





# Integrating Culture into English Teaching Process: A Path to Meaningful Communication

## Integración de la cultura en el proceso de enseñanza de inglés. Un camino a la comunicación significativa

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## Resumen

Esta investigación aborda el rol de la cultura en la enseñanza del inglés como un instrumento para lograr una comunicación significativa. La investigación expone cómo los elementos culturales locales influyen en la efectividad de la enseñanza del idioma inglés. Utilizando un diseño descriptivo y método mixto, se recopilieron datos mediante encuestas, listas de verificación y notas de campo para las observaciones de clase. Los resultados revelan la percepción de los docentes, quienes consideran la cultura como un componente clave en la adquisición del idioma, destacando estrategias efectivas para integrar aspectos culturales en la enseñanza. Adicionalmente, se identifican beneficios como el aumento de la motivación y el compromiso estudiantil, junto con desafíos como la falta de recursos y niveles diversos de formación docente. Esta investigación ofrece aportes significativos para optimizar la integración cultural en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, promoviendo un proceso de aprendizaje inclusivo y efectivo.

**Palabras clave:** elementos culturales; percepción; formación; integración cultural

## Abstract

This study investigates the role of culture in the English teaching process as a path to meaningful communication. The research explains how local cultural elements influence teaching effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Using a descriptive design, a mixed method was employed to gather data through surveys, checklist, and classroom observations fieldnotes. The findings highlight teachers' perceptions of culture as a vital component in language acquisition, as well as explore the effective strategies used to incorporate cultural aspects into teaching practices. Additionally, the study identifies the benefits of cultural integration, such as enhanced student motivation and engagement, alongside challenges, including limited resources and varying levels of teachers' training. This research offers valuable insights into optimizing cultural integration in EFL classrooms, contributing to a more inclusive and effective teaching-learning process.

**Keywords:** cultural elements; perceptions, training; cultural integration.

## 1. Introducción

In today's globalized world, language teaching is no longer limited to acquired vocabulary and grammar. Heidari (2014) emphasizes the strong connection between culture and language learning, underscoring that language is a fundamental means of communication, making cultural understanding essential for effective foreign language teaching. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education (2023) includes cultural elements in its English as a Foreign Language curriculum, aiming to enhance education, equity, and inclusion. Learning a second language provides access to new cultural perspectives and fosters tolerance, strengthening students' connection to their roots and enhancing their openness to diversity.

However, Shrestha (2016), defines local culture as the complex whole of society's knowledge, beliefs, and customs, frequently misunderstood as "indigenous culture". On the other hand, English teaching in Ecuador often overlooks local culture, focusing instead on foreign cultural elements that may not align with Ecuadorian values, customs, and traditions. Consequently, this integration is often challenging, requiring teachers to navigate differences and adapt their approaches using effective strategies.

Considering that Ecuador is linguistically diverse, with 13 indigenous languages recognized alongside Spanish, teachers must adapt their methods to address cultural diversity and create a supportive learning environment. This study seeks to address the role of culture in English teaching at the Language Center, shedding light on how cultural awareness influences teaching practices and elevates the language teaching experience. The Language Center at the University in Ecuador, serves students from varied cultural backgrounds and aims to offer inclusive, high-quality language instruction.

Rohmani and Behroozizad (2021), highlight the importance of including students' cultural diversity and experiences in teaching, which can engage students and improve communicative competences. The researchers

believe that developing abilities to integrate social factors and diverse cultural backgrounds promote students' tolerance and "validate students' realities" Burgin (2019), as well as reduce student's lack of interest in learning a foreign language. According to the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky, stimulating students to talk about familiar cultural factors helps them to expand their sense of autonomy and critical thinking. Daniel & Burgin (2019), conclude that there is a big necessity of training teachers over multilingualism and pluriculturalism in order to understand and identify effective and academic needs.

This study serves as a practical reference for teachers, since it analyzes effective strategies of integrating culture into the language teaching process. Considering Ecuador's diverse cultural heritage, it aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4. Consequently, the Ministry of Education in Ecuador has established The English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) for an EFL teacher such as knowing and understanding the nature and role of cultures in order to construct supportive learning environments for students. As well as applying the knowledge about culture values and beliefs, understanding the negative effects of racism and discrimination on students' learning process. These standards aim to promote students' and teachers' engagement in learning about Ecuadorian cultures and cultures of English-speaking countries.

The general objective of this study is to explain the role of cultural elements on the English teaching process among teachers at the Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato and understanding what is the role of culture in teaching EFL? reflecting on teachers' experiences, student relationships, and sociocultural dynamics in real-life contexts. This also shed light to describe the perception of English teachers on culture in the English language teaching process and answer the subproblem on what is the English teachers' perceptions on culture in the English Language teaching process? As well as explore teachers' activities in teaching culture to respond on What cultural activities do teachers implement at the Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato?

This study explores three main aspects: (1) culture and (2) culture in the English language teaching and learning process. The independent variable centers around the role of culture in ESL teaching, sociocultural theory, interculturality in ESL, and the Ecuadorian cultural context. The dependent variable examines cultural factors in the classroom, strategies for teaching practice, teacher-student relationships, and the challenges of integrating culture into the EFL classroom. Defining culture is challenging due to its diverse interpretations

Over time, culture has evolved, influenced by technological advances and globalization, and now includes dimensions such as local, national, and institutional cultures (Sheresta, 2016). Culture extends beyond language and plays an essential role in socialization and communication, impacting not only personal interactions but also educational contexts. Education and culture are interdependent, and their relationship has been shaped by historical, religious, and societal transformations. Freedman (2016) and Ertugruloglu (2024) emphasize that education acts as a tool for cultural preservation and transmission.

In Ecuador, intercultural mediators help students navigate between their own and the target culture. Integrating cultural knowledge in EFL instruction allows students to grasp pragmatic aspects of English, such as idiomatic expressions and social norms, enhancing engagement and motivation. This is particularly crucial in task-based and communicative language teaching methods. Vygotskian sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in second language acquisition (SLA) (Ahmed, 2017).

This theory is key to understanding the dynamics of language learning, suggesting that teachers provide culturally relevant tools and scaffold learning to suit the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's theory also underlines the importance of play, collaboration, and culturally mediated learning in fostering language development. As the world becomes more interconnected, sociocultural theory remains relevant for ESL and

EFL teaching, highlighting how culture shapes cognitive development and language acquisition.

Interculturality refers to the dynamic process through which people from different cultural backgrounds interact, negotiate, and develop mutual understanding (Fernandez, 2018). In EFL teaching, it encourages students and teachers to become global citizens, respectful of diverse cultures. However, many EFL teachers lack the skills to incorporate interculturality effectively into their classrooms, pointing to the need for professional development (Aziz et al., 2020). Incorporating intercultural elements into EFL teaching helps students not only learn a new language but also appreciate the complexities of different cultures, promoting tolerance and engagement in global contexts.

Research on Ecuadorian culture in ESL emphasizes the need to integrate intercultural content into classrooms. Studies (Ruggiero, 2015; Fernández & Cedeño, 2018) indicate that Ecuadorian teachers often focus more on intercultural attitudes than on knowledge and skills, primarily concentrating on English-speaking cultures while neglecting local ones. Addressing local cultural contexts in EFL classrooms enhances students' cultural awareness and competence, making language learning more relatable and effective. Additionally, incorporating local culture provides a valuable source of teaching material, allowing students to compare and contrast cultures.

Shrestha (2016) argues that effective EFL teachers need cultural proficiency, but many lack formal training in integrating culture into their classrooms. Clouet (2017) suggests that teachers with experience in global academic communities are better equipped to incorporate intercultural elements into their lessons. Teachers play a vital role in creating a culturally inclusive classroom environment, using culturally relevant materials and strategies to enhance students' learning experiences. UNESCO's standards for EFL teachers in Ecuador emphasize the importance of understanding the role of culture in education, promoting an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Culture has been bound to education for decades, that is why many researchers have investigated the relationship between culture and

education. Rohmani (2021) made an investigation of Culture Teaching in EFL Classrooms, he analyzes the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices. His explanatory research contributed to claim the importance of teaching culture in EFL in order to engage students' cultural comprehension as well as using effective teaching strategies to improve their communicative competences. He has developed this research providing enough information on how to develop meaningful learning to students.

On the other hand, Putry (2022) focuses his research on teachers' effectiveness training, explaining the relevance of teachers' role while teaching cultural competences in EFL classrooms. He supports the idea of collaborative learning between teachers and students, in order to amend teachers' professional skills and knowledge of the target culture. She explains the reason for having technology as one of the most updated and useful tools since pandemic. Similarly, Shrestha (2016) thrived his research based on 3P fundamental models; Perspective, Practices and Products. Consider the last as technology, music or literature, so the things people create, share and transfer to others.

These researches aim to effectively integrate native culture and target culture in order to compare and complement the teaching - learning process. The use of effective teaching strategies promotes students' own culture awareness as it is established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. Nevertheless Yaman (2017) presents sufficient information to balance the use of cultural elements and materials in order to create an intercultural learning with students' easy adaptability to new cultures.

Among these analyses, Choudhury (2018) believes that learning a new language including its culture, may lead students to forget their own identity, he explains the analogy of current issue between American and British language and culture, it's well known that there are some linguistic relation and differences between both cultures. Considering this TESOL established that the learning - teaching process should be based on enhancing intercultural competences within learners, rather than promoting any kind of romance or superiority of the target language over the native.

Daniel & Burgin (2019) through their research gave an essential input for Ecuadorian perception and reality of the role that culture plays in EFL teaching. The researchers consider one of the main problems of teaching EFL in Ecuador, is that it has a huge cultural and linguistic diversity, in consequence there aren't enough multilingual educators. Rugiero (2015) presents through a documentary some of the specific problems of education in Ecuador, at the same time she shares some strategies of immersing culture awareness in EFL classrooms.

On the other hand, Choudhury (2018) and Putry (2022) are convinced that there is a small risk in implementing culture in teaching - learning EFL. Choudhury supports the idea of using authentic materials which are aligned with specific needs of students, while Putry (2022) considers that using an appropriate teaching strategy is vital in effective teaching. In addition, Yaman (2017) suggests creating a balance between cultural elements in EFL classrooms and materials in target language, as well as facts in native language.

So, all the theories analyzed brace the significance of teaching culture in EFL, Rohmani (2021) claims that this contributes to engaging students' comprehension and communicative competences, Nevertheless Sariyildiz (2017) mentions some clear challenges such as insufficient time to include culture into the EFL curriculum. As a result, this analysis is a key helper to provide a route to develop and obtain the results for this research.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Research Settings

This research was in the urban area in the Ambato city, Tungurahua province, specifically in one of the well-known private University's Language Center, which is well equipped with updated technological resources as well as the appropriate academic area. The research was handled by the academic period



of September to November, where the specified instruments were shared by teachers at the Language Center for two weeks.

## 2.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study belongs to teachers of a private Language Center of a well-known University of Ambato, who are 15 in total. The instruments were applied to the total of the participants in order to get more reliable information. The teachers participating in the survey shared similar characteristics since they teach to students' groups from level A1 to C1, this was useful to analyze each teachers' experiences with culture. However, it is important to ensure the confidentiality of participants' responses and maintain anonymity in the reporting of results.

## 2.3 Research design

The design of this research is descriptive as Creswell (2018) cited in one of the studies that aims to describe the relationship between the independent variable as culture with the second variable, the dependent one that focuses on culture and immersion of it into the EFL teaching process. This stage focused more on gathering quantitative data to establish a deep understanding and then move to qualitative data collection. By using the specific method, research approach and appropriate instruments this study provided the correct analysis for the results.

## 2.4 Research approach

This study responds to the mixed approach, since it collected the quantitative and qualitative data (Smith 2020). The quantitative data was collected by a survey with likert scale questions (strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree) in order to analyze the teachers' perception of the role of culture in the EFL teaching process. While the quantitative data was used to gather information throughout the descriptive class observation field notes and

checklist (yes/no valuations) of teachers' intercultural elements used in EFL classrooms considering the culture in the teaching-learning process. Nonetheless, mixed methods offer overcoming limitations of individual methods and generating richer insights giving reliability to the research (Creswell, 2018).

## 2.5 Instruments and techniques

The instruments implemented in this study were validated by two experts in the EFL teaching and the techniques used to collect data are described as follow:

The class observation was conducted with an observation list and field notes to 15 teachers in order to explore teachers' strategies and cultural elements in EFL classrooms. According to Creswell (2018) this technique also allows the researcher to collect actual behaviors and interactions in their natural setting as well as qualitative data which served to complement the quantitative analysis previous to establish conclusions of the study. Additionally, this instrument provided feedback of the benefits of implementing culture in the development of the EFL teaching process.

The survey was adapted to likert scale format (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree), which ensures consistency in responses, making analysis easier as Cohen (2018) mentions. This was beneficial to gather information about the teachers' perception over the role of culture in English language teaching. Also, this instrument assisted by identifying the relationship between teachers and students, and was part of the qualitative data analysis. So, using these instruments enhanced research through triangulation, ensuring validity and reliability by corroborating findings from multiple sources.

## 2.6 Data collection

Considering this research is a descriptive work it is important to mention that the data is represented in tables by using the Jamovi program to take

the measures of central tendency which was useful to gather information and results obtained in the survey and observation checklist, which lead to conclusions. While the results from the field notes were used to complement the information acquired.

## 2.7 Data processing

A survey, observation sheet and a checklist were used to relate qualitative and quantitative data and support teachers' perspectives by analyzing the survey. The results of the survey were presented through excel. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The qualitative data was represented by categorizing and analyzing it with the indicators that helped to support the outcomes about the influence of culture over the teaching - learning process. These data were analyzed based on the class observations and checklist identifying effective strategies and challenges in the teaching-learning culture process. The data was transcribed and organized in excel. Considering that the names remained anonymously providing teachers a code as teacher 1, teacher 2 and so forth.

## 3. Results

In order to answer the sub-question: What do English teachers perceive of culture in the English Language teaching process at Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato city?, 15 teachers completed and returned the survey before being observed in order to gather data information from the survey based on indicators as the following:

## 1.1. Tables

**Table 1**

*Survey results about Institutionalility*

Institutionality	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As a teacher at the Language Center, I consider that the Center has been supportive in terms of providing resources and training for cultural competence.	29.4 %	41.2 %	29.4 %	0%
As an educator at the University's Language Center, I consider it promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity among teachers and students.	29.4 %	41.2 %	29.4 %	0%
As a teacher of the University's Language Center I believe that the values and mission of the Language Center aligns with culture sensitivity and equity.	41.2 %	29.4 %	23.5 %	5.9%

**3.1 Institutionalility**, the table 1 below illustrates the final results of teachers' perceptions over support and inclusive education at the University's Language Center, collecting a huge percentage of acceptance in the promotion of cultural awareness and sensitivity among teachers and students, as well as providing resources and training. A minority of participants (41%) supported the idea that cultural integration is valued at the Language Center. On the other hand, there was also a small number of teachers that suggested the mission and vision of the center doesn't align with equity. It is worth noting the possible bias in these responses.

**Table 2***Survey results about teacher's cultural awareness*

Cultural Awareness	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As an educator I feel well-prepared to teach cultural aspects in my EFL classes and there are enough cultural materials to include in EFL classrooms.	47.1 %	35.3 %	17.6 %	0%
As an educator, I understand how different cultural norms affect my students' behavior and participation in class.	70.6 %	23.5 %	5.9 %	0%
As an educator I consider that culture plays an important role in the teaching-learning process and the cultural content increases student motivation and engagement in EFL classes.	47.1 %	35.3 %	17.6 %	0%
As an educator, I believe that by promoting a good atmosphere in class, students feel comfortable sharing social and cultural experiences.	82.4 %	17.6 %	0%	0%

**3.2 Cultural Awareness**, table 2 provides the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of the second group of the survey's questions, where we found a huge number of participants (82%) believe in the importance of a helpful classroom environment for encouraging students to share their social and cultural perspectives. This consensus highlights a common practice in creating an inclusive and open atmosphere. A (70.6%) show a strong understanding of how cultural norms shape students' classroom behavior.

However, the 17.6% disagreement on two questions (related to being trained and cultural content's impact on motivation) suggest areas for improvement, like providing more resources, workshops, or training opportunities. Consequently, the absence of "strongly disagree" responses reflects overall positive perceptions and a disposition to incorporate cultural elements into EFL teaching.

**Table 3**

*Survey results about teacher's social cultural sensibility.*

Socio-cultural Sensibility	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In my opinion as an EFL teacher, I believe including cultural content in EFL classrooms is essential for effective language teaching.	76.5 %	23.5 %	0%	0%
As an EFL teacher, I consider it relevant to include elements of local culture in English language lessons.	82.4 %	17.6 %	0%	0%
As an educator, I believe that encouraging students to explore how local social issues in their own cultures relate to those in other societies help them to be tolerant and aware of situations in real context.	70.6 %	29.4 %	0%	0%
In my opinion, I believe that promoting an inclusive classroom environment helps all cultures to be equally respected.	82.4 %	17.6 %	0%	0%

**3.3 Socio-cultural Sensibility**, table 3 shows an overview of the results of questions related to socio-cultural factors that may influence the teaching-learning process. There was statistically significant support (76,5%) on the importance of including cultural material in EFL classrooms. This unanimous agreement highlights a shared understanding of the connection between culture and language, as well as the significance of equipping students with cultural competence in EFL contexts. Also (82,4%) supported that integrating local culture into EFL lessons aligns with the need for students to connect global English use with their cultural identity, stimulating a sense of embracing inclusivity in the classroom. Educators agree on the importance of having an inclusive classroom, emphasizing its role in valuing diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Table 4**

*Questions results about technology*

Technology	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As an educator, I believe technology makes language learning more active in class.	76.5 %	23.5 %	0%	0%
As an educator I am aware of the potential of digital devices in EFL and multicultural classrooms	70.6 %	29.4 %	0%	0%
As an educator I find that technology helps students from different cultures participate more actively in class.	52.9 %	47.1 %	0%	0%

**3.4 Technology**, over table 4 it's presented in the analysis of data where 76.5% of educators strongly agree and 23.5% agree that technology makes language learning more active in the classroom. This result shows the value educators

place on technological tools to promote engagement and interactivity during language instruction. In addition, 70.6% of educators demonstrate strong awareness of how digital tools can support teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. This suggests confidence in using technology for addressing the needs of multicultural learners, although there might be varying levels of comfort with the full range of available tools. Inversely, a smaller percentage (47.1%) suggest that while technology is seen as beneficial, its effectiveness in promoting cross-cultural interaction may depend on how it is implemented.

To answer the second sub-question: What cultural activities do teachers implement at Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato, September - December 2024. There was a checklist used in class observations, to gather supportive information to answer this question; providing the following results:

**Table 5**

*Results of the checklist based on effective communication in EFL classrooms*

Effective communication	Yes	No
The teacher uses examples, expressions, and language that are culturally appropriate and meaningful for the students' backgrounds.	73,30%	26.7%
The teacher integrates culturally diverse examples, metaphors, or idioms to support language learning.	66,70%	33.3%
The teacher adapts the level of formality, tone, and communication strategies based on the students' cultural norms and expectations.	100%	0%
The teacher avoids using language or topics that could be offensive or uncomfortable for students from different cultures.	100%	0%
The teacher creates opportunities for students to share their cultural backgrounds through discussions or group work.	80%	20%



The teacher incorporates cultural icebreakers or discussions that encourage students to explore differences and similarities between their cultures.	60%	40%
The teacher uses understandable statements and questions all students including cultural factors from different backgrounds.	80%	20%
The teacher uses technological tools with cultural elements to enhance understanding and support explanations.	86.7%	13.3%
The teacher integrates differences between the target culture and native culture to develop a better understanding	86.7	13.3%
The teacher shows full understanding of the target language and culture.	73.3%	26.7%

**3.5 Effective communication,** As shown in table 5, there is a significant support (100%) of adapting teachers' level of formality, tone, and strategies according to students' cultural norms and expectations to avoid potentially offensive or uncomfortable topics, showing strong cultural sensitivity. A greater number of teachers (86.7%) use technological tools with cultural elements to support their teaching and this was confirmed on the class observations. Also, most teachers (80%) create opportunities for students to discuss their cultural backgrounds, while others do not, indicating there is room to strengthen this practice further. In addition, 60% of teachers use dynamic icebreakers or culturally meaningful language; idioms and metaphors in order to explore cultural differences and similarities.

**Table 6**

*Checklist results based on motivation*

Motivation	Yes	No
The teacher uses a dynamic introduction of a topic using cultural elements in the classroom.	66.7%	33.3%
The teacher encourages students from different cultural backgrounds to communicate and collaborate on tasks.	66.7%	33.3%

The teacher organizes group work that encourages students from different cultures to collaborate, fostering motivation through social interaction.	53.3%	46.7%
The teacher provides feedback in ways that are culturally appropriate and motivational for each student.	60%	40%
The teacher builds student confidence by encouraging them to express their cultural identity in English, motivating them to engage more.	66.7%	33.3%
The teacher inspires students to explore cultural topics independently, fostering intrinsic motivation for learning.	46.7%	53.3%
The teacher shares their own cross-cultural experiences or examples to build rapport and motivate students through storytelling or personal connections.	66.7%	33.3%
The teacher uses technology to connect students with learners from other cultural backgrounds (e.g., pen pals, international chats), enhancing motivation through real-world communication.	73.3%	26.7%
The teacher brings social and actual issues to motivate students to give their own perspective of the situation by using communicative skills and critical thinking.	80%	20%
The teacher shows awareness of students' cultural motivations for learning English (e.g., academic goals, family expectations) and adapts lessons accordingly.	53.3%	46.7%
The teacher differentiates tasks and activities to match the diverse cultural learning styles and motivational drivers of students.	73.3%	26.7%

**3.6 Motivation,** Table 6 results highlight initial checklist analysis, showing 66.7% of teachers encourage cultural identity expression and use personal stories to build rapport. However, only 53.3% promote cross-cultural group work, and 46.7% inspire autonomous exploration of cultural topics, indicating a need for improved motivation strategies.

**Table 7***Analysis of the checklist results based on tolerance and adaptability*

Tolerance and adaptability	Yes	No
The teacher uses examples, expressions, and language that are culturally appropriate and meaningful for the students' backgrounds.	73.3%	26.7%
The teacher shows respect for cultural diversity by addressing and integrating different cultural norms and values into the classroom.	100%	0%
The teacher adapts the level of formality, tone, and communication strategies based on the students' cultural norms and expectations.	100%	0%
The teacher ensures that turn-taking in discussions is managed in a culturally sensitive way, allowing students from cultures that may value silence or indirectness to contribute comfortably.	93.3%	6.7%
The teacher actively works to raise students' awareness of cultural stereotypes and the harm they cause, fostering a more tolerant mindset.	86.7%	13.3%
The teacher facilitates activities that build understanding of global cultures and issues, enhancing students' tolerance.	46.7%	53.3%
The teacher integrates cultural celebrations or traditions into the classroom, promoting a greater understanding and acceptance of diversity.	46.7%	53.3 %
The teacher encourages positive communication and discourages any negative or intolerant remarks in class discussions.	100%	0%
The teacher intervenes immediately when intolerance or disrespect occurs and addresses it constructively.	100%	0%

**3.7 Tolerance and adaptability** are evident in EFL classrooms, with 93.3% of teachers practicing inclusive turn-taking. Strong positive communication fosters respect, though only 46.7% facilitate activities on global cultures, leaving over half lacking tolerance-building components. Cultural celebrations are similarly underrepresented, hindering diversity appreciation.

## 4. Discussion

### *What is the role of culture in the English language teaching process among teachers and students at the Language Center, Ecuadorian University in Ambato, September - December 2024?*

Understanding the vital role that education plays in culture and vice versa is well comprehended by the Language Center's teachers, which supports the affirmation of Shrestha et al. (2016) and Freedman et al (2016) that see culture as a crucial tool for survival. The results show that the role of culture in the English language teaching process at the Language Center is multifaceted, involving educators' cultural awareness, socio-cultural sensibility, and integration of technology to promote intercultural competence. Teachers strongly value cultural elements in their teaching practices, recognizing their impact on students' learning experiences, participation, and motivation.

Despite the agreement of using culture in EFL teaching, some challenges were encountered such as the availability of cultural resources and well-trained professionals. Nevertheless, addressing this gap may encourage teachers to gradually incorporate cultural content into their classes as Sariyildiz et al. (2017) mentions. So, these findings underscore the need for continued support and professional development to strengthen the cultural dimension of EFL education, ultimately enriching the learning experience for students. Considering that culture influences how teachers design interactions, emphasizing the importance of personalizing communication styles to meet the needs of students from different cultural contexts.

There is untapped potential for leveraging global and local cultural contexts to deepen students' cultural competence. By addressing these areas, the Language Center can further enhance the effectiveness of cultural integration in the English teaching process, benefiting both teachers and students. So, this fosters a strong commitment in creating a safe, equitable learning space where all cultural perspectives are valued.

***What do English teachers perceive of culture in the English Language teaching process at Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato?***

According to the last collection of results there is a huge acceptance of culture in the EFL teaching process. Teachers' perceptions are aligned with several key themes: institutionality, cultural awareness, socio-cultural sensibility, and the role of technology in fostering cultural integration. As the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture mention understanding our identity, art and culture promote intercultural exchanges over the world by letting students learn more about our country. So having the support of the institution and members of it, is perceived as an essential factor for an effective development of the teaching and learning process.

In addition, the results showed a deep understanding of teachers over being well prepared for intercultural EFL classrooms. Teachers' perceptions indicated that there is an urgent necessity of preparing professionals who work as a cultural mediator to understand their own culture as well as students' background. This helps students grab the pragmatic aspects of English (Clouet ,2017) such as idioms, humor, and social norms and can be achieved through literature, films or students' areas of interest in order to motivate them.

While analyzing the gathered data of socio-cultural sensibility agree with Candlin (2014) notion, who supports the idea of creating learning environments where all cultures are equally valued and represented. So, during the survey teachers reflected on the necessity of using social issues to increase students' curiosity while creating long-life content. As Vygotsky's theory highlights the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning.

Consequently, the use of technology showed an important impact on teaching and learning process according to teachers' perceptions. It can be used as a fun way to reinforce cultural knowledge and foster global

connections. While technology is seen as beneficial, there is room for growth in using it specifically to promote intercultural collaboration and understanding. Teachers recognize its potential but may lack strategies to fully leverage it for cultural education.

So, despite the positive acceptance and perceptions, there were some challenges identified. Putry (2022) emphasizes that teachers should acquire adequate training, while teachers noted a lack of sufficient cultural materials, which might delay their ability to consistently integrate cultural content.

### ***What cultural activities do teachers implement at Ecuadorian University's Language Center in Ambato, September - December 2024.?***

Considering the gathered results from the checklist and class observations, it appears that teachers are aware of the importance of using formal and appropriate communication in order to connect with students, avoiding offensive or uncomfortable topics. This aligns with Azmie (2022) theory, which focuses on teachers' abilities to apply and integrate an effective teaching strategy based on students' cultural background, creating opportunities for them to exchange, discuss and explore different cultures.

In addition, Yaman (2017) mentioned the importance of including cultural material of the native language and target language, in order to balance and establish intercultural tolerance and empathy among students in the EFL classrooms. This was observed during observations, this facilitated the learning process for students by using diverse examples, metaphors and even icebreaker activities where students feel free to express and work collaboratively based on their cultures. It is important to mention that the absence of cultural material of the native language could leave the language competency incomplete and students could forget their culture and adopt the target culture as their own (Shrestha, 2016)

Motivation plays an essential role in the teaching-learning process when incorporating culture in EFL classrooms. The results showed that although teachers adapt tasks to diverse cultural styles, there are inconsistencies in encouraging independent cultural exploration, affecting intrinsic motivation and language skill development. This is aligned with Yaman et al. (2017) that agrees building a good classroom atmosphere will contribute to students' confidence.

## 5. Conclusion

As it has been shown, culture plays a fundamental role in the English language teaching process at the Language Center in Ambato and that is how teachers perceive it. They recognize the importance of having the support of the institution, by promoting cultural awareness and socio-cultural sensibility to foster effective language acquisition. At the same time technology plays an important role in multicultural and pluricultural EFL classrooms, since it facilitates the learning and teaching process in the modern world.

Teachers value the inclusion of both global and local cultural content to provide contextually relevant lessons to increase student engagement, foster inclusivity, and enhance motivation. One clear example of this, are virtual dual immersion sessions which encourage students to connect with peers worldwide, fostering cross-cultural communication and motivation, considering that technology has a positive impact on students when teachers implement it as a factual tool to develop communication competences rather than just gamifying classes.

Furthermore, most teachers feel well-prepared to teach cultural aspects, emphasizing that effective strategies in the teaching-learning process are based on creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere where students are encouraged to share and respect diverse social and cultural experiences, yet a lack of sufficient authentic cultural resources was identified as a constraint. This highlights a gap between teachers' readiness to integrate native and

target language culture and their access to the necessary tools. Teachers demonstrate significant strengths in cultural understanding, adaptability, and promoting inclusive communication practices.

Even Though the short period of observations, findings demonstrated that integrating culture in EFL classrooms not only enhances language learning but also developed meaningful participation of students in a multicultural world.

Incorporating collaborative learning activities focused on cultural topics such as team working on worldwide cultural topics or Ecuadorian culture can help to overcome challenges in English teaching at the Language Center. Systematic integration of cultural content, resources, and teacher training is essential, bearing in mind that institutional support is overriding.

Further research should explore students' perspectives on the role of culture in their learning process as well as evaluate the long-term impact of culturally integrated teaching on language acquisition and intercultural competence.

## 6. Contributions of Authors

**MMAC:** Introduction, theoretical framework and interpretation of the results.

**MRA:** Revision, validation of instruments, and direction of the research.

**JJRP:** Application of instruments, and methodology.

**AASC:** Application of instruments, processing data, and conclusions.



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