

Local Culture and Context in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

With the aim of analyzing the inclusion of local culture and context in English Language Teaching at Don Bosco School, a descriptive and quantitative investigation was carried out using the methods Analysis, Synthesis, and Hermeneutic with two surveys that contained multiple-choice questions to know specific information and opinion of teachers and students. Moreover, the results of this investigation showed a lack in the inclusion of local culture and context situation in the English Language teaching-learning process. Besides, the identification of English teachers' perception in front of cultural and contextual aspects where students have been involved since their birth until the present and how those aspects are included in the English language teaching-learning process. Furthermore, specific elements about context and culture may be used as a resource in English language classes in Esmeraldas to engage students with their own identity. In addition, the analysis of this investigation allowed knowing meaningful information about how teachers include and integrate local context and culture in the English Language teaching-learning process with students from a different socioeconomic, religion and experiences. Finally, this investigation concluded that the inclusion and integration of local context and culture is based on teachers and students' perceptions, and it will be meaningful for them to emerge as a global language through their culture, which allows successful results of the learning process.

Keywords: Acculturation Approach, ELT, Local Culture and Context, Sociocultural Approach

Introduction

Nowadays, English is considered as a universal language, which has been possible through an active process from birth to daily life. Language is the most obvious challenge that English language teachers face when considering some aspects such as student's environment and culture. They must adapt to the students in a cultural classroom that may be quite different from which they were previously educated.

According to teachers from Esmeraldas, local culture and context are one of the biggest challenges they have in the English language teaching-learning process in their city. It means those factors are considered to teach English because each people's group has their own features and it interferes how students learn it in educative institutions. That is why; the referred situation has produced many problems in the teaching L2 which make difficulties in the learning of English classes explanations in Don Bosco School.

Apart from the deficiency of teaching, a lack of communication between teachers-students it is evident. Consequently, it generates misunderstanding when communicating. It may occur because students from Don Bosco School are involved in different environments, so it makes them learn the English language according to their own features. Also, teachers from this educative institution do not perceive the cultural and contextual aspects to include in their classes.

The stated problematic has been proved by own experience as an English teacher in 2018 academic year. So, the main question of this investigation arises: Which perception do teachers have about the inclusion of local culture and context in English language teaching?

To solve this problematic situation, some objectives were settled. As general objective, to analyze the inclusion of local culture and context in ELT at Don Bosco School, and as specific objectives: to identify English teachers' perception about the inclusion of local context and culture in ELT, to determine how

local context and culture is included in ELT and to determine some elements of local context and culture that may be included in ELT in Esmeraldas.

English Language Teaching (ELT)

This investigation considered some meaningful terms which allowed the development of the analysis, like English language teaching, about which Willy, A. et al. (2016) defined as a systematic, dynamic and complex process which has changed through the past of the time. It is true because ELT has experimented a complex change in the first students' language, how they use and express it. Broughton et al. (1978) refers that these changes include the emergence of different English language teaching methods such as the Audio-lingual method, the silent way, the natural approach, etc. This is known as period of diversity and communicative language teaching to task-based learning (p. 2).

Summarizing this idea, all these transitions affect the conceptualization in general, because teachers of ELT were considered as English teachers without knowing the necessary methods or techniques for the teaching process. But currently, this situation has improved gradually from an occupation to a profession.

Principles of English Language Teaching Methods

English language teachers have improved their methods, techniques, and strategies to adapt their students in classes. This is the reason that Nunan (1999) established three principles based on teaching methods. First, to focus on the learner that plays an important role in the classroom. It means teachers must involve learners in the learning process. Second, to develop their own personal methodology; it is according to their own learning because learners have different situations; and so teachers create their own teaching styles. Third, to build instructional sequences based on a pre-task, task and follow up cycle, that provides the students' interest, language processing and students' feedback to produce language teaching and learning.

Types of English Language Teaching

Additionally, Hui-Chin & Shih-Chie (2010) have established English language teaching can be portrayed in three branches, such as Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) is directed to students that their first language is not English, but they must learn to immerse in the environment where they are involved. Also, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is based on the methodologies of learning and professions of teaching and it is applied by teachers' training institutions and instructors-education programs for English teachers. In addition, Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is focused on the purposes and studies of teachers and English learners with a different mother tongue because the language's interpretation has changed to transform it as a communicative language.

Culture involves some definitions that are necessary to include in English Language Teaching (ELT). That is the reason why culture is considered as an essential aspect. It has been defined by Grandom (2013) as "a system of shared knowledge, beliefs, procedures, attitudes and artifacts that exists among a group of humans" (p. 73).

It makes emphasis on the features which a group of people exhibits, and it influences in the way they learn a second language. In addition, Keesing (1974) highlights that culture is originated in each country or ethnic and it is often used as a proxy for an individual team member's culturally oriented values, the two levels may capture different aspects of diversity. Furthermore, this important feature from the language learning process depends on how they learn a new language through their mother tongue.

Perspectives of Culture: Apart from this, James (2010) makes emphasis on the fact there are two perspectives which are global culture and local culture, that are based on culture. It allows the

understanding of where culture is directed to analyze a group of people. Global perspective is focused on the general features of human beings since the national and international point of view. On the other hand, Caputo (2015) refers that local culture is situated on a specific target population of a community. It means local culture provides the specific situations such as environment, context and organization that involve people from a group.

On the other hand, local culture has been derived a situation of the language teaching where the conceptualization now is that of concentration in what the learners learn or want to learn rather than what is to be taught. Mabindra (2011) established that since a person is shaped by one culture and local setting, teachers can assume that the importance of cultural context in language teaching will grow as learning becomes more learner centered. It is true because it is in conjunction with this shift of emphasis away from teaching and towards learning, has appeared a growing awareness of the role played by culture in the classroom. For instance, there are some cases where teachers are from other countries with other cultures, the referential teachers center on them. In other words, they do not cause a meaningful learning in the students.

On the contrary, Campos et al. (2011) refer Latino culture is totally different from North American culture, by the reason of Latinos are vibrant and complex, culture so it means there is a big influence caused by socioeconomic backgrounds, levels of education, religion and individual lived experiences. This information is related to Ecuadorian culture, especially Esmeraldas' culture, where there is a significant difference from the rest of the country. It shows learning a new language could be influenced by how they learn it.

Moreover, Nurlia & Arini (2017) make emphasis on the fact that it is meaningful to consider what the student wants to learn instead of what is to be taught so it means initiative and attitude from the learner is the main feature in ELT. This strategy allows determining the environment where they are involved and how to put into practice activities that integrate language and culture about a specific local area because not all of them have the same features.

Mazrui (1996) has referred seven general functions. They are communication, perception, value systems, motivation, stratification, production, and consumption. These functions provide features to perform the development of the culturalization from individuals to the society. They refer to communication because it provides the development with verbal and non-verbal elements in the communication between individuals from a society. Perception shows the manner of human to understand social features where they are involved to communicate something. Identification, which demonstrates influence in the way people see other people according to aspects proper of individuals.

Although, Lensky (1994) focused on stratification, it produces a system to motivate. It means a person feels motivated to improve to be a qualified person. Production and consumption have changed drastically because of the interventions among social transformations, technological development, and market competition. The relationship between the concept of culture and the processes of production and consumption is contested and complex; whilst a sociology of the market has developed to account for the 'cultureless' of all aspects of economic life.

Context: on the other hand, Illes (2001) has described context as a mental phenomenon created by the social and the individual/psychological world of the language user. It means context refers to factors acting upon composers and responders that involve the language. Moreover, context is a symbolic relationship in the production of meaning.

Perspectives of context: however, Dash (2005) refers to understand this big term; he classifies it in four types, which involve English language learning. They are local context, sentential context, topical context and global context. The sentential context refers to beyond the local context, the topical context

emphasizes to the wider beyond the sentence level, while the global context refers to the world at large. This is the reason Canh (2003) established the role English plays as the global language of choice for communication among many people around the world to have access to information and interaction with others. It makes students use English as a tool which increases the accessibility to acquire more meaningful learning from another context than theirs.

Besides, the influence of local context on English language teaching, Sailaja argues “it is also possible now to access a lot of information thanks to the internet. This additional tool can be used profitably, and culturally unfamiliar material can be made accessible by teachers” (p. 50).

It is focused on the familiar and use of one’s own context in language teaching is laudable. It is like the view that learning must happen in one’s native language. It means, English language teaching may require a different approach where English is often studied for its national and international value because it will provide better effects at the end of ELT.

The Role of Local Culture and Context

Mabindra (2011) concluded that both the terms, local context and culture are integrated so learners have a more comprehensive grasp of the language. That is why; teachers must follow a procedural format where local context and culture can be given more priority in the earlier stages. This information could be considered in some points of view, but it is showing the importance about the integration of local aspects in ELT which will emerge as a global language with global ownership to have as a result to the necessity to speak English.

Pedagogical and Psychological Foundation

The Sociocultural Approach by Vygotsky (1931) established the fact that learning occurs first interpersonally, by means of the relationship between more than one person and then in the mind of individual. For language learning in this case, it is meaningful to consider the social environment where the learner is involved. In the English language teaching process, teachers must consider factors to provide a good teaching and develop communicative functions based on culture and context of each group of students.

Furthermore, Acculturation Approach by Schuman (1978) refers that social and psychological features are influenced specific ethnic minorities of a society. Moreover, teachers, through this approach, take into consideration students’ origin, especially if they come from a specific ethnic group. It means acculturation can provide ways of improving the teaching skills to adapt them to the learning environment to provide meaningful learning.

Antecedents

All this information is only a description concerning culture and context and its influences in their environment but there are some investigations related to this research. Mabindra (2011) analyzed the role of local culture in English language teaching, where she concluded the importance of the students’ role and the environment where they are immersed to learn a second language. She concluded it is meaningful to provide global culture as example, which allows the use of the local culture and context.

Eğmen (2016) did a study about the impact of culture on language teaching in EFL classes that allowed analysis of the new headway advanced textbook through the cultural context which analyses how culture influences students’ learning languages and understanding varied meanings of the languages in target cultural contexts. This author presented some lessons plan in a textbook focused on local culture and context which provides a better English language learning because many books are centered in North American and British culture and context.

Besides, Golshman & Ranjbar (2017) realized a study about the impact of culture in Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language, which allows them to analyze the learning and teaching process that creates a meaning and interpretation in a cultural and contextual framework. They found the lack of teacher's perception to identify how the environment influences in ELL. That is why they suggest some ways of how to teach English in multicultural classes.

Also, Quezada et al (2017) presented factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools in the context of e- education and e-society where they demonstrated the educational problems are not only from teachers, but there are also other situations in the contextual environment that affect English language learning. These authors perceived the lack of training of some teachers' results in an incorrect use and selection of suitable activities that involve the use of didactic tools and Ecuadorian culture. It means does not provide a successful learning in people from Ecuador.

Method

The present investigation was carried out at Don Bosco School. It is a fiscomisional school located in Eugenio Espejo Avenue between Veraguas alley and PUCESE in Esmeraldas city on July 18th, 2020.

The type of investigation was descriptive and quantitative, because it analyzed the local culture and context on the English language teaching. Also, it was quantitative because the investigation was carried out through surveys which allowed taking meaningful information about what is happening in the consideration of local culture and context in the mentioned school. This information was permitted through the identification of the hypothesis about the influence the local culture and context in English language teaching. This hypothesis develops a dependent variable based on English language teaching and independent variable focused on local culture and context.

The referential analysis was directed to teachers and students. They were 163 males and 164 females, these students from basic education and senior high school, and 10 female and 1 male teachers of English area. It analyzed some situations which are succeeding in classes. On the other hand, all the strategies were used by the elaboration of investigation, which allowed the analysis of problems in the English language process.

Furthermore, the methods of the investigation were inductive-deductive, analysis and synthesis and hermeneutic. It was inductive-deductive because it allows establishing the conclusions through the results found in the investigation. Analysis and synthesis analyzed as well as in the bibliography and then a synthesis of the most important information was done. Besides, it was hermeneutic because it permitted the interpretation of data. Finally, the technique used was a survey for teachers and students where each survey was focused on eight multiple choice questions that allowed the results of this investigation.

Results

According to local cultural and contextual situations, figure1 shows that 83 % of teachers consider that motivation is meaningful to improve ELT.

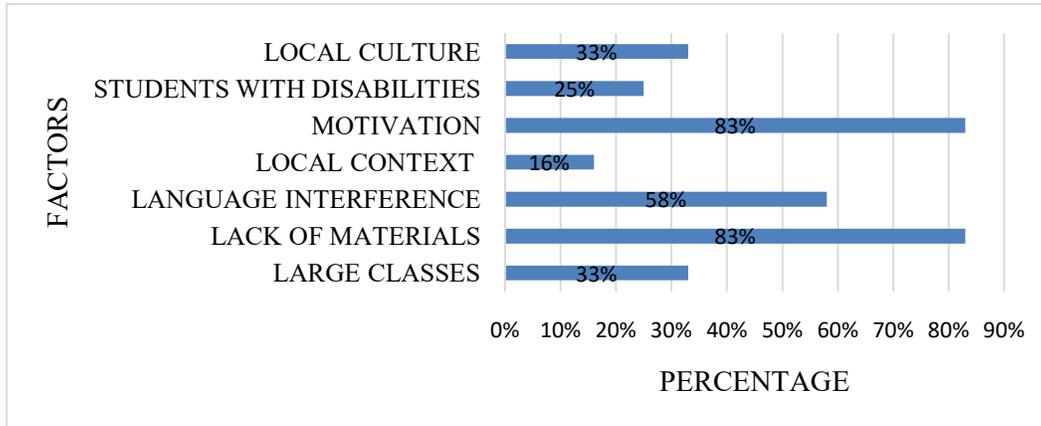


Figure 1. English language teaching process
Source: Survey applied to Teachers of English

Regarding the strategies that English teachers from Don Bosco School used to deal with culture and context ELT process, (figure 2), most of the teachers stated oral presentation with 100%.

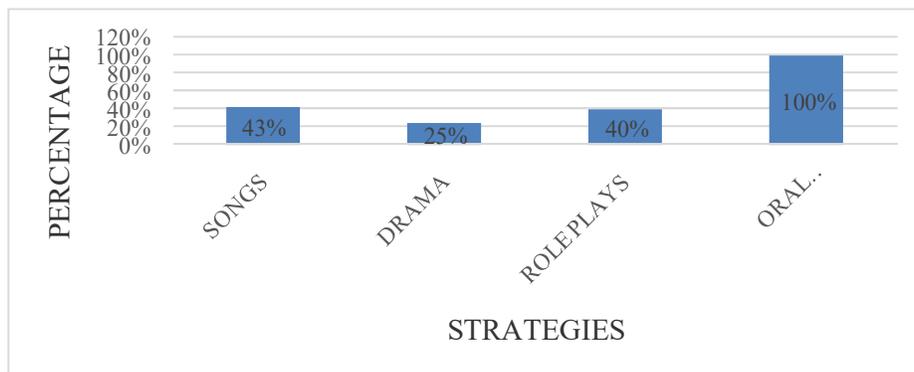


Figure 2. Strategies for ELT process
Source: Survey applied to Teachers of English

In relation to the strategies applied in ELT, (figure 3), 100% of the teachers use Cultural Connections Conversations Starts activity in ELT process.

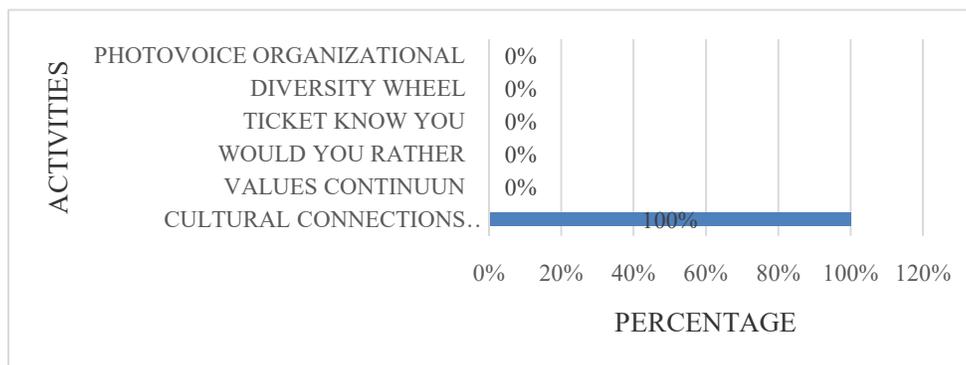


Figure 3. Activities applied in ELT.
Source: Survey applied to Teachers of English

Concerning to the experience as teachers of English, they would like to engage the book content with activities focused on Esmeraldas' culture and context. It showed Touristic Places 80% and Festivals 75% as two of the most predominant activities for using in ELT.

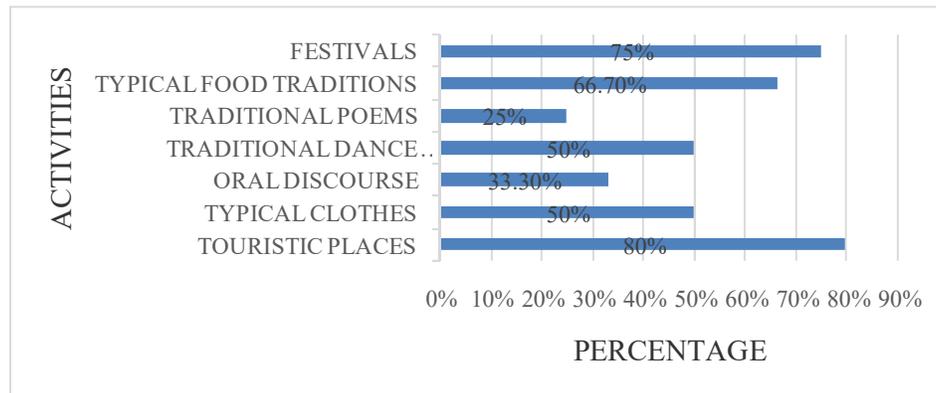


Figure 4. Activities for ELT process
 Source: Survey applied to teachers of English

Referring to teachers' opinion about what activities would like to include in the book units, or add in class with Ecuadorian people, 83% of the students revealed they would like to include touristic activities, on the other hand, 75% of them prefer doing festival activities.

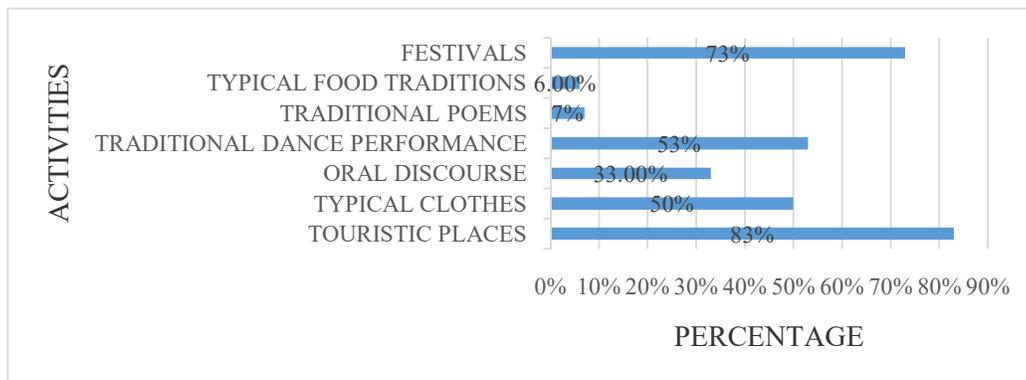


Figure 5. Activities for the ELT process
 Source: Survey applied to students

Discussion

The investigation done by Mabindra (2011) about the analysis of the role in local culture in the English language teaching, has a lot of similarities of this research, in the fact in both cases there was a need to analyze the cultural and contextual situation to learn English. It concluded the importance of the students' role and the environment where they are immersed to learn a second language. The present investigation was meaningful by the reason of it plays as one main instrument to collect information about situations that teachers and students are involved in front of Culture and Context in ELT.

Additionally, there is another study that is related to the present one, it was made by Eǧmen (2016) where he did a study about the impact of culture on language teaching in EFL classes, the analysis of the new headway advanced textbook through the cultural context which is comparable to the present research. This research allowed the analysis of how culture influences students' learning languages and

understanding varied meanings of the languages in target cultural contexts. It happens in this research by the reason of it involved in the analysis how Esmeraldas' culture and context will emerge in ELT.

In the same way, Golshman & Ranjbar (2017) realized a study about the impact of culture in teaching and learning of English as a foreign language which is indistinguishable to the present investigation, because Esmeraldas' culture plays an important role for ELT. The difference between the present investigation and this research is focused on English language teaching and learning process, but the current investigation is centered especially on English language teaching. Both investigations concluded culture and context should be taken into consideration to create a meaning to interpret a language.

However, a study developed by Quezada et al (2017) presented factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools in the context of e- education and e- society. Quezada et al. study coincides with the current investigation due to those analyze local culture and context. Both investigations have demonstrated the educational problems are not only of teachers, but there are other features such as religion, identity or ethnic in the contextual environment that affect English language learning.

Additionally, it was demonstrated that acculturation can provide ways of improving the skills of teachers to adapt them to the learning environment to have meaningful learning. Also, the Socio-cultural Approach by Lev Vygotsky which was very meaningful to analyze that teaching process should be carried out in the social interaction. This theory refers that social media is very important for the English language learning because learning processes are conditioned by culture and context where the human being is born and grows, so it means culture and context play a fundamental role in human education, especially in language learning.

Finally, all this information is only a description concerning the culture and context and their influences. Mabindra (2011) analyzed the role of local culture in the English language teaching where she concluded the importance of the students' role and the environment where they are integrated to learn a second language. It means teachers should be centered in students' learning, especially in the aspects that involve them, which are very meaningful to distinguish the correct teaching for the students.

On the contrary, Quezada et al (2017) presented factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools in the context of e- education and e-society where they demonstrated the educational problems are not only from teachers. These investigations presented in the current research are completely related because they concluded how important the local culture and context are to considerer in ELT. It means the essential role that plays both aspects in the society to learn innovative knowledge, which will be a contribution for it.

Conclusions

There are not inclusion of local culture and context because those terms are not considered as one of the main factors to teach at Don Bosco School which makes impossible the use of them in English Language teaching-learning process. It has made teachers of English not be aware be aware the importance to include local culture and context into the planning, which may provide a successful teaching.

In relation to the use of some strategies through activities, teachers do not have a perception about the use of cultural and contextual activities: Cultural Connections Conversations Starts, Values Continuum, Ticket to know you, Diversity Wheel and Photovoice Organizational Values. It has been caused by the lack of knowledge about how to use activities based on culture and context particularly of their own city. The engagement among local culture and context with English books provides students a meaningful learning about the city of Esmeraldas.

The fundamental topics that may be related to ELT are: Festivals, Typical food presentations, Traditional poems presentations, Traditional dance performance, Oral discourses, Typical clothes, Typical Instruments, Touristic places. Those topics will involve ELL in the Student's environment, where they may feel comfortable to communicate with others about their culture through a different language.

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