between the pre-test and post-test within each group yielded different results when it comes to the gains displayed. Concerning the experimental group, a statistically significant difference was seen after the intervention; that is, the perception of importance regarding culture improved among the participants of this group. As for the control group, no major changes were evidenced. It could be that the intervention the participants of the experimental groups received may have

played a role in their improved perceptions concerning the place of culture in the language teaching process. In order to further examine the participants' perceptions regarding the role of culture as a one of the pillars of ICC, ICC itself, and how they link these perceptions to practical matters, the next section will address the results of a set of four questions that tackled such issues.

Regarding the participants' conceptualization of culture, the results of the post-test and the comparison between the pre-test and the post-test indicated differences between the groups and significant changes in the experimental group. The complete analysis suggests that the experimental group moved towards a conception of culture that goes more in line with ICC. This finding resembles, to a certain extent, the results obtained by Gómez-Rodríguez (2015), whose research involved 27 pre-service English teachers. Although in her study, the researcher did not directly inquire about the participants' conceptualization of culture, their perception of what culture involves changed after implementing tasks featuring critical discussions on cultural issues. For instance, it was seen that when talking about culture, they no longer referred to merely superficial features; they went on to examine values and other manifestations. What is more, they learned to take an outsider's perspective when it comes to analyzing their and other cultures. When it comes to this study, this is a remarkable advancement in the participants' road to becoming interculturally competent, as learning that culture also comprises values, behaviors, traditions, and viewpoints may indicate that learners start stepping away from linking cultures to shallow manifestations that most likely lead to stereotyping (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015).

Additionally, it was seen that the experimental group shifted towards a predominantly non-essentialist view of culture. This implies that the participants grasped the idea that culture is not necessarily linked to a nation but more to a social group. With respect to the control group, the participants seemed to adhere to a traditional definition of culture, in which it is

defined as a static and essentialist concept that encompasses mere superficial features. This deep-rooted conception of culture is commonplace in foreign language teaching, and it is supported by researchers such as Olaya and Gómez (2013). In their study, the authors found that the pre-service teachers that they surveyed had a traditional and static view of culture and defined it based on surface features. This view is generally perpetuated by textbooks, which in their attempt to integrate culture limit their content to the transmission of factual information, usually about a country (Barletta, 2009; Rojas-Barreto, 2019).

As for the types of activities that the participants would integrate in their teaching practice, gains were also evident in the experimental group when the results were compared to those of the control group and to the ones obtained in the pre-test. The majority of the participants in the experimental group made a remarkable move towards activities other than those that involve transmitting factual information or presenting superficial aspects related to a country. Among the activities that they mentioned were raising awareness on diversity of cultures, promoting values, fostering critical thinking, and exposing learners to varieties of the target language. These findings gain more relevance when they are contrasted to those from the control group, in which activities that tackle superficial aspects predominated among the participants.

The changes in the potential practices of the participants of the experimental group suggest that the intervention may have had an effect not only in their conceptualization of culture but also in the practical part. From the results, it can be inferred that the experimental group appeared to have adopted strategies that are more likely to favor the development of ICC. The participants in this group mentioned activities that incorporated one or more principles such as awareness, reflection, and/or critical thinking, which are the ones at the heart of different proposals to develop ICC (see Liddicoat, 2004; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Peyman et al., 2016). The control group, in contrast, seemed to stay on a more traditional side, consistent

with their conception of culture and also the long-held approach in which culture is minimized to a set of festivals, ways of dressing, food, and others alike that are most of the times seen as country-specific.

Regarding the cultures the participants would address in their teaching, in the pre-test, the majority, in both groups, had stated that they would include those in which the target language is spoken as an L1, consistent with Olaya and Gómez' (2013) and Peña-Dix' (2018) findings. However, the results of the post-test indicated a completely different trend in the experimental group, in which addressing multiple cultures was the prevailing answer among the participants. As for the control group, no changes were present, and the initial answer predominated in the post-test as well. This finding was telling because it represents that the participants of the experimental group acknowledged the worthiness of all cultures, and that is the main point of being interculturally competent.

With reference to the knowledge and conceptualization of ICC, the results showed that the experimental and control groups had similar perceptions of the construct in the pre-test. They were capable of partially defining ICC, as had been seen in prior studies (Atmojo & Putra, 2022), and some of the participants in the experimental and control groups claimed they had no knowledge of ICC at all. Nonetheless, when the results of the post-test were examined, it was seen that most of the participants in the experimental group were capable of providing definitions of ICC that were more elaborate, detailed, and coherent with the one that was adopted in this dissertation. They moved from linking ICC to awareness of differences to associating it to features such as values of tolerance, respect, and empathy, and the ability to communicate in spite of cultural differences. Furthermore, none of the participants in the experimental group claimed not knowing what ICC was.

As for the control group, even though the most prevailing characteristic in the definitions was the same as in the experimental group, the concept was described in less detail,

as could be seen in the examples gathered from the participants (e.g., Example 48). Moreover, in the post-test, a few participants in the control group stated that they could not define ICC. This finding goes in line with what Esteban-Núñez (2021) found. The participants in her study, five pre-service language teachers, were also capable of identifying some aspects of ICC but not entirely. In this dissertation, the participants in the control group pointed at some elements immersed in the competence, which was a positive outcome, but they did not know what ICC truly is. In the long run, this void will very likely prevent them from incorporating ICC in their teaching (Esteban-Núñez, 2021). On the whole, it can be concluded that the control group did not display any progress in terms of the participants' conception of culture, their teaching practices, and ICC. This result was probably expected because without being taught or led to discover the intricacies of culture and ICC, the participants, or language learners in general, may not develop the attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary to become interculturally competent (Crozet et al., 1999; Liddicoat, 2004; O'Neill, 2002; Mai & Binh, 2020).

Bearing in mind the analysis for both groups, it is possible to affirm that overall, the results suggest that the knowledge and perceptions of culture, ICC, and future practices of the participants in the experimental group were impacted by the intervention. This was evident, first, in the participants' theoretical knowledge of culture and ICC. This could be observed, for instance, in the way they redefined the concept of culture, in what they conceived as cultural manifestations, and in their conceptualization of ICC. It was seen that in their definitions, the participants in the experimental group expressed that culture comprises a lot more than facts, festivals, traditional dresses, that in the end only promote stereotypes. In turn, they moved towards including deeper elements such as attitudes and values that were not considered at the beginning of the study. The changes in the experimental group were also seen in their ideas to teach culture and develop ICC. After the intervention, the participants broadened the array of teaching practices. They went from favoring activities that were limited to transmitting factual

information about a country and sharing its most salient characteristics to activities that promote awareness of diversity, values, and critical thinking.

With regard to the above, Bennett (2009) and Baker (2015) claim, for learners to become interculturally proficient, they need to go beyond declarative knowledge. They need to engage in the critical analysis of the link between culture, language, and communication. In line with this, Yaprak and Özmen (2021) state that critical thinking and ICC intertwine, and both lead learners towards becoming more open-minded, being less judgmental, and stepping away from stereotyping and ethnocentrism. For Yaprak and Özmen (2021) and Deardorff (2020), critical thinking is essential to develop ICC, and activities to foster it were proposed by the experimental group. This is perhaps a critical area because the main challenge concerning ICC is to implement practices that lead to its development. Based on the evidence collected from the experimental group, a change was visible after the intervention, which was not observed in the control group. Finally, when it comes to the conceptualization of ICC, most participants in the experimental group became able to pin-point core principles of being interculturally competent, such as establishing and maintaining effective and appropriate communication, not being judgmental, and especially cultivating values that, in the end, could be transferred to other spheres of life, beyond the language classroom.

Considering the findings discussed thus far, it can be affirmed that the intervention had positive effects, and the gains were coherent throughout. That is, the theoretical and practical knowledge of the participants in the experimental group was enhanced, and it could be affirmed that they were capable of creating strategies to materialize ICC. This assertion was confirmed when the outcomes of LS, which was part of the intervention, were examined. In this regard, when the participants in the experimental group engaged in the LS process, more tangible changes in their ability to integrate ICC in their lessons were perceived.

The findings of the present study closely align with those obtained by Yazdanifar and Khazaeenezhad (2020), who investigated the perceptions of novice teachers with regards to LS and also how this approach helped them bring theory and practice together. The researchers found that the participants viewed LS as a practice that helped them learn about teaching and fostered reflective teaching and reflexivity. In addition, for the novice teachers, LS assisted them in integrating theory and practice, in their case, about communicative language teaching. In a similar vein, when it comes to a construct as complex as ICC, the results of the present research resemble those obtained by Walsh (2019). The researcher explored the level of intercultural understanding (IU) of in-service teachers and how LS could support them in the design of strategies to promote IU in their schools. The results indicated that the participants were aware of the relevance of IU. However, they also acknowledged not knowing clearly how to address or promote IU. As for LS, the participants stated that the practice was useful to turn such an abstract concept as IU into concrete practices.

Based on previous evidence and the results of the present study, it could be said that LS could have contributed to the participants' better understanding of ICC and its materialization reflected in the design of concrete tasks featuring ICC. In the first place, it was seen that while working collaboratively in the LS groups, the participants were able to create lesson plans that integrated culture in a way that they addressed not only shallow features but also deep cultural aspects, which is what generally happens when culture is integrated in language lessons. As has been claimed earlier, incorporating only superficial cultural features such as music, ways of dressing, food, festivals and others is not negative, but it is not enough to develop ICC. As Gómez-Rodríguez (2018) argues, these practices do not prepare learners to deal appropriately with intercultural encounters. What is more, that approach to culture focuses on transmitting information, oversimplifies what ICC is, and may cause the opposite effect, which is to promote stereotypes without engaging learners in critical thinking (Harbon & Moloney,

2015). It is important to remark, however, that stereotypes can be part of the lesson but as a source for discussion and critical analysis to later promote positive attitudes towards others (Byram, 2021).

Up to this point, the results of the analysis of the lesson plans indicate a positive outcome, derived from the LS sessions. It was seen that most lessons pulled away from a long-held paradigm and were closer to practices coherent with ICC. In this respect, in the lesson plans, it was observed that the groups incorporated principles and elements of ICC such as awareness of diversity, similarities, and differences across cultures. They created tasks that promoted self-awareness, critical thinking, values, reflection, and pragmatic awareness to a lesser extent, which were addressed in the theoretical part of the intervention they received.

Awareness, which was the most widely incorporated in the lessons, is deemed a core characteristic of ICC, as it tackles learners' understanding of what culture comprises and how this influences behaviors and practices (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). This implies that in the lessons, the participants included activities that required their learners' deeper analysis of the similarities and differences between their own and other cultures.

With regard to critical thinking, it can be considered a skill that plays a pivotal role in the development of ICC for several reasons; among them is the idea that those who think critically are able to think more as a society rather than as only individuals (Paul & Edler, 2012). For Bennet (2013), critical thinking is crucial when exploring diverse cultures because it allows us to see what lies behind visible cultural manifestations. What is more, Deardorff (2020) argues that critical thinking indicates the degree of ICC, as it implies individual reflection and assessment of one's experience to act according to the conclusions drawn from such reflection.

As for self-awareness, it can be said that it is the process in which learners discover the intricacies of their own identity and culture including shallow and deep aspects. It also refers

to their understanding of how their own cultural mindset influences the way in which they communicate and interact. Self-awareness, for Kramsch (1993), is a step forward towards becoming interculturally competent. This is undeniable because developing ICC involves getting to know oneself and understanding what drives the ways one thinks and acts.

Another element immersed in the lessons was the fostering of values such as respect, tolerance, and empathy. These are essential in intercultural interactions in order to, first, display adequate behavior and attitudes; second, to maintain effective communication despite cultural barriers (Deardorff et al., 2009). Although values should be inherent among individuals, in reality, they are sometimes absent in human relations, let alone intercultural exchanges. Therefore, it is worth promoting them not only for the sake of proper intercultural interactions, but also for positive relations under any circumstances.

Concerning reflection, in general terms, it can be conceived as the intentional act of gaining deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Nardon, 2019). Reflection may also involve looking back at past experiences to possibly reinterpret them (Britton & Lorimer, 2020). For McConachy (2018), reflection is pivotal in understanding the foundations of one's judgment of appropriate or inappropriate and how this influences one's perception of others. In ICC, reflection allows the interpretation of the impact that one's values, attitudes, or actions can have on the other and vice versa (Peyman et al., 2016).

The ability to assess behaviors, actions, and attitudes from different perspectives, or what Kramsch (2011) termed to take a 'third place', was also seen to be addressed in several lessons. This ability has to do with the idea of adopting a more neutral stance which allows individuals to see and interpret things beyond their cultural mindset, trying to put themselves in the other's shoes. With these ideas in mind, it can be affirmed that such skill resembles empathy, which is conceived as the capacity to consider the other's perspectives (European Council, 2004).

Finally, one of the claims made in this dissertation is the idea that metapragmatic awareness resembles ICC; this would imply that the development of the former has a direct result in cultural understanding and interpretation, and also in the individuals' ability to navigate between intercultural differences. However, metapragmatic awareness stems from pragmatic knowledge, and in the lesson plans that were created by the participants, this area was hardly covered. This issue may be the result of the lack of pragmatic focus throughout the curriculum. When the curriculum for the program the participants belong to was studied, none of the courses they are required to take is devoted to pragmatics. For that reason, only one lesson plan tapped onto pragmatics, and more specifically pragmalinguistic elements.

In general, the participants' ability to bring theory to practice and come up with lessons leading to the development of ICC suggests that LS is in fact an effective pedagogical strategy. It could be that the collaboration, scaffolding, and reflection involved in the process bring about improved teaching practices, as has been found in studies such as the ones conducted by Bayram and Bikmaz (2021), Karabuga, (2021), Vermunt et al. (2019) and Yazdanifar and Khazaeenezhad (2020).

In all, it can be affirmed that the intervention consisting of a training course and LS had a positive impact on the practices of the participants in the experimental group. The way in which the intervention was conceived seemed to be effective for three reasons. First, the pre-service teachers who were part of the experimental group were provided with conceptualizations of culture that led them to modify their traditional outlook of the concept. Second, they had the chance to become familiarized with principles of ICC including a metapragmatic perspective; both were fields basically unexplored for the participants until they took part in the intervention. Third, through LS, they received the support, the opportunities for reflection, and monitoring necessary to put their newly acquired knowledge into practice, which was reflected in the lesson plans they designed. The results as a whole lead to reflect on

the idea that laying the theoretical basis, at times, does not suffice when educating future teachers; it is necessary to guide them in the process of translating such knowledge into concrete actions.

6.5. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the results and discussion of this research and was structured in a way that it addressed the four research questions to later focus on the purpose of the study. In this vein, the chapter first examined the results of the pre-test; it analyzed the initial perceptions of the participants of the control and experimental groups about the relevance of culture in language teaching, their conceptualization of culture and ICC, their views on how to incorporate culture in their lessons, and their level of ICC. Then, the chapter reported the results of the post-test; these were analyzed by comparing them to those of the pre-test both by comparing the control and experimental groups. This analysis allowed establishing the gains of both groups, and more specifically those of the experimental group, to determine the effects of the intervention on their level of ICC, their perceptions of culture and ICC, and teaching practices.

The findings suggested a significant improvement of the experimental group as a result of the intervention; this was evident in areas such as behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, empathy, and intercultural adaptability. Likewise, the participants developed the ability to incorporate the theoretical principles they studied into the lessons they designed. The planning of the lessons incorporating the principles of ICC was assisted by LS. In all, it was seen that even though ICC has proved to be a very complex construct to integrate in language teaching, it can be materialized if the necessary scaffolding is provided.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

This study was motivated by two main factors. On the one hand, the void that the pre-service teachers that made part of this research had concerning their competence as intercultural individuals. On the other hand, the need to provide them with the tools not only to develop ICC themselves but also to make this competence part of their future teaching practices. Following these lines, the study was framed within action research, as it sought to solve a problem that had previously been detected. In this case, the solution that was put to the test was an intervention that combined a training course on ICC and LS. The purpose was to explore the extent of its impact on the level of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers. To attain this objective, four research questions were formulated:

1. How does a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers conceive ICC?
2. What is the initial stage of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?
3. To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the level of ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?
4. To what extent does an intervention consisting of a training course and LS impact the practices regarding ICC of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers?

On these grounds, this chapter first provides a succinct overview of the main findings regarding the four research questions, focusing mostly on the results obtained by the experimental group, which received the intervention. It reviews the starting conditions and the changes that this particular group experienced in terms of ICC level, how its participants advanced in their conceptualizations of culture and ICC, how they connected their theoretical views and teaching approaches, and how the intervention influenced their ability to include elements leading to the development of ICC in their lesson plans. Upon the presentation of the

most relevant results, this chapter addresses the contributions of the present study and their scope as well as its limitations and suggestions for further research.

7.1. RQ 1. How does a group of Colombian Pre-service EFL Teachers Perceive Intercultural Communicative Competence?

In order to answer this question, two sections of the pre-test, namely a Likert scale and a set of four open-ended questions were analyzed. Both aimed to examine the participants in terms of their initial perceptions of the role that culture plays in foreign language teaching, their approach to teaching culture, and their knowledge of culture and ICC. Concerning the importance of culture when compared to other seven aspects that are regularly taught in a foreign language classroom (grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation), it was seen that the participants from the experimental group conceived the construct as equally important as the others. This could be considered as a good starting point, since culture represents the foundations of ICC. Therefore, the participants' positive views indicate their willingness and interest in integrating cultural aspects in their teaching practices. It was necessary, however, to delve into what their conceptualization of culture was, an aspect that was examined through further questioning.

When asked about their conception of culture, the answers that the participants gave were mostly linked to a traditional view. That is, culture was likely to be defined as a set of traditions, customs, festivals, and music that represent a specific country or region. From this stance, first, culture was perceived as a static construct; it would be handed down from generation to generation and would not be affected by the passing of time or contextual circumstances. In addition, an individual's identity would not have a place in this cultural perspective. Second, culture was considered from an essentialist view in that it was perceived as a set of practices that people from a specific country share. Third, culture was generally seen

as the composite of visible aspects, neglecting deep features such as values, behaviors, and attitudes, which are also part of an individual's culture.

With respect to the way in which the participants would address culture in their future practices, the answers were coherent with their predominantly traditional view of the concept. Most of them claimed they would present information about a country, generally focusing on visible aspects. This practice is not completely negative, but it should go beyond the mere transmission of factual information. Limiting culture teaching to showing the most common and superficial aspects of a nation -i.e., the “visible culture” -would only perpetuate stereotypes. For Yaprak and Özmen (2021) in the language classroom, there should be plenty of opportunities to analyze cultures and promote critical thinking, as these practices may guide learners towards being more open-minded, less judgmental, and less ethnocentric. In addition, if the goal is to educate interculturally competent individuals, there should be opportunities to critically analyze the connection between culture, language, and communication (Baker, 2015).

In regard to the cultures the participants would integrate in their teaching, the vast majority of participants in the experimental group bluntly stated that they would address cultures (most likely countries) in which the target language is spoken as an L1. As the majority of studies have also revealed (Barletta, 2012; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018), foreign language learners tend to prioritize the American or British cultures, as they are seen as the standard they compare themselves to, and it is what textbooks and foreign language programs have promoted throughout the years.

Finally, when it comes to the knowledge of ICC of the participants of the experimental group prior to the intervention, the findings indicated that most of them did not have a solid idea of the competence. Their answers linked ICC to awareness of cultural differences, respect towards other cultures, or ability to communicate with people from other cultures. Although a

number of the participants had some idea of the concept, their definitions were unclear and imprecise while a few others did not even provide a definition. This outcome is not uncommon (Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Olaya & Gómez, 2013). Indeed, it was expected given the complexity of the concept, the scant opportunities for the participants to familiarize with it, and no less important, the fact that not even official documents in Colombia agree on what the competence is and involves.

Up to this point, it can be inferred that the results of the experimental group related to their initial perceptions of ICC and its associated concepts and practices are consistent throughout. In other words, their traditional perception of culture is reflected in different spheres. It can be seen in the fact that they link culture necessarily to a country (essentialist view), and they favor countries where the language is spoken as an L1, especially Great Britain and the USA. It is also evident in the way in which they would approach culture in the classroom: by presenting factual, generally superficial, information about a country. In their practices, there is no place to critically analyze and discuss diverse cultures. Finally, it is reflected in the misconceptions and uncertainty as to what they understand by ICC.

7.2. RQ 2. What is the Initial Stage of Intercultural Communicative Competence of a group of Colombian Pre-Service EFL Teachers?

To address the second research question, three parts of the pre-test were used: the intercultural profile questionnaire, which measured the participants' general ICC level; five scenarios taken from the INCA project, which provided information on the participants' level of competence in five ICC dimensions (behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy); and five critical incidents that targeted the participants'

metapragmatic awareness (including pragmalinguistic awareness and sociopragmatic awareness) and intercultural adaptability.

In all, after exploring ICC from three different perspectives, it was seen that, regarding general ICC, the participants in the experimental group had an intermediate level. This outcome broadly informs on the participants' potential skills to handle intercultural encounters and misunderstandings. In contrast, when the five dimensions of ICC were examined, the experimental group displayed a basic level in all of them. As for metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, the overall level was intermediate, which is consistent with the results of general ICC.

In addition to examining general ICC, it is necessary to delve into the components of the instruments. Following these lines, it was seen that the dimension of behavioral flexibility has much in common with intercultural adaptability. As a matter of fact, Garrote-Salazar's (2016) had previously resorted to behavioral flexibility and communicative awareness to measure levels of adaptability. Bearing this in mind, it was seen that the level shown by the experimental group in both behavioral flexibility and intercultural adaptability was predominantly basic.

Concerning pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness, the level displayed by the experimental group in the pre-test was intermediate. However, although the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features that the participants identified were classified at that level, their number was very small when compared to the number of those related to intercultural adaptability. This phenomenon could be explained by the fact that the participants did not receive pragmatic instruction, or at least it was not evident in the curriculum of the program they were enrolled in.

In this study, ICC was examined from different stances, from its different dimensions and a metapragmatic perspective. Considering the results as a whole, it can be affirmed that, at

the onset of the study, the experimental and control groups displayed several weaknesses. They seemed to resort to piecemeal strategies to interpret and solve the situations they were presented with. These initial results, however, provide great insight into which specific skills need to be developed for the participants to advance in their own ICC.

7.3. RQ 3. To What Extent does an Intervention Consisting of a Training Course and Lesson Study Impact the Level of Intercultural Communicative Competence of a group of Colombian Pre-service EFL Teachers?

This section made use of three parts of the pre-test and their counterpart in the post-test: intercultural profile questionnaire to have a general idea of the development of their ICC level; five scenarios taken from the INCA project to assess changes in the five ICC dimensions; and five critical incidents to measure the development of the participants' metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability. With the aim of answering the third research question, the effects of the intervention will be addressed.

With regard to the development of ICC by the pre-service teachers in the experimental group, it is first worth pointing out that major gains were evident in specific areas, especially when their competence in the five dimensions of ICC (behavioral flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge discovery, respect for otherness, and empathy) and their metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability was examined. Based on the results related to the five dimensions of ICC, it was possible to see that the experimental group moved forward in their level of behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, and empathy. These findings have some implications as to what the participants of the experimental group were capable of doing. In terms of behavioral flexibility, the results indicate that the participants displayed willingness to adjust to and comply with the spoken and unspoken rules of the new environment. As for respect for otherness, they seemed to move towards understanding that their opinions, set of values, behaviors, traditions, and attitudes are not the norm, hence, moving from a more

ethnocentric perspective towards a more relativistic one. Although different, the way other people think and behave is equally worthy and valuable. In intercultural interactions, or actually of any kind, it is not a matter of agreeing; it is a matter of understanding the intentions and wishes of the other (European Council, 2004). Regarding empathy, the participants appeared to take a ‘third place’ (Kramsch, 2011), which indicates that they were able to assess behaviors, attitudes, and actions from different angles. This means that they were able to assess a situation or interaction taking into account the other’s values, beliefs, and attitudes. As a whole, it is possible to affirm that the results in this study are in line with the findings in Garrote-Salazar’s (2016) research, in which the participants obtained higher scores in terms of adaptability and lower scores regarding openness.

In relation to the results of the participants’ metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, no major progress was observed in terms of pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic awareness, but changes were reported regarding their intercultural adaptability. More particularly, not as many participants were able to identify or provide a solution to pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic misunderstandings as they did regarding situations that involved intercultural adaptability. As explained earlier, the type of instruction they received in the undergraduate program did not include pragmatics as focus of study (see section 5.3 for compulsory courses of the undergraduate program). It is possible that this area was immersed in certain courses and addressed incidentally, with no major analysis, as it is usually the case of culture as well (Barletta, 2008; Sobkowiak, 20201). As a consequence, the participants in the experimental group were less likely to identify pragmatic aspects as the source of a misunderstanding. In this regard, for learners to develop pragmatic competence and the associated competences, instruction is key, and it is an aspect that Ishihara and Cohen (2022) stress. The authors suggest that explicit instruction, in particular, brings about more noticeable changes in the learners’ pragmatic competence. This would include enhanced pragmalinguistic

and sociopragmatic awareness. As has been claimed in this dissertation, integrating such type of instruction in foreign language teaching would contribute, in the end, to the development of ICC among learners (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

Continuing with the analysis of the results of metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability, although no changes were evident as for pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic awareness, some gains were perceived related to intercultural adaptability. In this particular area, the participants in the experimental group moved from a basic to an intermediate level. This change indicates that they were more willing to adjust psychologically or communicatively to situations they were not familiar with, were capable of putting forward useful alternatives to deal with an intercultural misunderstanding, and refrained from ethnocentrism. This finding is comparable to previous studies that have indicated that pre-service teachers are likely to have a high level of intercultural adaptability as compared with other ICC abilities (e.g., Cubukcu, 2013; Garrote-Salazar, 2016).

In all, regarding the extent of the changes in the level of ICC, it can be affirmed that the experimental group displayed a certain degree of development in specific areas of the competence: behavioral flexibility, respect for otherness, and empathy. Such development was not seen in the control group, which actually moved from an intermediate to a basic level of competence in terms of behavioral flexibility. If the definitions of these dimensions are scrutinized, it can be seen that they interrelate and bear some similarities with intercultural adaptability. For instance, showing empathy indicates the interlocutors' ability to adjust to a situation when they are capable of understanding how others may feel in such circumstances. In that sense, the gains observed in the experimental group, after their ICC was measured from different perspectives, are consistent. Moreover, the areas of improvement were of primary focus in the intervention the participants received, an outcome that goes in line with the idea

that culture needs to be explicitly taught if one wants learners to develop positive attitudes towards other cultures (Ingram & O'Neill, 2002). Culture, and more importantly, ICC can no longer be subject to incidental teaching; they are areas of paramount importance nowadays, should be addressed with care, and should be made part of the curriculum (Mai & Binh, 2020).

Bearing in mind the results obtained thus far, it could be said that the intervention was a contributing factor for the participants' progress as intercultural individuals. Nevertheless, being interculturally competent does not suffice when it comes to pre-service language teachers, which is the case in this study. One of the claims made in this dissertation is the idea that, at times, there is no coherence between the teachers' competence (pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and language educators), their theoretical foundations, and how they bring such foundations to practice. That has been the case of ICC, which is generally seen as a positive element to include in the language classroom. However, those in charge of doing so are unable to materialize it. On this basis, and considering the participants' improvement in their level of ICC after the intervention, it is now necessary to determine if such gains were also reflected in their theoretical views and their potential teaching practices.

7.4. RQ 4. To What Extent does an Intervention Consisting of a Training Course and Lesson Study Impact the Practices Regarding Intercultural Communicative Competence of a group of Colombian Pre-service EFL Teachers?

Results regarding research question 1 showed that the participants in both groups had a positive view of culture and the relevance it has in language teaching. More particularly, these results indicated that when compared to the other elements that are included in the language teaching process (grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation), culture was seen as an equally important aspect. Moving on to research question 4, for the experimental group, the perceptions of culture statistically improved when comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test. This finding is in agreement with part of the results obtained in various

studies (e.g., Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Chao, 2016; Moloney et al., 2020; Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Sobkowiak, 2021). They coincide in the idea that culture is conceived as a fundamental aspect in the language teaching/learning process. In those studies, however, there was a commonality, and that was related to the fact that even though the participants were aware of the irrefutable link between culture and language, they also acknowledged that they lacked the foundations of ICC or they simply did not know how to develop the competence in the classroom. Following these lines, the aim is now to find out if the positive perceptions the participants of this study had regarding culture were coherent with the advancements made in their knowledge of the principles and also their practices. In this vein, the results of the open-ended questions that examined their knowledge and ideas on how to develop ICC will be reviewed.

In regard to the perceptions of culture, ICC, and teaching practices, progress was seen in the experimental group, comparing the results before and after the intervention and when compared to the control group. In the first place, when it comes to the participants' view of culture, there was a shift towards conceptualizations that were congruent with foundations of ICC. The most relevant gain had to do with the participants' increased awareness that culture goes beyond the visible features of a social group. In the definitions they provided, the majority mentioned that the construct comprises aspects such as values, behaviors, traditions, and attitudes. This indicates that they no longer associated cultures to purely superficial characteristics such as festivals, food, or ways of dressing, which many times do not represent a community and only contribute to stereotypes (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Olaya & Gómez, 2013). Moderate improvement was also observed in relation to the essentialist vs. non-essentialist duality. In this regard, the number of participants with an essentialist view of culture decreased. The results showed that after the intervention, most participants no longer linked culture to a specific country; instead, they referred to communities, social groups, and society.

This particular outcome goes hand in hand with the definition of ICC that was embraced in this dissertation, which refers to ICC as “the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to improve interactions across differences whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders” (Deardorff, 2020, p. i).

When asked about the types of practices they would adopt as language teachers, the participants in the experimental group also displayed some gains, especially by abandoning the idea that incorporating culture in their lessons implied transmitting information, which was the widespread practice before the intervention. Most of them asserted that when teaching, they would try to implement activities that raise awareness on diversity, promote values, prompt critical thinking, and expose learners to variations of the target language. This finding follows the proposals of Liddicoat, (2004), Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), and Peyman et al. (2016), which were addressed during the intervention. Developing these skills, which goes beyond communicative competence and acquisition of declarative knowledge, is crucial when teaching towards being intercultural (Baker, 2015).

As for the cultures that the participants would include in their teaching, the experimental group went from favoring cultures that speak the target language as an L1 to involving multiple cultures and their own. This outcome reflects the participants’ acknowledgment that all cultures are worth discovering and can be subject of discussion despite not being British or American, as was the former misconception that the participants held and has been seen in other research studies (e.g., Barletta, 2009; Olaya & Gómez, 2013). It is possible that foreign language teaching programs are accountable for the tendency to limit culture teaching to learning about cultures where the target language is spoken as an L1. In the curriculum of these programs, at least in Colombia, it is common to find courses such as American cultural studies, British cultural studies, Intercultural communication in English,

Intercultural communication in French (Cabrales-Vargas & Loaiza-Trujillo, 2018). Learning about those cultures is not negative in any way, but in the curriculum, there should be room for discussing multiple cultures and subcultures. Seeing diverse cultures as equals could be considered as a requirement for ICC to be developed.

Regarding the conceptualization of ICC, it was seen that initially, the responses given in the pre-test tended to be more vague and some of the participants claimed not knowing anything about the concept. These initial results were not surprising and resemble those obtained by Peña-Dix (2018) and Atmojo and Putra (2022). However, in the present study, after the intervention, the participants in the experimental group were capable of giving more detailed definitions of the competence. Most of them were able to pin-point elements that were addressed during the intervention, which were more in line with the one by Deardorff (2020), the one at the heart of this dissertation.

With the evidence presented up to this point, it is possible to assert that the intervention had positive effects on four different areas among the participants of the experimental group: their perspective of culture, their conceptualization of ICC, the cultures they would integrate in their teaching, and also the particular strategies they would use to develop ICC. It is important to highlight that the gains in these four strands intertwined; that is, the improvements they displayed in their theoretical foundations were reflected in the practical part when they were asked about the types of activities they would integrate. This is considered as a notable step towards being interculturally proficient and being able to foster this competence in their future students.

Hitherto, the impact of the intervention on the development of ICC and teaching practices of a group of Colombian pre-service EFL teachers has been discussed. Then, the next part will deal with how LS contributed to their capacity to design actual lesson plans reflecting the principles of ICC. Along these lines, the results of the lesson plans the participants of the

experimental group designed during the LS sessions need to be addressed. In this respect and considering the criteria established for their assessment, it was seen that the vast majority of lessons complied with the key requirement that consisted in the incorporation of one or more principles that guide ICC. A closer examination indicated several traits as will be seen next.

To begin, most of the lesson plans included exclusively deep or deep and shallow cultural aspects. Even though some of the lessons did include cultural elements such as traditional dances, food, music, among others, these tended to be used as part of an introductory phase for a more complex task. This finding goes in line with the changes the participants experienced in terms of their views of culture as more than a simple composite of visible features. Another characteristic of the activities the participants proposed was the fact that these were far from focusing on the mere transmission of facts, biased at times about a culture, or usually a country. Furthermore, the activities did not emphasize only differences, which generally promotes ethnocentrism and prompts learners to judge cultures as better or worse. The activities that the participants designed included those that promoted cultural awareness, critical thinking, values, reflection, empathy, and, although not substantially, pragmatic awareness. This finding coincides with the responses the participants gave when asked about the types of activities they would incorporate in their practice, thus adding consistency to the findings.

With the results above in mind, it is possible to affirm that LS brought about changes in the participants' ability to translate their newly acquired ICC knowledge into practical tasks. It is possible that thanks to the collaborative work and support immersed in LS, the participants were more aware of the elements they needed to integrate in their lessons so that these became aligned with the principles and features of ICC. These findings are congruent with the results of other research studies in that LS represents an effective strategy to turn theory into tangible actions (see Yazdanifar & Khazaenezhad, 2020). They are also coherent with Walsh's (2019)

research, in which LS positively influenced the participants' ability to foster intercultural understanding in the classroom.

On this basis, it can be affirmed that LS could represent a beneficial pedagogical approach, especially under circumstances such as the ones depicted in the present study. First, it could assist inexperienced teachers such as the pre-service teachers who took part in this research, so that they gain confidence and practice in lesson planning. Second, it can serve as a bridge between theory and practice, especially when dealing with a challenging concept such as ICC. Third, it can be an alternative to regular professional development programs in contexts where these are scarce, which is the case of the setting where this study took place. In fact, LS can even be more beneficial than other options given that it takes the particularities of the context, the learners, and learning conditions into account (Karabuga, 2021).

Having discussed the results obtained after the intervention it can be said that the impact of the intervention on the level of ICC and teaching practices of the pre-service teachers in the experimental group was positive. When it comes to ICC level, the improvement was not outstanding, but it was present, and that was evidenced when comparing the results of the group before and after the intervention and also to those obtained by the control group. The progress especially occurred in areas related to the participants' willingness and ability to adapt behaviorally or communicatively, respect towards others, and empathy. No apparent changes were seen in terms of tolerance, knowledge discovery, pragmalinguistic awareness, and sociopragmatic awareness. Concerning the last two, the result may be explained by the lack of pragmatic instruction that the participants had received throughout the curriculum of the language program they were enrolled in. To somehow fill a negligible part of this void, a few pragmatic aspects were briefly studied in the course, but time constraints played against. In

addition, the field of pragmatics is vast and should be made a systematic part of the entire educational process within foreign language teaching programs.

The improvement displayed in the level of ICC of the participants of the experimental group was coherent with their perceptions of the relevant role that culture plays in language teaching and also their conception of culture and ICC. In this regard, it was seen that after the intervention, the participants' view of culture was more in line with a non-essentialist stance and also with the idea that culture includes visible and invisible aspects that determine the way individuals behave, think, act, and interact. As for ICC, they seemed to have a clearer and elaborate conceptualization of the competence.

When it comes to articulating ICC and actual actions, which is the most critical point, it can be said that the training course that was part of the intervention laid the theoretical basis and tackled areas that are crucial for the development of ICC. LS, in turn, provided the support necessary for the participants to translate the knowledge they gained into more tangible actions. In sum, it could be affirmed that the intervention as a whole brought about encouraging results that suggest that guided and explicit instruction on cultural matters and pragmatics may improve areas as complex as ICC and can also bridge the gap between theory and practice.

7.5. Contributions of the Study

This section focuses on the aspects that account for the originality of the present study and how this fills certain voids that had not been dealt with thus far. It is true that issues around ICC have been addressed in prior studies in the Colombian context. A number of them have examined the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge language teachers have regarding the integration of culture and ICC in foreign language lessons (Esteban-Núñez, 2021; Olaya & Gómez, 2013; Peña-Dix, 2018; Ramos-Holguín, 2019). Others have focused on the practices and challenges that foreign language teachers, teachers educators, and pre-service teachers face when materializing ICC (Barletta, 2009; Rojas-Barreto, 2019). There have also been

pedagogical experiences that have tackled very specific aspects of ICC or have put a strategy to develop ICC to the test (Carreño, 2018; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015, 2018). In spite of the valuable contributions that such studies have made to the field, there are four main features that set the present study apart from them.

First, prior research has either been of descriptive nature or has represented on-shot experiences, which, although worthy, are not part of a sequence of actions that lead to gains in ICC. This study, in turn, was longitudinal, as it reports changes from pre-test to post-test in terms of the participants' ICC level, their perceptions and knowledge of culture and ICC, as well as their future practices integrating the competence. The pre-test and post-test made it also possible to pin-point the specific areas in which the participants displayed strengths and weaknesses, so that more targeted actions can be taken within the language teaching program they were enrolled in.

Second, the intervention that was at the heart of this study provided the participants in the experimental group with progressive theoretical and practical foundations. First, the intervention aimed at clarifying key concepts such as culture, familiarized participants with processes such as awareness. Then, it moved on to more demanding areas such as reflection, critical thinking, and pragmatics. Finally, the intervention integrated LS, which was chosen as a pedagogical approach in which collaborative work facilitates the transition from ICC theory to practice. In short, it could be said that the intervention as a whole was not an isolated attempt but a consistent process.

Third, this study is, up to this point, the only one in Colombia that has examined the link between ICC and metapragmatic awareness. This is a pivotal aspect because metapragmatic awareness, and pragmatics in general, could be one of the missing links between ICC theory and practice. As discussed earlier, providing pragmatic instruction and creating scenarios for the development of metapragmatic awareness are tangible practices;

together with appropriate tasks and discussions could result in the development of ICC. In doing so, this study contributes to the very small bulk of studies that have empirically addressed the bridge between ICC and pragmatic competence (e.g., McConachy, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández & Maíz-Arévalo, 2021).

Fourth, bringing theory to practice has been one of the main issues when dealing with ICC. In that sense, the present research intends not only to provide the participants with the knowledge and skills for them to become interculturally competent but also to give them the tools to transform that knowledge into concrete actions in their teaching practice. To attain that objective, this study puts forward LS, a pedagogical approach that can serve as scaffolding for experienced and inexperienced teachers such as the ones that took part in this study. Although the LS process may be well-known in several countries, it is not common practice in Colombia. In fact, no studies have been conducted in relation to the approach in the country thus far. However, given its potentialities, it is worth considering it as an alternative, especially in settings where resources and support for professional development are scant. In this vein, it could be said that this study, on the one hand, takes the lead in proposing LS as a practice that can support pedagogical practices of teachers or future teachers in the country. On the other hand, it contributes to the few studies pointing out the benefits of LS for the development of ICC.

Altogether, this study represents the first pedagogical intervention that, on the one hand, aimed at providing foreign language pre-service teachers with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge for them to become interculturally competent and be able to teach towards ICC as well. On the other hand, the intervention resorted to other areas such as pragmatics, which is, at times, neglected in foreign language teaching but could be considered a crucial

element closely related to ICC. Therefore, it is worth exploring and being made part of regular language lessons.

7.6. Curricular and Pedagogical Implications of the Study

This dissertation has brought several issues to discussion: the heart-felt need for a paradigm shift when it comes to the conceptualization of culture, the unbreakable link between culture and language, the importance of fostering ICC in the foreign language classroom, the challenges of materializing ICC, and the value of offering support to pre-service teachers. To develop ICC, a good start can be broadening the conception of culture to include groups of individuals who have certain characteristics in common that allow them to have a sense of belonging, yet they have their own identity that is the product of socialization and passing of time. Cultures can not be limited to countries; a country is only one of the cultural groups one can identify with. Culture is not reduced to traditions, food, music, and celebrations; it comprises values, attitudes, behaviors that allow making sense of what is visible.

The development of ICC also involves adjusting teaching practices when cultural matters are part of the lesson. Culture, or countries as it is usually the case, should no longer be presented as facts and figures that only promote stereotypes. Culture, in its broad definition, should be part of discussions, reflection, comparisons, and critical analysis (Olaya & Gómez, 2013). If such practices are made part of the foreign language classroom, there would be more chances for learners to understand or analyze the reasons behind individuals' culture-loaded values, attitudes, and behaviors and their impact on one another.

In line with the above, the connection between language and culture and how they come to play in intercultural encounters should be brought to the attention of learners. In spite of the evident intertwinedness, culture and language are generally detached from one another. Language teachers tend to focus exclusively on linguistic aspects of the language and at times on culture but as separate constructs. However, as discussed in section 2.2, culture influences

linguistic choices and, in general, the way in which individuals use and interpret language (Harbon & Moloney, 2013). Therefore, for intercultural encounters to be successful, that is, effective and appropriate, learners need to be aware of such influence, and one way to highlight it is through pragmatic instruction (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016).

The above are the basis to start teaching ICC, which although complex, it is possible to develop. In this dissertation, several principles and strategies were discussed, and a number of them were actually implemented during the intervention. Nonetheless, these have to be more widely disseminated. The ideal scenario would be that such principles and strategies were part of the national curriculum; that they were integrated, for instance, in an improved version of the Colombian Suggested Curriculum for English (2016b). For now, that does not seem feasible in the short term, and probably the link between policy-makers, institutions, and all the ones involved in the foreign language teaching process will remain somewhat broken.

For the time being, some actions can be taken, especially at the heart of foreign language teaching programs. In that respect, Olaya and Gómez (2013) and Esteban-Núñez (2021) have argued that the curriculum should be adjusted in a way that it incorporates and makes the elements necessary for the development of ICC explicit. That can be considered a step to raise awareness on what the competence actually is, a void that is commonly found, as was the case before the intervention in the present study and others (Atmojo & Putra, 2022; Peña-Dix, 2018). The changes to the curriculum, however, should be the result of collegiate debate among teacher educators and informed decisions.

For Gómez-Rodríguez (2015), pre-service teachers in foreign language teaching programs should receive special attention, and developing ICC among them should be of paramount importance. They will be, in the very near future, practicing teachers working in diverse contexts, especially in primary and secondary schools, where they will have to

implement the Colombian Suggested Curriculum (2016), in which ICC plays a major role. In this vein, it is affirmed that:

Developing ICC among pre-service language teachers should be mandatory. These new teachers are the ones in charge of opening spaces to place cultures into the language classroom. The result of that new scenario can become one of the opportunities for learners to develop a better understanding of the world and its changes in this new era of globalization and easy access to the information. (Esteban Nuñez, 2021, p. 16).

Since materializing ICC has proved to be a challenge, it is also important to consider that pre-service teachers need extra scaffolding. Guiding them towards becoming interculturally competent does not guarantee that they will be able to do so with their own learners. Extra support should be provided so that they integrate strategies and principles in their lessons. In this dissertation, LS represented that kind of support, and could be considered as an alternative. It is a practice that, unlike professional development programs, can take place when needed; it enhances reflection, self-monitoring, and increased awareness among those who engage in it. It does require collaborative work, planning, and especially commitment.

As could be seen, foreign language teaching programs may be considered the springboard for ICC, but they are not the only ones responsible nor are the sole beneficiaries. It has been argued that ICC is a worldwide concern. Consequently, it is necessary to think about surpassing the boundaries of those programs and involve the entire academic community at higher education institutions in practices that promote ICC (Rojas-Barreto, 2019). This joint work could contribute to internationalization processes, which are the coveted goal of higher education institutions. However, the development of ICC should not only be instrumental. As Carreño (2018) argues, ICC should be a priority in higher education, not because students may travel abroad or because the institution needs to meet international standards, but because all individuals have to face cultural differences on a daily basis. Thus, preparing them to be

interculturally competent will enable them to properly interact in numerous scenarios regardless of cultural backgrounds.

7.7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study had as a main purpose to examine the impact of an intervention consisting of a training course and LS on the ICC level and practices of a group of pre-service teachers. In the process, several areas were addressed and examined. However, there were aspects that were not within the scope of the investigation but could be considered for future research. In this vein, this section is concerned with the limitations of this study and how these can be addressed in future studies.

First, it can be said that some of the instruments used to measure ICC level and the perceptions of the participants regarding their teaching practices involved self-reported data, especially the intercultural profile questionnaire used to measure general ICC. Possibly, when yielding this type of data, the answers may not truly reflect what actually happened. That is, they may be inaccurate due to varied reasons. It could be that sometimes, the participants provide socially desirable answers (Dornyöi & Taguchi, 2010); they answer according to the expectations of the person who administers the questionnaire (Sinicrope et al., 2007); or they fall into *acquiescence bias*, which refers to the idea that when not knowing an answer, the participants choose the most positive alternative. This issue had already been contemplated in section 2.3.1, and that is why to neutralize the possible flaws, the two additional instruments were used to measure the participants' ICC in this study. Unfortunately, measuring ICC from an objective perspective is difficult, as different scholars have pointed out. It is even more difficult when the instruments available are designed without considering how culturally different individuals are. Future studies could focus on developing objective ICC measures that take into account the local cultural context.

Second, this study has not taken into account how individual differences of the learners (e.g., personality, proficiency, anxiety, language attitude, etc) may have affected ICC development. Foreign language learners have different traits that are likely to determine variability in their language learning process. Future studies could explore the factors that could be correlated to learners' likelihood to develop ICC or specific dimensions of the competence. One of those factors could be the participants' personality type. In this vein, a study similar to the one conducted by Azadipour (2019) could be carried out. The researcher used the Myers–Briggs' Type Indicator (MBTI) to determine the participants' personality types and how these correlated to their likelihood to develop ICC. The findings could serve as a basis for pedagogical planning involving ICC in a way that it caters to individual differences.

Third, this research has not included a delayed post-test (only a pre- and a post-test). Hence, it has not accounted for whether the ICC gains displayed by the experimental group were maintained over time. In the last few years, traveling abroad through exchange programs has become a common practice among the pre-service teachers enrolled in the teaching program where this study took place (e.g., as au pairs, counselors at summer camps, language assistants). On this basis, the participants who were part of the experimental group and then traveled to another country could be traced to investigate their perceptions and determine whether and how the intervention helped them in the new context and while engaging in intercultural interactions.

Fourth, with regard to the integration of ICC in the participants' future practice, the ability or inability to do so was inferred from the answers the participants in the experimental and control groups provided in the pre and post tests. However, only the experimental group was required to design lesson plans integrating the principles of ICC to analyze if they were capable of doing so. This stage was part of the intervention they were subject to. An additional study could address this issue by examining both groups in this respect.

Fifth, the foreign language teaching program in which the participants of this study were enrolled did not specify pragmatics as an area of study. During the intervention, some basic concepts related to the field were broadly addressed due to time constraints. In this sense, it would be interesting to examine the impact of exclusively (meta)pragmatic training on the development of ICC. Subsequently, their progress could be assessed by means of critical incidents to examine their metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability.

To conclude, despite the limitations discussed in this section, this study provided some insights into the various perspectives from which ICC can be examined. Furthermore, and more importantly, this study proposed an intervention that comprised the training and theoretical foundations needed to better understand ICC and LS as the scaffolding that most pre-services, and probably in-service teachers, need to materialize complex concepts such as ICC. As a whole, it can be said that if ICC becomes a more visible part of the curriculum of foreign language teaching programs and if the work of policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers articulate actions, the ways in which this competence can be promoted can be more easily disseminated, understood, and adopted.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. INCA Assessor's Rubric

Level Competence ↓	1 'Basic'	2 'Intermediate'	3 'Full'
General profile	The candidate at this level is on the ladder of progression. They will be disposed to deal positively with the situation. Their responses to it will be piecemeal and improvised rather than principled, even though mostly successful in avoiding short term difficulties. These will be based on fragmentary information.	The candidate at this level has begun to induce simple principles to apply to the situation, rather than improvise reactively in response to isolated features of it. There will be evidence of a basic strategy and some coherent knowledge for dealing with situations.	The candidate at this level will combine a strategic and principled approach to a situation to take the role of a mediator seeking to bring about the most favourable outcome. Knowledge of their own culture and that of others, including work parameters, will be both coherent and sophisticated.
i) Tolerance ambiguity	1T Deals with ambiguity on a one-off basis, responding to items as they arise. May be overwhelmed by ambiguous situations which imply high involvement.	2T Has begun to acquire a repertoire of approaches to cope with ambiguities in low-involvement situations. Begins to accept ambiguity as a challenge.	3T Is constantly aware of the possibility of ambiguity. When it occurs, he/she tolerates and manages it.
ii) Behavioral flexibility	1B Adopts a reactive/defensive approach to situations. Learns from isolated experiences in a rather unsystematic way.	2B Previous experience of required behaviour begins to influence behaviour in everyday parallel situations. Sometimes takes the initiative in adopting/conforming to other cultures' behaviour patterns.	3B Is ready and able to adopt appropriate behaviour in job-specific situations from a broad and well-understood repertoire.
iii) Communicative awareness	1C Attempts to relate problems of intercultural interaction to different communicative conventions, but lacks the necessary knowledge for identifying differences; tends to hold on to his own conventions and expects adaptation from others; is aware of difficulties in interaction with non-native-speakers, but has not yet evolved principles to guide the choice of strategies (metacommunication, clarification or simplification).	2C Begins to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and attempts to clarify his own or to adapt to the conventions of others. Uses a limited repertoire of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to solve and prevent problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.	3C Is able to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and is aware of their effects on the communication process; is able to identify and ready to adapt to different communicative conventions, or to negotiate new discourse rules in order to prevent or clarify misunderstandings; uses a variety of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to prevent, to solve, and to mediate problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.
iv) Knowledge discovery	1K Draws on random general knowledge and minimal factual research about other cultures. Learns by discovery and is willing to modify perceptions but not yet systematic.	2K Has recourse to some information sources in anticipation of everyday encounters with the other cultures, and modifies and builds on information so acquired, in the light of actual experience. Is motivated by curiosity to develop his knowledge of his own culture as perceived by others.	3K Has a deep knowledge of other cultures. Develops his knowledge through systematic research-like activities and direct questioning and can, where this is sought, offer advice and support to others in work situations.
v) Respect for otherness	1R Is not always aware of difference and, when it is recognised, may not be able to defer evaluative judgement as good or bad. Where it is fully appreciated, adopts a tolerant stance.	2R Accepts the other's values, norms and behaviours in everyday situations as neither good nor bad, provided that basic assumptions of his own culture have not been violated. Is motivated to	3R Out of respect for diversity in value systems, applies critical knowledge of such systems to ensure equal treatment of people in the workplace. Is able to cope tactfully with the ethical

	and tries to adapt to low-involving demands of the foreign culture.	put others at ease and avoid giving offence.	problems raised by personally unacceptable features of otherness.
vi) Empathy	1E Tends to see the cultural foreigner's differences as curious, and remains confused about the seemingly strange behaviours and their antecedents. Nonetheless tries to 'make allowances'	2E Has the beginnings of a mental checklist of how others may perceive, feel and respond differently to, a range of routine circumstances. Tends increasingly to see things intuitively from the other's point of view.	3E Accepts the other as a coherent individual. Enlists role-taking and de-centring skills, and awareness of different perspectives, in optimising job-related communication/interaction with the cultural foreigner.

Appendix B. Metapragmatic awareness and intercultural adaptability rubric

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Initial</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Mature</i>
Pragmatic awareness: pragmalinguistic aspects	Student either is not aware of any pragmalinguistic aspect or is only able to point out there has been a linguistic misunderstanding. Even if pragmatic terminology is not used, the student intuitively (pretheoretically even) is able to spot a problem that has to do with pragmalinguistics.	Student is able to point out what type of linguistic misunderstanding there has been or which linguistic strategies could have been used to address it. This includes implicit reference to speech acts (e.g. requests), address forms, (im)politeness, etc.	Student is able to explicitly address which type of pragmalinguistic element(s) is at play and/or go beyond that to also comment on the surrounding aspects of the utterance (i.e. perlocution, conversational management strategies). This is evident in the use of metapragmatic comments.
Pragmatic awareness: sociopragmatic aspects	Student either is not aware of any sociopragmatic aspect or is only able to point out there has been a cultural misunderstanding. Even if pragmatic terminology is not used, the student intuitively (pretheoretically even) is able to spot a problem that has to do with sociopragmatics.	Student is aware that the relationship between the interlocutors is likely to affect the conversation. This includes implicit reference to social distance, power, and/or cultural similarity.	Student is aware that the relationship between the interlocutors is likely to affect the conversation and explicitly reflects upon social distance, power status, and/or cultural distance playing a role in communication
Intercultural adaptability	Student either is not willing to adapt to the situation (i.e. does not consider the misunderstanding could be avoided), proposes unhelpful solutions (i.e. the speaker should have learned more German before going to Berlin), or blames it on the hearer. All in all, a strong sense of ethnocentrism and a maintenance of stereotypes (i.e. categorizing one culture as being better or worse) are present in the critical analysis.	Student is willing to adapt to the situation, either through communicative or psychological adaptability, as (s)he proposes an adaptation strategy(ies) the narrator could have resorted to. However, they show a neutral cultural position that reveals neither ethnocentrism nor an appreciation for the target culture.	Student is willing to adapt to the situation, either through communicative or psychological adaptability, and shows an ability to see the two cultures' perspectives, shows an understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity, and does not see cultural differences as an impediment to communication.

Appendix C. Complete pre-test

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Answer the following questions as precisely as possible. If they do not apply for you, leave them blank. If possible, use a different font color.

Biographical information

Name:

Contact information: email: phone number:

Age:

Studies/ semester:

Place of study:

How long have you been studying in your current institution?

Do you work in a field related to your studies?

If you do work, how long have you been working?

How many languages do you speak well?

Where and how did you learn these languages?

Do you have any friends from abroad? If so, how often do you communicate?

How often have you dealt with people from other countries in your professional life? Have you ever worked/studied in a work group with members from various cultures?

How often do you read books that are written in foreign languages?

Have you been abroad? If so, how long have you been abroad?

Which countries have you been to?

Are you likely to travel abroad in the future? If so, where and how?

Write about any additional experiences with people from other cultures that you may have had.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions

1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words.
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?
4. What is intercultural communicative competence for you?

Based on your perception and experience as a teacher, provide a score for each of the following elements according to their relevance in your teaching practice. (cero (0) is not relevant - five (5) is highly relevant.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar						
Vocabulary						
Speaking						
Listening						
Reading						
Writing						
Culture						
Pronunciation						

INTERCULTURAL PROFILE

It is possible that you may have experienced situations where you have had contact with people from other cultures, for example at your place of study, in your country, or in other countries. You will find below some statements that are related to such situations. Please tick those statements that are valid for you and that best describe your experiences. Maybe these statements are related to situations that you have not yet experienced. Please try to imagine such a situation and tick those situations that correspond best to your possible behaviour and reaction.

		Not applicable	Maybe	Fully applicable
	This section is about encounters with other people in your home country			
1	In restaurants I often eat dishes with ingredients that I don't know.			
2	I often seek contact with other people in order to learn as much as possible about their culture.			
3	When other people don't feel comfortable in my presence, I notice it.			
4	I find it difficult to adapt to people from diverse origins.			

5	When other people behave in a way that I don't understand, I ask them why they are doing this.			
6	When I hear about a catastrophe happening in another country I think about the people there and their fate.			
7	When I am a newcomer in a group with people from a different country, I try to find out the rules in this group by observing their behaviour.			
8	When a conversation with people from different countries fails, I ask all persons involved to explain their positions.			
9	When conversation partners use gestures and expressions that are unknown to me, I ignore them.			
10	When talking to other people I always watch their body language.			
11	In conversations with speakers of other languages I avoid unclear or ambiguous words.			
	Now we deal with situations where you meet people in their home country (e.g. when on holiday in other countries and cultures)			
12	I get confused when there are no reliable transport timetables in the country where I spend my holiday.			
13	When I observe people in other countries, I often guess how they are feeling.			
14	I often change my plans when I am on holiday abroad.			
15	When the behaviour of people from other cultures alienates me, I avoid making contact with them.			
	The following statements are related to work situations with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.			
16	I don't have problems in suddenly changing to one of my other languages during a conversation.			
17	I always follow the rules of my own culture if I am not sure of how to behave properly when dealing with people from other cultures.			
18	When colleagues from other cultures in my work group come to work later and/or take longer breaks, I adopt their work habits.			
19	If I have behaved inappropriately towards a colleague from another culture, I think of how to compensate for it without further hurting him.			
20	When there are colleagues in my work area who constitute an ethnic minority, I try to involve them in the majority group.			

21	When colleagues or superiors from abroad criticise my work, I consider changing my work habits accordingly.			
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ANALYZING DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

Below you will find 5 scenarios that depict situations you may encounter when interacting with people with different backgrounds. Read each scenario and answer the questions that follow each one of them.

SCENARIO 1: FINDING INFORMATION

You have been selected to take part in an international university project with an associate European company. This will involve you spending 3–4 months in a country which you have not visited before (although it is possible that you learnt some of the language at school). Answers to the following questions will help us to judge how quickly you might come to understand your new environment, its culture and its people.

Please answer the following questions:

1. What kind of information do you think you would need before departure?
2. How would you obtain that information?
3. During the placement what would you do to find out information at your place of study?
4. During your spare time, if you wanted to find out more about the country, what would you do?

SCENARIO 2: ACCOMMODATION

Given the fact that one of the stated aims of your work placement abroad is that you would be able to find out more about another country and its way of life, please study the options for your accommodation. There is no one correct answer, as each option would offer some advantages and some disadvantages. Rank the options in the order in which you yourself would choose, and then write a paragraph in which you explain why you chose your **first** option.

1. A place in a hostel, together with some of your fellow nationals
2. Living with a local family; you would have your own room
3. A small flat where you would cater for yourself

The reasons for my choice are as follows:

SCENARIO 3: FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE TEAM

You are spending a year in another country working as a language assistant. Early in your placement, you discover that the system of hierarchy is totally different from that practised in your own country. For example, you are used to people dressing informally, using first names, eating in the same canteen. Here there is much more formality, rules and regulations, and people don't even speak the same way to each other. It is very strange and you cannot help feeling that your own way is much better.

1. Write a few lines, which could be part of an email explaining this, and your reaction to it, to a colleague at home.

SCENARIO 4: UNDERSTANDING UNEXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

You are a language assistant abroad. One disadvantage of your new workplace is that the weekends are rather lonely. You normally spend time with friends and family and you miss this social side of your life. At work, you become friendly with a colleague who can speak your language. This colleague says that he would give you a call during the weekend. The telephone does not ring. There could be a number of explanations for this.

1. Please, complete the following tasks:

1. On the Monday morning you decide to talk to a local colleague about this. How would you explain what had happened and how would you find out from the colleague what the explanation could be?
2. Later in the morning you meet the colleague who did not phone. He/she tells you he/she could not phone because 'My mother asked me to go shopping for her'. Write a few lines as part of an email to your family telling them about this incident and explaining why it happened.

SCENARIO 5: FEELING CONFUSED

You have been working in a foreign country for six months and you speak the language well enough for everyday needs. At work, difficult procedures are explained to you in your own language, so there are no problems here. However, it is almost impossible to understand your colleagues when they talk to each other as they talk quickly about situations you do not understand. It is also difficult to understand jokes and casual remarks where people seem to speak in a local dialect. Therefore you often feel out of your depth and confused.

In your reply to this question:

1. Say whether you would find such a situation particularly difficult and why.
2. Suggest what you might do in order to feel more comfortable in this situation.

Cultural incidents task

Read the paragraphs below and, for each one of them:

1. Briefly explain, in your own words, what went wrong.
2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?
3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?

INCIDENT 1

I'm a foreign languages student and a couple of years ago I moved to New York City as an au pair, which is an exchange program. This situation happened around January, I was at JFK airport just arriving from vacation and as I lived in Brooklyn, which is a borough in New York, I decided to take an Uber because public transport from the airport to Brooklyn is basically hell, it would have taken me around two hours just using the subway, so for comfort

[sic] I chose to Uber. Everything was fine, the car arrived on time, the driver helped me with my luggage, until a couple of minutes after starting the route to my place, the driver started to talk with me in an unknown language! I could see that he looked Indian, or something like that, but I absolutely did not know what he was saying, he was able to see my confused face but chose to still speaking in god knows what language so I decided to tell him, in English, that I wasn't able to understand him, he just frowned his face and kept going on his language and I stopped him with a loud voice telling him that whatever he is saying I don't understand it! I was kind of anxious about this situation and a little scared, besides there was nothing I could do, I mean he was driving on a highway so what was I supposed to do? I just put a very serious face and tried to use the most angry voice I could. When I yelled at him, his expression changed and then, in English, he told me that he was speaking in his native language because he thought I was from where he was from, which then he told me a weird country I can't remember, I just suppose it was somewhere in Asia. When he told me that, I got relaxed but he looked ashamed, I just told him that I was Colombian and that he should have asked first instead of assuming things. It was a 40 minutes ride and after that inconvenience we didn't share a word. He wanted to force me to speak in his native language so I felt offended when this situation happened because he sounded mean and I don't have a clue what he tried to tell me so what if it was something inappropriate? I felt very brave after stopping him because to have the courage to put a stop in a situation requires guts. I know that for my look I might not scream Colombian at first sign, and a lot of times people have asked me where in Asia I am from, or even where in Thailand I was born lol but one thing is to ask and another completely different one is to harass a person because you thought something.

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 2

In December 2017 I was living in Washington D.C. during my year as an aupair. I was working for an American family, and I was in charge of their two children. That year, we spent Christmas together at the grandparents' house and I was a little surprised by some American traditions and behavior.

To provide some context, I am from a small town in Nariño. I was used to traditional Colombian food, the warmth of the people, the super Catholic traditions, and the festive mood during this time of the year.

To begin with, Americans are very organized people, they like to be on time, and they normally plan stuff ahead of time. So, it was a big surprised to know that we had a calendar of events for that Christmas. Nothing compared to the way I used to celebrate it at home, where we didn't plan anything thoughtfully and were often late for most things.

On the 24th, we had a great dinner together with traditional Christmas food. In Colombia, we normally make natilla for dessert, so I really wanted to share some of that with this family. I made some and told them "You can try the natilla I made if you'd like." Just a couple of the guests tried a bit and left some on the plate. They didn't seem to like it as much. I felt a little offended by the fact that they left some of it on their plates, which is not the case in Colombia, where we normally finish all the food on our plates and ask for more which is considered polite.

That night we talked and had a great time together, but we didn't do what we do at home. In Colombia, we normally start by praying the novena, then we have some dinner, we might open some presents, and then we listen to music and dance. So, it was a bit shocking to me that religion did not play a very important role here and people didn't dance like we did back home.

The next morning, we opened Christmas presents. We woke up very early and ran down the stairs to open a ton of gifts. I was shocked to see so many gifts. I probably hadn't received that many presents in all my Christmases combined! At home, we mostly give children presents, but that night everyone, including the adults, got gifts from every person in the room. I loved the fact that some people were very thoughtful and took the time to think about presents that you needed.

All in all, I had an amazing time with this family, but I was certainly surprised by the way they did things there and some of their behavior. I missed several Colombian traditions, but I valued and appreciated some of the American ones, too!

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 3

In my culture it is very common to show how grateful you are when someone does a special favor for you. The incident took place during the interaction of a graduate student and a professor of the program. I have had different meetings with my professor, who was an expert in a topic I was interested in. He had scheduled a couple of meetings and we were to meet for the last time in his office. I thought that it would be nice if I had a gesture of gratitude with my professor. The last minute had taken about an hour and I believed that this new meeting could possibly take the same time. I decided to bring a cup of coffee for the meeting and bought one for my professor. As I entered his office I announced, "I brought you a cup of coffee." He was shocked. He said that he was not

allowed to receive any gifts from his students. As a teacher myself I understood the position he might be in. I explained to him that I understood, but I also explained that it was just a cup of coffee. I told him that I would leave the cup of coffee on his desk and that he could decide to take it or not. I explained that if he would decide not to take it was ok and that I would take it with me on my way out. I explained that in my culture it was ok to have a gesture like that as it was something small, not a gift or a bribe. He finally understood my intentions and that there was nothing to read between lines and drank the coffee.

1. What went wrong?
2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?
3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?

INCIDENT 4

I am from Colombia and the other person I had the incident with was from the United States but her parents were Mexican so she knew English and Spanish very well. We were attending one of the celebrations at Church in Denver, CO.

After the celebration, we were talking and she was carrying her baby while I was playing with the baby too. I told her

"tu bebé es muy juicioso" (your baby is very well-behaved), to which the other girl did not react accordingly; she gave me the look and walked away. The word *juicioso* has a positive connotation in Colombia and other Spanish speaking countries and can be used to refer to someone who behaves well or is responsible. But that word had a different definition in Mexican Spanish. The Mexican girl probably associated the word *juicioso* to the verb to judge. Then, she pulled her baby away and she looked very mad. I could tell for her face. I tried to explain her [sic] even in English but she didn't seem to understand. I felt bad and uncomfortable because I was trying to compliment the baby and his behavior but she didn't understand it that way. She said goodbye and left after that.

1. What went wrong?
2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?
3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?

INCIDENT 5

I'm originally from Pasto, Colombia, and I currently live in Washington DC. I came to the United States as part of a cultural exchange program in which American families welcome a foreign young adult, who's interested in getting to know more about the local culture and language, as a childcare provider. If we put it that way, it sounds quite simple, but actually even the smallest habits can become big challenges when you encounter yourself in a new environment with different rules and a whole new background. That is exactly what happened to me during my first months in this country. Indeed, I never thought that something I never perceived as problematic like keeping my shoes on inside a house, could result in a deep reflection on how moving to a new country is certainly a whole process of adaption and, in some way, reeducation. Since day one, my host family told me not to wear shoes in the house. My host dad said *"I would prefer that you didn't wear shoes inside the house"*. His suggestion completely contradicted what I was taught back at home where wearing shoes at your place is not only ok but also enforced. So, one day I just ignored what my host dad had said and wore the shoes anyway since I hated to feel the cold floors and itchy carpets. God I regretted it...When my host dad, who was actually quite picky about cleanness [sic], saw me wearing my shoes inside, he looked at me as if I had committed a crime. I immediately noticed his upset expression and knew that what for me was not a big deal was totally one for him. He did not say anything to me in that very moment, yet his stare was clear enough. Later that day, he sent me a text saying *"please no shoes inside the house."* Never in my life had I felt as embarrassed as I felt that day. After that day, I definitely put [sic] more attention to all the aspects I found were different here because I wanted to show my respect towards the local culture and manners. I wanted to show my interest in learning as well, and somehow this helped me to be less stubborn and allow myself to explore different ways to act and solve issues taking into consideration not only my thoughts and feelings but also those from the ones around me. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's hard, but I'm glad I got to understand it and apply it.

1. What went wrong?
2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?
3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?

Appendix D. Task given to teachers and students to collect cultural incidents

Cultural incident task

1. Write a paragraph describing a situation that involved the interaction between you and a person with a different cultural background. The situation can be one of the following (or may have involved more than one):
 - You felt that things were completely different from how they are in your culture.
 - You felt uncomfortable due to how this person behaved, reacted, spoke...
 - You felt you were misunderstood
 - You felt offended
2. In the description, please include details such as:
 - Where you and the other person are from, any additional details about your background are welcome.
 - The context where the incident took place
 - The relationship between you and the other person
 - What was said (as much as you can remember)
 - Any body language, if used
 - Your reaction and that of the other person.

THANKS!

Appendix E. Complete post-test

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Answer the following questions as precisely as possible. If they do not apply for you, leave them blank. If possible, use a different font color.

Biographical information

- Name:
- Age:
- Contact number/ email:
- Studies/ semester:
- Have you travelled abroad in the last year?
- If so, where and how long did you stay? where
- Have you had any contact with people from other cultures in the last year?
- Are you likely to travel abroad in the future? If so, where and how?

Write about any additional experiences with people from other cultures that you may have had.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions

1. What is culture for you? Provide a short definition in your own words.
2. How do you or would you incorporate cultural elements into your teaching practice?
3. Which culture/cultures do you or would you address (if any) into your teaching practice?
4. What is intercultural communicative competence for you?

Based on your perception and experience as a teacher, provide a score for each of the following elements according to their relevance in your teaching practice. (cero (0) is not relevant - five (5) is highly relevant.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar						
Vocabulary						
Speaking						
Listening						
Reading						
Writing						
Culture						
Pronunciation						

INTERCULTURAL PROFILE

You will find below some statements that are related to such situations. Please tick those statements that are valid for you and that best describe your experiences. Maybe these statements are related to situations that you have not yet experienced. Please try to imagine such a situation and tick those situations that correspond best to your possible behavior and reaction.

		Not applicable	Maybe	Fully applicable
	This section is about encounters with other people in your home country			
1	When I eat out, I like to try new food.			
2	I like meeting people from other countries so that I can learn about their culture.			
3	I can tell when people around me are uncomfortable because of me.			
4	It is difficult for me to adapt to people from a different culture.			
5	When other people behave in a way that I don't understand, I ask them why they are doing this.			

6	When a tragedy strikes another country, I worry about the people living there.			
7	When I am in another country, I pay close attention to their actions to infer their behavioral rules.			
8	When interacting with people from other countries, misunderstandings arise, I ask the ones involved to explain their positions.			
9	When conversation partners use gestures and expressions that are unknown to me, I ignore them.			
10	When engaged in a conversation, I generally pay close attention to their body language.			
11	I try to be as unambiguous as possible when talking to people whose first language is not Spanish.			
	Now we deal with situations where you meet people in their home country (e.g. when on holiday in other countries and cultures)			
12	When I go on holiday, I feel uneasy when the transport system does not have a fixed schedule.			
13	When I observe people in other countries, I often guess how they are feeling.			
14	I generally have flexible plans when I am on holiday abroad.			
15	When people from other countries isolate me, I avoid making contact with them.			
	The following statements are related to work situations with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.			
16	I can easily switch from Spanish to English or the other way around in a conversation.			
17	I always follow the rules of my own culture if I am not sure of how to behave properly when dealing with people from other cultures.			
18	When colleagues from other cultures have different work habits, I adopt them.			

19	If I have behaved inappropriately towards a colleague from another culture, I make up for that and avoid replicating the same behavior in the future.			
20	When my colleagues or acquaintances are from an ethnic minority, I try to make them feel part of the bigger group.			
21	When colleagues or boss are not pleased with my work, I try my best to adapt my work habits to theirs.			

ANALYZING DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

Below you will find 5 scenarios that depict situations you may encounter when interacting with people with different backgrounds. Read each scenario and answer the questions that follow each one of them.

SCENARIO 1: TO INVITE OR NOT

A young person from country x comes to work at your university for 6 months. You are aware that he is rather isolated and you consider the idea of inviting him to join you and your friends. The problem is that your group of friends have known each other for a long time and a stranger would find it difficult to fit in.

Please complete the following task:

1. Write down in a few lines what you think you would do in this situation (and why).

SCENARIO 2: A SOCIAL OCCASION

Your supervisor at the language center you work at has asked you to socialize with a young foreign worker of the same age and gender as yourself, who speaks your language quite well. Say:

Answer the following:

1. What topics of conversation would you choose?
2. What kind of activities would you choose to do and why?

SCENARIO 3: FEELING CONFUSED

You have been working as a language assistant for six months among people from a different country. In the workplace you do not have language difficulties as such, but you notice that people often seem to say things they don't really mean and that they exaggerate the way in which they speak. For example when somebody is working too slowly, a supervisor might say 'you take all the time you need' instead of 'hurry up'. In your culture people are very straightforward and say only what they mean.

1. Imagine that you are writing or e-mailing to a friend in your own country. Write down the thoughts you might have on this situation. Imagine what your reactions might be and how you would deal with the situation.

SCENARIO 4: UNDERSTANDING UNEXPECTED BEHAVIOR

You have just arrived in another country to work as a language assistant. In your country, you were used to a more relaxed atmosphere: people dressing informally, calling each other by first names, drinking coffee together during breaks. In this new environment, things seem to be more formal; there are more rules and regulations, and relationships among coworkers are not as close as they are in your home country. You feel out of place and think that everything is better in the place you come from.

1. Please, complete the following tasks:

Write an email addressed to a coworker in your home country in which you explain how things work in your new workplace and your reaction.

SCENARIO 5: FEELING CONFUSED

You have recently moved to a new country due to work reasons. At work, there are people who have helped you and guided you to do things right. However, you are struggling a bit to fit in social situations. For instance, you do not understand everything your colleagues say when they talk to each other informally; they use slang and jokes you simply do not get. You feel somewhat confused and a bit out of place.

In a short paragraph:

1. Say whether you would find such a situation particularly difficult and why.
2. Suggest what you might do in order to feel more comfortable in this situation.

Cultural incidents task

Read the paragraphs below and, for each one of them:

- 1. Briefly explain, in your own words, what went wrong.**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 1

Once I was invited to visit a French family from Poitiers. I met a French girl, Marine, at the entrance to the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow. So, this is how we met. It turned out that she was from France, and I was just heading to France. While being there, at some point her family decided to invite me to visit them in their hometown. Hence, that trip brought me some new knowledge about eating culture in France. As a gift I brought some chocolate sweets and wine. The moment of tension happened when they served the sweets I brought. There were 5 of us: Marine, her parents, her little sister and me. All of us around the table, waiting for I

didn't know what. The sweets were lying on the table, right in the middle of us, but nobody touched them. I couldn't understand what was happening. I believe there even was a moment of intense silence.

Based on my culture, the house owner is the one who should taste the present he or she was brought first. That is why I was waiting for somebody from the family would take a chocolate. As something was clearly wrong, I thought maybe I was supposed to start eating the gift I brought. I reached for a candy, and everybody breathed with relief and started eating the sweets too.

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 2

I worked as an au pair in the USA, and during the beginning of the pandemic, I had to start the process of finding a new family. When I found it, I had to move to a different town in the same state. After being with them for couple days, someone from the agency called as, asking couple questions about me and if I had taken any type of course or class so my profile could be updated. I told them I had taken a couple classes; I was bragging about the courses I took online and told them I had taken one in Yale. My accent is really strong and used to pronounce the /y/ sound as /j/ sound, so they thought I meant that I took a course while being in jail. It was hilarious because they were so quiet and looking at each other while I was telling them how great it was. They were kind of serious and acting nervous when they finally spoke to me to verify if I had spent some time in "jail". I finally realized what I have done, so I apologized about that so many times, and explained them it was Yale, the university and that I have never been in jail in my life. I got so nervous and tried to explain to them that it was a mistake and it was because of my accent. It was almost impossible to let the words out of my mouth. I did my best to explain that is was a pronunciation mistake.

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 3

The incident happened when I interacted with a girl who is from Russia, Elena, and I am Lucia, a girl from Colombia. The thing is that we met and we talked for a while at a party, we exchanged numbers and we said we would keep in touch. Since I was truly busy, I never wrote, but couple of weeks later she wrote. I felt really happy because I thought that the possible friendship would have died out but then, but it had not. Then we started talking, and the next day we did too. During our conversations we found out that we had a lot in common and it was a lot of fun. I have to say that I love having friends from other countries because that is a way to discover new worlds. That being said... In the middle of the conversation, I

said that I was really happy to have met her and sent her an emoji with a kiss. Immediately she sent me a voice note and she was notoriously more serious and said that she was sorry if I had misinterpreted her... well, I assumed she thought I was into her. For me it was funny but at the same time a bit upsetting because I simply sent her an emoji and she had made such a big fuss about it. Then I had to be more explicit and tell her that I was just being friendly and maybe a bit too affectionate. After that, we kept talking but no further misunderstandings have happened.

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 4

My name is Eve, I'm from Colombia and went to live with a family as an Au Pair in Seattle. One night I was really hungry, and I decided to stop at a restaurant called "In-n-Out", it is fast food, and the place is very popular. I was with my friend, Colombian too. She went to the bathroom while I stayed to order our food. The waiter was American, and I used to be so shy since my English wasn't great. I wanted to try anyways.

Me: Hi! Can I get please a burger with French fries and Coca-Cola?

Guy: Yes, what size do you want your drink?

Me: Emm Coca-Cola

Guy: Yes, what size?

Me: two Coca-Cola please.

The waiter was not in a good mood. I guess he got mad because I didn't understand what he was saying, so got frustrated and, sighing, mad. Then, I took some cups from the counter and showed me all the three sizes. He started to speak very slowly and using signs, saying: "What kind of cup do you want?" I immediately pointed to the smallest one, I was getting mad and so embarrassed. Then he said: Alright, your order is going to be ready in a bit. My friend came back from the bathroom and asked me why I didn't get the big drink, so I had to tell her that I didn't understand what the guy was saying and got nervous. It was funny, but, of course, stressful for the guy since he repeated himself several times about the size and I just kept saying "Coca cola".

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

INCIDENT 5

To explain a little bit the background, I am currently doing an international exchange as an au pair in North Carolina, USA. I live with a host family who is made up of a single mom who is younger than me and is a college student, and her baby. However, my "host parents" are her parents as they are the ones that pay my salary. Because of that I often have to spend time with them.

Back in November I had an uncomfortable situation with my host mom (grandmother) we were in the living room with her daughter, and they started talking about hunting animals, I was also part of the conversation, so I just made a comment saying " I don't understand why people still hunt animals if there are other ways to sustain, and the planet faces a lot of problems because of that". My host mom reacted kind of hysterically to my comment and started with "let me explain to you why hunting is important in this country", she continued arguing about the importance it has to the people who live from that and even for the planet. As she spoke her mind, I was not able to talk. After that happened, I felt that her "explanation" was kind of passive aggressive. What she said goes against what I stand for. It made me mad, and that was an uncomfortable moment for me.

- 1. What went wrong?**
- 2. Could the cultural shock/misunderstanding have been avoided? How?**
- 3. Is there anything you would have said to deal with the misunderstanding?**

Appendix F. Consent Form

Title of Research: **Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence among Colombian Pre-Service EFL Teachers: Exploring the Impact of a Pedagogical Intervention via Lesson Study**

Researcher: Diana Ibarra Santacruz UCM

Advisors: Carmen Maíz Arévalo, UCM

Ariadna Sánchez Hernández, UCM

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study.

Explanation of Study

I am conducting a study on pre-service teachers' intercultural competence and pragmatic ability. For this, you will be asked to complete a number of tasks, which involve completing a modified version of the INCA questionnaire and explaining five critical incidents. Please have in mind that there are not right or wrong answers; I am just interested in your views.

Risks and Benefits

I do not foresee any risks or discomforts for you as a participant in this research. As for benefits, intercultural communicative competence is one of the domains your learning and teaching practice should focus on; therefore in this study, if you complete the 3 stages, may represent some benefits to you in the short run. Additionally, the study will contribute to the field of English linguistics.

Confidentiality

Please be assured that your identity will be kept confidential. Although your name is requested in the questionnaires, only the primary investigator will have the information about the participants' identity and under no circumstance it will be revealed to anyone else. Participants' answers will be used as research materials to help the researcher gain a better understanding of intercultural competence and pragmatic ability.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact: Diana Ibarra Santacruz - dianibar@ucm.es

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and benefits
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Indeed, you may leave the study at any time without any penalty.

Signature_____ Date_____

Printed Name_____