

***Promoting a Reflective Attitude towards the Target Culture by
Implementing the Use of Portfolios in the British Cultural Studies Course.***

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Bucaramanga

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A Project Submitted to the School of Languages in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor in Teaching English as a Foreign
Language

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Professor Bozena Lechowska and the students of British Cultural studies for their valuable help in carrying out this classroom project.

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Resumen

Título: Promoviendo una actitud reflexiva frente a la cultura extranjera mediante la implementación del uso de portafolios en el curso de Estudios Culturales Británicos.*

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Conceptos clave: Reflexión, Cultura, Portafolio, entendimiento transcultural, conciencia cultural.

Descripción:

Promover un entendimiento transcultural como medio de comunicación se ha convertido en un factor esencial en los procesos de enseñanza de idiomas. Los Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés (Ministerio de Educación, 2006) tienen como meta resaltar la estrecha relación entre cultura y lenguaje. En este contexto, el objetivo de incrementar la conciencia cultural ha adquirido relevancia. Por esta razón, el curso de Estudios Culturales Británicos en el programa de Licenciatura en Inglés provee a los estudiantes con elementos para el entendimiento de la cultura británica y promueve el análisis crítico y la reflexión a través del cual los estudiantes son motivados a comparar y contrastar aspectos de su cultura propia con la cultura extranjera.

Este enfoque hacia los estudios culturales debe implicar un componente reflexivo. Existe la necesidad de incrementar conciencia por parte de los estudiantes acerca de la importancia de manifestaciones que tienen lugar en su propia cultura así como en la cultura extranjera que se está estudiando. Por esto, el uso del portafolios parece ser adecuado debido a que estimula a la autonomía, incrementa la conciencia metacognitiva y eleva la competencia lingüística. Además, el portafolios brinda información necesaria para la valoración del proceso de aprendizaje a través de un amplio periodo de tiempo.

* Proyecto de grado

** Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director: Bozena Lechowska

Summary

Title: Promoting a Reflective Attitude towards the Target Culture
By Implementing the Use of Portfolios in the British Cultural
Studies Course.*

Authors: Libia Carolina Blanco Leal**
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Key Concepts: Reflection, Culture, Portfolio, Cross-cultural understanding, cultural awareness.

Description:

Promoting cross-cultural understanding as means of communication has recently become an essential factor in the process of language teaching. Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés (Ministerio de Educación, 2006) aim at stating the close relationship between culture and language. Within this context, the objective of raising cultural awareness has become particularly important. This is why British Cultural Studies at our undergraduate Teacher Training program is geared towards providing students with elements of understanding British culture, as well as promoting critical analysis and reflection among them whereby students are encouraged to compare and contrast aspects of their own culture with the target culture.

This approach to Cultural Studies should entail a reflective component. There is need for an increased awareness on the part of students about the importance of cultural manifestations taking place in their own culture as well as the foreign culture they are studying. That is the reason why the use of portfolios seems to be highly adequate since they encourage learner autonomy, improve meta-cognitive awareness of the learning process and increase linguistic competence. At the same time portfolios provide data necessary for assessment of the learning process over an extended period of time.

* Proyecto de grado

** Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idio

Introduction

“Different perspectives of the universe should not alienate us but rather complement one another” Octavio Paz

Learning a new language implies, in great proportion, learning a new culture. Over the last decade, non- English speaking countries have been introducing cultural studies as an important aspect in their curricula. Thus, raising cultural awareness and cross- cultural understanding has become the expected outcome target language teaching aims at. Crucial elements such as ways of living and thinking, arts and literature, customs and habits, history and geography, traditional habits, behavior regulation and values in English-speaking countries, are now widely employed in language teaching.

In order to approach cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding, non-traditional strategies should be integrated. Strategies based on reflective understanding of one’s own cultural identity and promoting intercultural dialogue are at the core of this methodology. According to a study carried out in the Dutch Interuniversity Center of Educational Research, reflection fosters the awareness of one’s personal identity, beliefs and development in the learning process (Mansvelder: 2006). In the extensive repertoire of cutting edge strategies, the reflective nature of the use of portfolio stands out: “Portfolio fosters students’ ownership of the learning process and encourages deep learning through reflection” (Guard et al.: 2003). Moreover, “Portfolios has an added value on stimulating reflection on students” (Mansvelder: 2006). Other authors such as Hartman (as cited in Guard et al., 2003) emphasizes learning aspects: “Portfolios encourage active student involvement and invite students to apply known principles and generalizations to new problems and situations; to think creatively..” Properties such as these are essential for the learner autonomy, intercultural communication and the student’s personal development.

Theoretical Background

This classroom project has been carried out following the principles of constructivist approach, generally attributed to Jean Piaget, who articulated mechanisms by which “knowledge is internalized by learners” (Chang, 2000). According to constructivism, each person in his/her personal and professional process of development and formation, builds up his/her own knowledge, giving it meaning in light of his/her previous frame of reference and the functionality they have in the contexts they can be transferred. Constructivism states that knowledge is an ongoing process of criticism and creation (Chang, 2000). In this approach the teacher comes to be a counselor; a mediator that helps to organize the learning processes.

Portfolio as a growth process

Previous research on the use of portfolios in the classroom displays different ways that portfolios have been conceptualized. Danielson and Abrutyn (as cited in Rolheiser et al.: 2000) identify three major types of portfolio: working portfolios, display portfolios and assessment portfolios. Seely (as cited in Rolheiser et al.: 2000) identifies four types of portfolios: showcase, documentation, evaluation and process. Although the conceptualizations of these authors are different , “ the common theme in determining the type of portfolio to use is that it is important for educators to be clear about their goals, the reasons they are engaging in a portfolio project, and the intended audience for the portfolios” (Rolheiser et al., 2000). To narrow down the different types of portfolios, two major classifications are suggested: best work portfolio and growth portfolio.

The type of portfolio selected for this classroom project was the growth portfolio. A growth portfolio demonstrates an individual’s development and growth over time (Rolheiser et al., 2000). Development can be focused on academic or thinking skills, content knowledge, self-knowledge, or any area that is important in a specific setting. When growth is emphasized, a portfolio will contain evidence of struggle, failure, success, and change. The growth will likely be an uneven journey of highs and lows, peaks and valleys, rather than a

smooth continuum (Rolheiser et al., 2000). The goal of a growth portfolio is for learners to see their own changes over time.

Cultural awareness in language learning

Recently, cultural awareness has gained considerably more prominence in language learning: “Since cultural awareness constitutes a crucial component in language learning, foreign language teacher education in the twenty-first century should integrate the study of culture into language teaching in new and productive ways” (Lechowska; 2009). Understanding a language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis but also essential elements such as ways of living and thinking, arts and literature, customs and habits, history and geography, traditional habits, behavior regulation and value notions in English-speaking countries. In order to break language barriers, cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding have become core objectives in language learning standards.

According to Quappe and Cantattore (2005), “Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions”. They also state that cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures: “People see, interpret and evaluate things in different ways. What is considered an appropriate behavior in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another culture” (Quappe and Cantattore, 2005).

Reflection as a means of promoting student’s cultural awareness

For the purpose of this classroom project, a “personalist” or “narrative approach” to reflection has been found appropriate: “Reflection is geared to construct personal practice-based knowledge and to develop awareness of one’s own identity, beliefs and development (Mansvelder, 2006). Hatton and Smith (as cited in Mansvelder, 2006) give a general perspective of what reflection is: “In general reflection is seen as a way of systematically thinking about experiences, frequently coupled to action in educational practice, and

arising from a problem experienced . This systematic thought is understood to mean a mental process of structuring and restructuring experiences”.

Other definitions of reflection to be found in “The Learning Portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection by student teachers” (Mansvelder, 2006) point out to the fact that educators often assume that if students reflect on their own actions they will develop insight into their own beliefs. In other words: “They will become aware of their own frame of reference, through which they approach and interpret their experiences”. Von Wright (cited in Mansvelder, 2006) believes that only self-reflection leads to awareness, where the object of reflection is one’s own beliefs and not one’s own actions. “Reflecting on your own beliefs assumes that you can distance yourself from your experiences and see that your beliefs play a role in your thinking and action” (Mansvelder, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

The British Cultural studies course aims at providing students with elements of understanding British culture, as well as promoting critical analysis among students whereby they are encouraged to contrast aspects of their own culture with the target culture. Special emphasis is given to the identification of historical events and the impact they have on different aspects, and also to the students' reflection about them.

This approach to Cultural Studies requires a reflective component. The need for an increased awareness on the part of students about the importance of cultural manifestations taking place in their own culture as well as the foreign culture they are studying can be accounted for in this way. Hopefully, students' understanding of their own culture will be enriched and the aim of promoting cross-cultural understanding among participants will be achieved.

Justification

The implementation of portfolios increases reflection and provides an ongoing record of learning development. This methodology is suitable if we want our students to become aware of the changes that take place in their learning process. Moreover this approach allows students to self-monitor the way they learn and make reflections on the benefits and difficulties they experience. In this context, we strive to promote the portfolio as a means of authentic assessment and reflection in which students will be able to keep track of their own learning process. In addition to that the portfolio will be instrumental in developing the appreciation of one's culture and enabling cross-cultural understanding. In this view, becoming fully aware of the importance of one's own culture is combined with and enhanced by the study of a foreign culture.

Objectives of the Project

- To incorporate new elements to the evaluation process in the course, by introducing a portfolio as assessment tools
- To provide students throughout the learning process with an opportunity to reflect upon and explore in greater depth the issues related to culture.

Description of the project

Students attending British Cultural Studies were asked to participate in a seminar-based class in which they were supposed to participate actively, either during class discussions with their interventions, or guiding it by delivering one presentation during the semester.

Students were also asked to involve in reflective writing by making comments about class discussions, topics or reading assignments. They were expected to write about their impressions, progress and viewpoints. To facilitate the task at hand and for the sake of organization, this reflective portfolio was delivered in an electronic way. Making the portfolios digital was also motivated by environmental concerns – less paper would be used in this way. Students were asked to send their texts via e-mail; they received the corresponding feedback, corrections of their texts or any kind of extra course material to their personal accounts.

This growth portfolio was included in the course program as one of the assessment tools that the teacher would have in order to grade the students' participation in the class process. The percentage given to this portfolio was 30%.

As an introduction to course topics, students were introduced to the cultural dimensions as formulated by Geert Hofstede. Having discussed these concepts as well as the rankings attributed to the countries objects of study, students were asked to comment on the following statement made by professor Hofstede: "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster". This first attempt at making reflections produced very satisfactory results. Students' reflections demonstrated a deep level of personal engagement with the issue at hand and their writing was informed by the concepts introduced in class. Students' opinions about Hofstede's concept of culture were divided. Most of the students agreed on his thought, although some stated that conceiving culture as a source of disaster is a generalization and even those cultural differences that lead to conflict are often used as an excuse to justify actions taken against others.

“...I think that Hofstede in his quote tends to generalize and perhaps he does not take into consideration that each one of these differences of race, religion, economic and social status, are what identify and make unique every culture”.

“...I think culture sometimes becomes an excuse to justify some other problems that lay underneath.”

This first task also showed that some of the students required extra practice in order to improve their command of grammar and vocabulary. An example of this type of difficulties experienced by the students can be found below:

“This quotation means for me different feelings. First I am complete agree with the professor when he refers to culture as source of, because almost all times we as a different human beings we can not tolerate others and what should be a source of sharing and standing, becomes a source of disagreement.”

In the classes that followed students were given a new reading assignment. The text summarized the work of three major authors involved in the study of culture such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Dell Hymes and Franz Boas. This reading material coming from *English-Spanish Translation, A Cross-Cultural Interpretation Approach* by Francisco Castro-Paniagua (2000) constituted the basis for class discussions. Students were assigned a fragment of a text and they had to present it to their fellow students. Then class discussions involving every student present took place. Once presentations and discussions were over, students were asked to chose among the three authors and write a three-paragraph text about the author they found most convincing and whose ideas they liked the most. This time, the writing produced by course participants was not as satisfactory as expected. In many cases students produced a summary of the ideas promoted by the author of their choice rather than their own personal reflection on what they read. Since the reading material was highly complex both on conceptual and linguistic level, in all likelihood students must have experienced problems dealing with the text. The relatively, poor results as far as reflections are concerned should be seen against this

background. In our view, this why majority of participants decided to summarize what they read rather than to account for their reactions since it is difficult to establish a personal stance towards ideas one fights to grasp.

Once again, several reflections produced by the students displayed problems with text structuring and language use. Class monitors and the class instructor, having previously revised and corrected the text students had written, proceeded to give the corresponding feedback. These comments and corrections were all done with the purpose of promoting an improvement in students' skills. Each student received his/her texts with annotations and corrections they were expected to take into account before sending back their final version. This step of corrections and feedback was a crucial part of the project since the growth portfolio seeks a process of growing and continuous improvement of the student.

Owing to the difficulties experienced by the students in this stage of the project, a decision was made to allow participants to use their mother tongue in the following stage. Despite the fact that the class is always carried out in the English language and the reading material fulfills the same condition, students were asked to write their next reflections on Octavio Paz and his analysis of Latin American culture in Spanish. We wanted to make sure that this time language would not constitute a barrier and students would be able to express their ideas without any problems. Facilitating the task from linguistic point of view, would also provide us with the necessary insight into the kind of difficulties students were experiencing. Another argument in favor of our decision has to do with the fact that portfolio assessment intends to promote growth and to give more importance to the student's reflection rather than to the means used to commit those thoughts to writing. As Apple and Shimo rightly state in *Perceptions of portfolio assessment in EFL classrooms*: "...writing a reflective essay in one's mother tongue rather than the target language does not detract from the value of the reflection, and in fact can even add to it".

In addition to that students were given a checklist of components they were expected to include in their written reflections. This was done to ensure that every participant would produce a reflection rather than a brief account of

what they read. At the beginning of the course the students were given some guidelines for writing a reflection. The instructor explained what features should be found in a written reflection and given that the first task produced satisfactory outcomes concerning the structure and form of reflections, it was not considered necessary to provide students with the checklist. The need for more detailed parameters became evident when a significant number of participants failed to produce satisfactory results.

The subsequent stage of the project consisted of a set of questions students were asked to respond (annex). Their main purpose was to lead students to a reflective and introspective look at their participation and possible changes in attitudes hopefully produced as a result of the course. We were also puzzled by the way students perceive their role in intercultural communication and their relationship with other cultures.

The students in this class took advantage of this exercise to express their ideas about the class development, their experience and their personal growth in the academic and professional fields, the progress they made, and a comparison of their previous frame of reference with their views after the course, as it can be seen here:

“I think the way we are working in this subject have helped me to be a little bit more autonomous. I think it is a great idea to make reflections on the readings we make because in that way we can say what we think of the reading. I think these reflections really encourage students to read the materials. This subject has helped me to improve the way I write my opinions about others’ thoughts.”

These opinions display a positive attitude towards the process and the new proposal for the course, but it does not mean they completely agree with it. Sometimes, subjects participating in studies may provide positive outcomes or feedback in order to please the researcher or because they may also feel afraid of expressing their viewpoint since the texts are still part of an exercise that will be graded.

However, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the above motivation may only apply to few participants. We do believe that in most cases their reflections have been characterized by their openness and sincerity.

Conclusions

We would like to conclude by stating that the project “Promoting a reflective attitude towards the use of portfolios in the British Cultural Studies course” has been a very enriching experience both for us and for the students involved. It definitely contributed to our personal and professional growth. We are convinced that it allows us to draw the following conclusions concerning the use of portfolios:

- The use of portfolio promotes reflection which fosters students’ understanding of their own identity since students are asked to construct practical knowledge about cultural element and compare them with their personal experiences.
- In order to provide new strategies for assessment, portfolios can be used as a more effective tool for the reason that examinations assess only a moment of the learning process while portfolios assess the learning process over an extended period of time.
- The use of portfolio enhances student’s proficiency in the foreign language since learners are encouraged to write portfolio entries which display not only learners’ mastering of the concepts discussed in the course but also students’ command of the language.

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Annex 1

Reflections on Hofstede's quote

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster."

Culture is rather a source of knowledge than a source of conflict from my point of view. However I do understand that some people find it hard to cope with certain behaviors that other cultures have imprinted in them and that sometimes create conflicts especially in the professional field. I think this point of view proposed by Hofstede is too pessimistic and gives very little hope to the avoidance of conflicts between different countries, which as we have all seen has led to very big confrontation and conflicts.

In my case I find it very pleasant to study and share time and knowledge with people who have been brought up in an environment different to mine and have different point of view about life and many other topics that we might happen to share during a conversation. I think it actually increases my level of tolerance and appreciation for the many different things that are out there and might help me to be a better person and probably a better professional.

Cultural differences may prove a source of many emotional reactions among humans, and sometimes these differences, inevitably, lead to conflict. Everything arises from the fact that human beings little tolerate ideas which are opposite to our own. Although these types of conflict take place in many parts of the world, and even between nations, it is not necessary to go too far to see examples of how this phenomenon occurs.

In our local context, it is evident how people sharing certain ideas prejudice people from other sort of group. It also happens that culture or ideas are pretended to be divided into reduced parts, and this conducts to a state in which people are classified into whether one group or another; without the opportunity to set themselves in a middle or impartial place.

However, I think culture sometimes becomes an excuse to justify some other problems that lay underneath. Hofstede's assertion is quite precise;

although culture must cause conflicts, it also links people, and makes us similar in the sense that all of us have our own and different perception of the world.

This quotation means for me different feelings. First I am complete agree with the professor when he refers to culture as **source of**, because almost all times we as a different human beings we can not tolerate others and what should be a source of sharing and standing, becomes a source of **disagreement**. It is amazing how different people in other cultures behave. We are inclined to have a human instinct that deep inside all people are the same, but they are not.

I think we have to learn what exactly the word culture means, is more than music, festival and typical food of a specific place, is decide to take the risk of be aware of learn more, know more and tolerate more other cultures. Differences are what made us make part of unique and these are at the same time, experiences that teach us how to increase our life`s point of view

GEERT HOFSTEDE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

I consider that Hofstede's conception about culture is relative according to each person's experiences. For that reason, it is really hard to assume only a stance of agreement or disagreement taking into account what Hofstede claims in his study. For instance, from my personal experience I can say that even when all the cultures and the individuals who them are different, it does not mean that we are unable to tolerate those differences. Another thing is that, although sometimes there are misunderstandings between two people from different countries no always this situation refers to a conflict.

Furthermore, I think that Hofstede in his quote tends to generalize and perhaps he does not take into consideration that each one of these differences of race, religion, economic and social status, are what identify and make unique

every culture; besides those divergences, instead of dividing us since we do not share the same opinions or ideas as others, it should make us more tolerant people with the ability to respect all these perceptions even if they are against our beliefs or our culture.

I completely agree with Professor Hofstede's thought, when two cultures are mixed up they may cause a catastrophe. It makes me recall some of the few times in which I've been in touch with people from a different culture; it ends up in an awkward or annoying situation most of the times. For instance, people always try to be funny when meeting others for the first time, but these interaction attempts prove unsuccessful when we are talking about foreigners.

Behavior and perspectives are also seen problematic when different cultures get together. For example, Latinos may think Europeans are cold and sometimes rude when interacting, but that's just the Latinos' perspective because for Europeans that's the right way to behave. Otherwise, Europeans or even Americans may think Latinos are too much cheeky, but this is what they think is best way to approach people. So, having different points of view is how conflict takes place.

- Culture embodies the religion(s), language, food, traditions, art, literature, and the lifestyle of people; all those topics are diverse in all over the world. Geert Hofstede proposes: *"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster¹."* This maxim could sound pessimistic and ironic; however history has demonstrated that professor Geert Hofstede has enough arguments to say it. . Through out human history there have been so many wars where the principal argument was not accepting a new culture but imposing a new one.

Religion as an important part of the culture has been the principal factor to start a war. Nowadays we can observe the conflict in France where there exist a

difference related to the Muslim culture. The French government established a law which avoids the usage of the burka for Muslim women in public schools. It produces that Muslim people feel that French government does not respect their culture. This is a clear example of how we do not accept a new culture and how it could be an excuse to be intolerant and how culture could be a cause to disaster.

Culture is more a source of conflict according to Hofstede. The subtle racism and discrimination have been one of the major problems that humanity deals with. Having stereotypes and racial epithets are a crucial issue when talking upon culture since it creates violence and intolerance. When you criticize some specific ethnic group or people from another country, without knowing deep down the things that characterize them, you are being part of that racism.

However, Culture should not only be taken as a matter of complicated differences but also as a significant wealth of the world.

I think that what makes this world interesting is to have different ways of life, different thoughts and feelings, different clothes, policies, manners. It is very exciting to think of how many cultures could share with us new points of views, diversity customs and innumerable lifestyles.

An individual discovers his/her culture when he/she is exposed to a new one. Due to the differences between two cultures the individual recognizes its own culture and how unique it could be in the world. If the individual is exposed to a new culture accidentally, there could be two possibilities, one is that he or she gets on well with the new traditions and shares them pleasantly, and number two is that these new traditions affect his or her environment tending to be uncomfortable.

On the other hand if the individual decides to have a contact with other culture, conscious of the possible disagreement, he or she could have a neutral position to accept it as different but not as a bad behavior. Those people who

are looking for this contact with cultures they are open minded to enjoy this as the enrichment of their own culture.

I agree 100% with Hofstede. The first thing that came to my mind as I was reading Hofstede's quote was the news. Like a year ago the news broadcasted the story of a Latina girl who got kicked in the face by a Spaniard on a train. The footage appeared all around the globe and the aggressor was publicly branded a racist. The matter was never resolved and it caused shock among the Latino community. It was outrageous at that time.

A few months ago Sonia Sotomayor was named as President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court and she got famous overnight even in Colombia. The thing is: no matter if the news is nice or not, cultures are subject to approach these kinds of topics the wrong way. If a Latina plays a major role in government she should be applauded because that's not expected, of course. If a Latina gets punched in the face she's a victim – a really poor victim, of course. *"Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster."*

Professor Geert Hofstede stated in his web page "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." In my personal opinion i think it is true because many cultures have a different ways to express themselves, and what for one culture may be polite for the other culture can be irritating and disrespectful, for instance in the states handshake must be done briefly, that is a signal of masculinity and self-confidence, but in other part of the world as in Africa the handshake normally last longer even some minutes; which for an American that would be interpreted as sexual attraction; so if you are American and you are doing business with an African and close the deal with a handshake how would you react? Would you feel uncomfortable with a long handshake? Would you

cancel the deal? Would you join them for business and tell other american to do negotiate with them?

In the last paragraph we talked about cultural differences in countries but we also have a differences between cultures inside the country for example people from Barranquilla and Bucaramanga, some expressions are taken in the wrong way for instance a person from Bucaramanga would say: estoy arrecho that means he is angry, and if he is in Barranquilla and says: esa mujer me tiene arrecho he would be trying to say that that lady makes him angry, but a local would interpret it as that lady turns me on because in barranquilla and the northern coast of the country being "arrecho" has a sexual connotation, ad that can lead onto really serious fights and misunderstands, and why not even in a tragedy; that's why you should be careful in the way you talk and in the way you behave when you are in a place different from your home town, you may hurt someone's feelings.

According to professor Hofstede culture is a source of conflict, I don't agree with him; I think culture is not a conflict between civilizations. For me it is the possibility to know others' thoughts and behavior. For that reason is quite difficult to understand that every single person has a different point of view. To understand this you should be willing to know different societies; I mean give yourself the opportunity to be in contact with people who have completely different manners instead of reject others because of their behavior.

I think it is also a matter of education and communication, a person who is interested in learn and investigate about the different cultures, would be open minded and will understand better the differences. Good communications would also help in the sense that we are constantly in contact with people who are obvious different from us.

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Prof. Geert Hofstede, Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University.

I agree with the quote of Professor Hofstede about culture. Just thinking about the various discussions, reflections or theories that have emerged in relation to what culture is, it is clear that every author or individual that has thought seriously about a definition for culture, and what this is consisted of, has a perspective that in some cases shares similarities with some authors while in other circumstances is totally at variance with them. That shows how complex this is and that reaching to an agreement about how to define it would cause clashes of viewpoints.

Therefore, if only the definition of culture gives a great amount of insights, the coexistence of real societies, that have different characteristics and varied degrees of development in terms of family, religion, etc., is an issue that generates an ambiguous situation in which it is uncertain to know how a given group will react towards another one, since cultural differences can result in hard looks from others or in really problematic situations that might set different cultures at odds. That is why the word "tolerance" has been suggested as a solution to the troublesome yet necessary interaction among cultures.

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Prof. Geert Hofstede..

In my opinion, I agree with professor Hofstede because as individuals we do not tend to respect or at least accept points of view, customs, and beliefs that differ from ours. History can show us a clear example of this: wars, conquests, conflict among nations, thousands of deaths etc. many of these facts had happen because it was not possible to manage those differences in a proper way.

The human being is by nature competitive and aggressive; we need to demonstrate that we are better than others. Culture is the base of those aspects that makes us unique in the world; so, every time we see that this sense of superiority is threatened, we defend it. It is possible to say that the conflict is part of any social order; however, the hitch is not the differences between groups, the problem is the way in which we deal with those disagreements. Each person contains in himself patterns that can help him to balance his needs of uniqueness without harm to others.

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." I agree with these ideas proposed by professor Hofstede because inclusive having in mind the thinking of that all humans are equals, we are able to recognize that this is not true, even, people who live in the same country but in a different region show marked cultural differences. These differences can provoke misinterpretations in what a person is doing or is saying.

We must be conscious that people from different cultures are different in many aspects, for example in the way of dressing; a person from the coast is going to be dressed in a more casual way than a person who lives in the interior of the country in a cold region. Sometime the interaction between people could be problematic due to the way of expressing their ideas; we probably could see that in a culture some expressions could be rough while in other these expressions are normal expressions without any strong connotation. To successfully live in a different culture, we have to adopt the customs or habits of the country or region.

As Lévi-Strauss stated, back in 1975, that "All human beings are inclined to reject anything that does not identify with themselves" Professor Hofstede is not saying nothing new. Actually, he is kind of right, it is very difficult to understand people that are very different from you, that have different customs, etc., and this lack of understanding always leads to conflicts as Prof. Hofstede says.

However, I think that it has to do a lot with your educational background. If you do not know anything about other countries, other cultures, then it will be very hard to understand why people from other countries behave and act in a different way than you do. And it is only through education that you become interested in other cultures (well, education or mere interest), so what you (should) do, or at least in my case, is to find out as much information as you can from that country, in this way you acquire the knowledge you need to be more tolerant towards other cultures, other ways of living... I mean, you may dislike some of their habits, their customs but you have the knowledge to understand why they do it and in that way you, somehow, learn to tolerate those things. But, I know, this is "ideal" not everybody is interested in knowing and understanding other cultures and I think that's why Prof. Hofstede is so negative. For instance, in our country very few people have access to education, so very few people have this broad view of the rest of the world and the different cultures you can find in it.

27th November 2009

“Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are nuisance at best and often a disaster”

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However, I think that it has to do a lot with your educational background. If you do not know anything about other countries, other cultures, then it will be very hard to understand why people from other countries behave and act in a different way than you do. And it is only through education that you become interested in other cultures (well, education or mere interest), so what you (should) do, or at least in my case, is to find out as much information as you can from that country, in this way you acquire the knowledge you need to be more tolerant towards other cultures, other ways of living... I mean, you may dislike

some of their habits, their customs, but you have the knowledge to understand why they do it and in that way you, somehow, learn to tolerate those things. But, I know, this is "ideal" not everybody is interested in knowing and understanding other cultures and I think that's why Prof. Hofstede is so negative. For instance, in our country very few people have access to education, so very few people have this broad view of the rest of the world and the different cultures you can find in it.

British Cultural Studies Portfolio.

On Hofstede's quotation:

Hofstede's quotation is, in my point of view, a raw and straightforward way of expressing an idea which is a universal truth, but that no one dares to acknowledge publicly. This is not the mere statement of a thought on human relationships, it is a conclusion drawn from our historical record and can be easily confirmed at international, national and even local levels thanks to mass media.

Not only differences themselves but the way they dealt with are yet the source of more differences and clash among cultures. The evolution of differences into conflict leads to the negotiation of principles which are non-negotiable on the first place and turns human rights and lives into exchange currencies. These are undeniable facts that Hofstede's words categorically remind us.

Annex 2

Three-paragraph texts about the author students liked the most

FRANZ BOAS 1858 – 1942

Life is a chain of consequences, like the cause and effect phenomenon, so I think that according to Boas' view as you grow culture is shaped or modified by your experiences in life; your past, your family environment, your educational background, interactions with people around you, for instance here in Colombia by how violence has hit you, I mean, everything you have lived has to do. That is why every human being is different, every human being has a different perception of the world, therefore has a different culture. Among us we may share some cultural characteristics, those from Latin-American people or Colombian people, but that is just one part, we are still different from each other because we have lived separate lives.

These cultural characteristics that we share also restrain us from understanding or accepting other cultures that are very different from ours. As stated by Boas "the fact that we were born in a particular society which controls our every single thought, makes it very unlikely for us to see merit in any civilization other than our own and prevents us from wholly recognizing the assets of foreign cultures, simply because our lives have not unfolded under their dominance". This explanation is perfectly understandable but as I said in a previous comment I think that apart from that patriotic pride there is also another factor to consider that is education and that might explain in a broad way this lack of tolerance and understanding.

Regarding Boas' contribution of the nonexistence of superior or inferior cultures I think he was definitely ahead of his time because, as we discussed in class, there are two sides to this matter. On the one hand, we have those countries like The United States where you can find a mixture of cultures and diversity. It is a very developed country with strong economy but with little identity and traditions. On the other hand, we have very traditional countries like

Asian ones where you can find lots of customs and identity. These countries, on the contrary, have a great understanding and respect of their own culture and traditions. Therefore, we cannot measure cultures in terms of superiority or inferiority; there are lots of aspects to take into account.

In short, I found Boas' contributions very enriching, having in mind the time when he made them, the variety of fields (specially race prejudice), and their influence on many other authors and studies that follow him.

Hofstede's intercultural Dimensions

1. Power Distance

Clearly in Colombia, we have social classes' distinctions and I think they count for everything; for getting a job, getting a VISA, belonging to a specific social group like clubs, etc. and many other things. Some people in our country tend to label people according to their social status, so I think that is the reason why we have a higher score on this dimension.

Now, talking about superiors and subordinates in companies I think we have advanced a lot on that matter because those relationships are much more casual nowadays, maybe thanks to the Human resources departments in all the companies and enterprises that try to make these relationships friendlier.

2. Individualism

Well, we have a very low score here because for us, family is very important and you always want to succeed in life for giving your family the best you can. You are always thinking about the well-being of the ones you care. There are few people that live alone taking care of themselves and usually they are just trying to find and build a family, so we usually do not promote much individuality in our society.

3. Uncertainty Avoidance

Colombia is a very traditional country but anyhow I think most people change according to the world's changes and obviously according their own possibilities. Depending on our needs, we are willing to take risks and change our lives.

Another important aspect to consider here is that these days we watch on TV that some really bad people don't care about social rules and laws at all, they have done unthinkable things such as; mothers killing their own children, parents abusing their children, and many other despicable acts, so we cannot say we are a rule-oriented society. Some of us are, but there are some unfortunate exceptions. And another aspect that does not let us assume we are a rule-oriented society is that half, or even more of our rulers, our leaders in the government are being investigated for connections with guerrillas groups, drug dealers, etc. So unfortunately corruption is on the everyday news in our country.

4. Masculinity

We definitely have these distinctions in our society. There are even different fees between men and women with the same educational background. It is really hard for women to climb up to power positions, those ones are usually taken by men.

This differentiation is more evident in some regions of our country. For instance, in "La Costa Caribe" where women, they say (costeños say), have to stay at home cooking and taking care of the house and the children. This phenomenon also occurs in low economic resources areas where women don't have access to education. In places like this and in general, gender differentiation is still on the table!

13th August 1961 The Wall went up

I read all the articles proposed in class and I found out very interesting the fact that most eastern Germans think that the fall of the wall had to be done, they needed freedom but they have also had to bear with the negative consequences that brought the fall, as women unemployment and deindustrialization, things that they had never experienced in the Democratic German Republic.

Another worrying fact is that racist tendencies are common in a considerable part of the eastern Germans but all the columnists also said that well-being has improved remarkably, salaries are better now, and in general people have access to a wider range of goods and services. So opinions are divided, some think it was positive but some others accept the fact that they are free now but still think it has not been completely positive. From my point of view freedom is always positive, a wall means that you can only go until certain point, there are no more options, you are prisoner in your own country and that is not fair, not in today's world.

On the subject:

Having a subject specifically on culture is a great chance for me to know more about others' point of view and life style. It is an experience that I appreciate a lot, and besides there's also the possibility to compare and discuss aspects of life that I normally wouldn't talk about. I hope to gain knowledge which will allow me to perform better in multicultural work environments since that is one of my greatest expectations.

As professor Lechowska said, it is difficult to gain a complete understanding or acceptance of every point of view people from another culture might have, but, to increase our level of tolerance with respect to other cultures is a remarkable profit and so I expect to have achieved a higher level of tolerance to others through the reflexion this course promotes.

On Franz Boas:

Before this intellectual, the ideas on culture followed two main trends: the theory of the timeline development and the theory of cultural spread; these two principles -the only available at the moment- explained the way forms of culture developed in stages from primitive to advanced and that the similarities among these forms were due to interaction with other societies.

Thanks to Boas it became possible to talk about different *cultures* and not just “forms of culture” or “stages of culture” when referring to groups of people, this meant that all societies had a structured culture not only the most “sophisticated” ones. By introducing the scientific method in anthropological research he was able to demonstrate there are no superior or inferior cultures.

He observed the “primitivism” needn’t to involve simplicity, given the levels of complexity he found in primitive languages and musical instruments; and, also, that cultures with such remarkable traits in common such as language didn’t share beliefs or practices that others did share without having a common tongue.

Finally, another great contribution of Boas to the notion of culture was the status he gave to the concept Folklore as the representation and interpretation of reality a culture owns. Folklore according to this author encloses the universe of beliefs and practices a society lives by and is therefore an essential cultural manifestation.

My reflection about Hofstede

Hofstede says that cultures are based on a huge array of specific notions that may define and categorise a group of people. But he goes beyond that when he claims that those specific notions are more a problem rather than a positive result. In other words, cultures are the main source of conflicts, and there is nothing to do about it.

In my very point of view, this is a very negative perspective of what culture might be. If it is true that there are certain discrepancies between cultures – and

there must be some, of course – it does not imply that culture itself has to blame for. According to what was discussed in class, I can infer that the *problem* does not fall upon culture; but we can say that the problem might be the lack of tolerance.

My reflection about Lévi-Strauss

It is outstanding how those relevant men in history have been able to change and provide a new perspective of what culture might be, giving the opportunity to open people's eyes to explore and understand, at a certain level, their own culture and others. One of those important characters that really drew my attention was Lévi-Strauss.

He talks about the *barbarian* acts that have been carried out by those cultures that based in their own perspective believed themselves as superiors. In the case when Spaniards polished off the Indians. On the other hand, those Indians also acted with *barbarian* acts towards the Spaniards when they were exploring with them. This is not a matter of who is guilty or not. This is a clear example of who *false evaluation* from both parts, resulting in what Lévi-Strauss would name "By believing in 'barbarism' we become barbarian ourselves."

This could be linked to another topic that Lévi-Strauss mention during his career. He talks about *oversimplification*. Those cultures that believe in a cultural line of development and place themselves in the top of it, they tend to claim that other cultures that are underneath their line of development are not mentally prepared and therefore inferiors. Of course that belief is totally wrong. Lévi-Strauss says, "Human progress cannot be equated to climbing the steps of a ladder; it is more like the tossing of the dice, only occasionally the numbers add up to a lucky combination, but the game takes thousands of years and we lose the right perspective of how it takes place"

All in all, I think that not every single culture – and I am being way too optimistic – is willing to accept and understand his neighbour. It is difficult to take in those who we believe are strange for the simple reason that we all human beings tend to reject what is unknown! It is true that an open-

mindedness perspective would let us embrace a variety of knowledge that lead to mankind maximum potential, as Lévi-Strauss said. But I have to say that it is a hard and slow progress. It takes time – I am talking about hundreds of years – to adopt other cultures' knowledge; and when that time comes, we forget its origins.

My reflection about the class

My first impression about the class was that we were going to work on the different aspects of the British Cultures and of course compare them to Colombia's own culture. Unfortunately, it has been just reduced to the complex analysis of the definition of culture. I do not claim that this is not a key definition to start off if we want to study culture, but on the other hand it seems vague and without any sense to stick to that only exercise.

We spend two hours of one class talking about one single piece of one chapter that not all the people find interesting, even when sometimes it is! Maybe it is due to the fact the class held did not fulfil our expectations; perhaps it has to be with the fact that we are stuck in the same chapter since the beginning of the semester! I have to make my point here by saying that it is not about the teacher, it is about *the way* the class is developed. Again, those readings tend to become a little too repetitive, and sometimes boring, when we could have discussed the definition of culture in two sessions.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Claude Lévi-Strauss says, that *there are some forces which particularise or diverse and others that foment convergence and affinity*; he also says, that *human beings are inclined to reject anything that does not identify with them*. I agree with this because, as part of a society we tend to follow certain rules that help us to live in harmony; those regulations, give us a sense of what is right and what is wrong; so, when we see that something is against this agreement, we refuse it because it is considered incorrect or immoral depending on the situation. In other words, if something does not follow our society's standards it is not acceptable.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, this attitude gives us a sense of superiority among other societies. I share this conclusion with him because, we are characterised by a competitive behaviour; we always try to prove that we are superior. This aspect can be perceived in our tendency to compare our culture with others. For us, the western civilization is by far the best, the most advance; and those societies which are not part of it are considered retrograde, and powerless. Even though we admire some of their achievements, we persist in judged them as inferiors.

Lévi-Strauss declares that each culture takes something from other cultures because in this way, it is possible to have a better understanding about the world. I believe that it is necessary to take into account different perceptions, in order to comprehend in a deeper way the things that surround us. As well as he says if we observe the great civilizations all of them have in common that they acquire some of their neighbours' traditions and unified them in one. Besides, since prehistory times, humans have always been social creatures who need others to survive.

Claude Lévi-Strauss also states, that one of the obstacles that explains why some societies do not accept any kind of intercultural relations, is because they feel that they can loose their identity. He also affirms that "*the key of cultural diversity depends on the capability of each society to accept and understand other forms of cultural expressions.*" As I mentioned before in a previous comment, we are competitive and aggressive; so, it is complicated to be tolerant with other cultures even more when we are defending our superiority. But taking into account that we need others in order to improve; I believe that we have to find a balance between the adoptions of some mores and the preservation of those ones that make us unique.

Franz

Boas

The intensive study of aborigine tribes, made Franz Boas an important figure of the anthropology. He developed an interesting point of view according to the definition of culture anf folklore. He was the first to present culture as part of

every human community. He was also the first to use culture as a whole phenomenon and not as a process divided in many stages.

He passed a long time observing different North American Indians therefore he started being comprehensive and respectful with that culture, mentality and lifestyle. Hence, he began to watch over other cultures, especially Indians. He was one of the most representative scientist at saying that everybody were equal. I think he realized the importance of clarifying that no race is superior than the other, simply each culture has different and diverse ways to do their things.

Another important point to consider is his significant book “ *The Mind of Primitive man*” in which this author mentioned that every single person has the same fundamental way of thinking and said that dark -skinned people have the same features, boundaries and willingness than white-skinned Europeans, however, the difference falls in the system of tradition that influences their behavior. I completely agree with his ideas upon the imposition of ideals, he proposed that nobody have the right to establish ideals to other nations, despite of they will be strange or different.

In closing, I really appreciate the facts this anthropologist made of his research, I think he went deep down in the practices and habits of the groups of people he studied and tried not only to make inquiries but also to speak out upon social and political problems. We can not turn a blind eye to the fact that the intolerance makes human race discriminates others. We should be more tolerant with people, respect their traditions , because they are happy in the way they live as well as we are used to our lifestyle.

CLASS COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Geert hofstede was the creator of the five cultural dimensions we have studied, which were very important in the first classes. We discussed the several difference between some countries like Unites States against Great Britain, and Colombia against both. We concluded that Colombia is a more tolerant and the family and friends are closer than Unites States and Great

Britain. So, these countries are more individualistic and independent. According to the masculinity dimension we concluded that we are still going through a difficult situation where women are not treated in the same way as men.

Another important issue was about Dell Hymes, considering him more as an ethnographer. He established three different kinds of ethnography: *comprehensive* (related to the interpretation of a civilization), *topic oriented* (focus on one aspect) and *hypothesis oriented* (theoretical frame of a specific cultural topic and so, make comparisons). The meaning and subjectivity was analyzed since the investigators can be influenced by their background, experience and ideas, and the meaning is different according to every vision of the world. The participation and observation were also relevant in the moment of obtaining genuine conclusions. Finally, ethnography, exposed by Hymes is the deep study made by observation that takes place in its authentic context.

About classes → Talking about Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, I consider that it is important to have known about it because we can have a point of view about different aspects as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity and the degrees of that not only in our society but also in another particular society.

According to that, I have some things that I keep in my mind as the analysis of every dimension is not related to all the individuals of a society because not all them are or behave in the same way and as always, there are exceptions in everything. Of course, I think that Hofstede' dimensions are an excellent contribution to have a point of reference for analysing a country's culture and in this way to make a comparison between different cultures.

Dell Hymes → Taking into account the study of Dell Hymes, he is considered by many as the founder or father of the ethnography of communication that it is a way to study how people talked so he pointed out that it's easier said than done. I consider that Dell Hymes' contribution is very important for us because

as he said, there is a relationship between language and social context and communication is required in each and every aspect of our life.

It is important to mention that Dell Hymes suggests that “cultures communicate in different ways”; so, through communication we can interact among members of a culture since there are many communities where their own speaking was created and established. This is the reason that there are several ways in which we interact with other systems of culture.

I would like to point out that according to Dell Hymes ethnography involves not only observation but participation is also essential so I believe that it is true because for getting communication is vital to understand what other people want to express and maintaining a good relationship is a good clue for developing a healthy communication with no insults.

To conclude, I think that it is necessary to know what ethnography means and involves because through ethnography we can understand another culture and the behavior of the people; also, it is important to hear what individuals within a culture have to say about their beliefs and in this way we can appreciate other ways of thinking from different perspectives different from our own because having clear that it is easier to comprehend the nature of a particular socio-cultural phenomena.

Reflection on some of the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss about culture

The ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss about culture are the ones I agree with the most. When he refers to the development of cultures as a “parallel phenomenon in a different sphere”, I interpret this as various, several or some cultures making progress in certain fields (i.e. the building of houses, clothing, etc.), but each one of them being in a different stage of evolution and complexity. That is, a given *group* could have achieved more elaborated architectural designs of houses than the rest. Something like this probably happened due to the type of environment that surrounded that *group*, which could have had dramatic seasonal changes for example, and the kinds of neighboring communities that the *group* had, which could have been friendly settlements or on the contrary

really hostile neighbours. Although these are not the unique factors that could have caused an impact on the complex development of a specific group in a given area. Therefore, the degree of progress of a culture in particular aspects could be the result of its struggle to supply its most important necessities.

Another thing Lévi-Strauss mentions is the diversity of cultures which, according to him, depends more upon the interactions among them than it does upon their isolation. This is closely related to the needs of groups to have an identity, that differentiate them from the other societies, and the needs of the individuals of such groups to acquire a distinction that labels them as being part of something. This is evident everywhere. It can be clearly illustrated if we take the example of the map of the earth. This is divided into continents which are subsequently subdivided into countries. Those countries are divided into regions and every region is as well subdivided into smaller territories that can be states, departments, etc. and this subdivisions go on until we have that every single individual has his or her own distinction. Distinction that provides that person with an identity. But this is not the end of it because such individual identities create other groups, like those in which people share specific likes or dislikes, or those in which people share certain objectives or perspectives, etc. And then, those small groups find affinity with other groups, which can be in their same land or in the other side of the world, and create with them strong bonds that somehow join neighbouring or distant nations to become only one. In this way, it is evident that the interaction among cultures provides them with an identity that generates diversity of cultures.

Lévi-Strauss continues talking about diversity, but now in terms of how every culture perceives the other ones. In this case, the members of a particular culture will take into account their own environment, values, attitudes, traditions, beliefs, etc. to see and judge other cultures and their people. This is a subjective and in many cases close-minded view that generates expressions of rejection and superiority towards other cultures, as well as acts of violence and intolerance that lead to the beginning of chains of crimes and acts of injustice that turn into endless wars or the dominance of some groups over others. To avoid this, nowadays words such as tolerance and discrimination against are

central issues in international organizations that promote human rights and equality. Also, the responsibility of every nation to make its inhabitants aware of their history is crucial, since in many cases it should be taken as an example to avoid subsequent wars and bloodshed.

Finally, and related to the previous paragraphs, Claude Lévi-Strauss mentions the need to adjust our focus so that we can perceive other cultures in a way that allows us to accept that they are different, and to recognize that every culture has contributed to the evolution of human kind. Therefore, it is important to be able to identify which are the achievements that other cultures have shared, in one way or another, with the rest of the world to finally realise that every society depends on the skills and abilities of other groups. Also, it is vital to admit that the contact among cultures enriches them and that this is something that should take place gradually and in harmony, which means it should not be the result of imposing the practices, customs, etc. of a culture upon another one.

Reflection on the class

At the beginning, the class seemed to be really different from what it had been in previous semesters: it appeared to be better structured and offered new objectives, which sounded interesting and worth taking it. Since the subject is called “British Cultural Studies”, the first thing that was discussed was the concept of culture. Therefore, some author’s ideas about this were presented to us and we continued working on it and talking about cultural dimensions, etc. Then, there was included a reading material about culture, where the ideas of Franz Boas, Claude Lévi-Strauss and other authors are offered in order to see different perspectives on this concept. And although having read and analysed concepts and ideas about culture has made things clearer to avoid being really subjective when facing the realities of other societies, I consider that probably we have spent enough time discussing about this and therefore we should go on. I say this because I looked at the content we should cover and it seems like if there would not be enough time for all the topics it presents.

In general, I can say that I have taken advantage of the classes, I have read, analyzed and searched for extra information that can give me a clearer and bigger picture of culture and how complex this is, and that is what the rest of the class has been doing as well. This is something that can be seen when we participate, even though we do not fight with one another so that we can have a chance to express our opinions. It is just, from my personal point of view, that some parts of every discussion appeal more to us and there is when we participate. It is also important to mention that when any of us has shared his or her view, there appear connections between what we have been analysing and our cultural reality and that of other countries.

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Prof. Geert Hofstede, Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University.

Social systems have always been a relevant topic to explore; since the first existence of societal groups at the beginning of times when diverse groups of citizens were characterized by their own rituals, ways of life, life styles etc. Those first habitants were constantly on conflict because of their different cultures and at any time they met up by accident a calamity always occurred. Cultural differences since the beginning have been a twinge that individuals have not been able to work out.

Even cultural differences are necessary and are a significant piece on human beings growth; those divergences have caused many catastrophes, at low or high levels but they have been for ever and a day a point for discussion. Regrettably, Culture being such an essential component for individuals instead of making differences a way to survive through boundaries what causes is more dissimilarities that make a deep breach inside societies .

Claude-Lévi Strauss→ ... "Different cultures follow different progress paths. But progresses in distinctive areas have only a relative meaning to our own way of life. Thus, cultures that have contributed and affected our cumulative civilization will seem to have made more progress. We consider others

stationary because we can not measure their line of development in terms of the criterion of our own culture"... Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Since my own view I found Lévi-Strauss perceptions accurate and understandable, his researches and points of view state full sense theories found relevant from my standpoint; anyhow his theories are based on another grate researcher and father of the anthropological study of culture, Franz Boas. Lévi-Strauss took his theories and researches beyond.

Lévi-Strauss stated that an inability to recognize actual interests of a given society can give us a forged idea of immobility, mistaken points of view as seeing a society behind in constant evolution of **technology** as underdeveloped or primitive. This could be exactly the contrary: ... "Different perspectives will give different cultures dominance in diverse aspects of human progress"... Lévi-Strauss named lots of examples of his theories such as India as possessing the world's most elaborate and philosophical and religious system or the sophistications of the Pre-colombian cultures of America such as the Maya, the Incan and the Toltec which are just beginning to unravel.

He stated that any culture have its own level of growth but used or taken to different ways; if for example Chinese would not discovered the gunpowder many things and cultures could not have taken advantage of this source and their power probably would be different; Chinese just used it for fireworks. Another example could be the pre-colombian Mexican culture with the wheel used just to make toys. Those inventions has absolutely left remarkable changes in rise of cultures just that those were used for different purposes.

Each culture has taken something from another one with variations or relevancies on their rise culture some have made important changes and advances and some other as Lévi-Strauss argued are on a lower level of *sophistication*. Sometimes these cultures just come together and become one with higher potentials. This theory was absolutely interesting for me because his arguments state that all civilizations state on a lineal succession of development but some of them are staged higher than others depending on

many implications in each culture.

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another... the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to the environment.”
(Hofstede 1980-2009)

Culture during decades has had different perspective and meanings, as time passed by and after many studies developed a clearer concept of what is culture shows up. The first researchers and the fathers of this concepts have been studied to a certain extent during the reading of texts in which lots of relevant topics and theories have increased our knowledge of how we perceive other cultures and how others perceive ours. Those reviews have made a pertinent influence during our studies because opened main concepts on our studies which probably we have never thought about.

From these classes we can amass notions as that cultural perception is emphasized on the multiple conceptions of cultural value dimensions; other concepts as that every culture has a lineal succession of development and that those suffer changes in evolution which situate them on higher or lower stages. Another important one refers to the concept that every culture is influenced by another one and that some ways of life are borrowed and depends on dissimilar factors to stage higher than others.

Annex 3

Reflections based on the questionnaire

1. What aims have you set for this course?

I have found different aspects and definitions upon culture, I have been involved in some authors' discussions, giving my opinion and point of view about a specific topic. I have been able to participate and discover the most important aspects of the copies.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

I have read everything related to class, I have tried to make my own knowledge apart from what we discuss in class.

3. What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

Topics related to new and some society issues. I think they are difficult to deal with because it is not a common country you talk about, even when you are studying English, it must be more important.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

Organizing the time for studying, forgetting the wasting of time.

5. How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

It is the interaction among different kind of cultures, according to their customs, thoughts, feelings, way of life, opinions, political status, etc.

6. What elements and skills does intercultural communication include?

Improve communication, expose natural cultural diversity, respect each culture, understand the differences, know other cultures, interaction, etc

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I am really bad at talking and listening to long discussions , I prefer to explain my point of view and opinions through reading and writing.

1. What aims have you set for this course?

One of my aims in this course is to comprehend in a deeper what British culture means. I am not only referring in their beliefs or customs; but also in those things that are behind their way of life.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

In order to reach my aims, I am reading all the material and doing all the work that is assigned. I am also reading other authors that I consider interesting like the work of Derek Macghee, who does not only talk about the positive but also the negative aspects of the British culture.

3. What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

Some readings have been kind of difficult to comprehend because they are more complex like Claude Lèvi-Strauss' work; besides, some topics also demand research in order to get a better comprehension.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

I basically follow the same schedule everyday which is to study not only in my free time at home, but also at the university during breaks; I try to read and study more because I think it is necessary to keep me in advanced.

5. How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

Inter-cultural communication is for me those tools that we can use at the moment of interact with foreign speakers. Here we can take into account some words said by Geert Hofstede "*Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.*" it

means that some customs can be seen as a lack of respect or can be misunderstood, due to the fact that the gaps between some cultures are very big.

6. What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

The skills that inter-cultural communication involved are the regular ones that we use everyday; writing, reading, listening but taking into account in to not make any kind of judgement. Ant to be sure that we under understand what the other person is trying to say.

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

The skill in which I consider I am very strong is at listening, because, since I was very young I practised it very much therefore, listening it is not problematic for me. On the other hand, writing had always being my weaknesses and that is why I am working very much in order to improve it .

- What aims have you set for this course?

For this course my purpose is to analyse and understand the different definitions of culture the teacher gives us and the ones we have found. The idea is to examine carefully what we see and learn in class to be able to give our own definition of culture. It is also my purpose to know UK's culture in order to differentiate it from Colombian culture.

- What are you doing to reach your aims?

To achieve this purposes I am paying close attention to class, not only to the teacher but also to my classmates. I am jotting down and reading the assigned material to understand what the teacher is saying and explainnig in order to have arguments to support my ideas.

- What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

Culture_in general terms is a very complex and extensive topic which has to be studied in a very careful way. British culture is for me one of the most interesting and attractive topics, I personally think the most difficult aspect related to the subject is to understand the texts and to have the exact meaning of what the essence of British Cultural studies is.

- How do you improve your working habits?

The first thing is to read and understand the material we are working with. Then, to do all the reflections we are asked to and finally to look for extra information in the internet to make my work easier and understandable.

- How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

For me Intercultural Communication is the study of different cultures behavior; it is the way to analyse how people from different places and cultures behave and react in similar situations.

- What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

The elements that it includes are:

1. The analysis of different cultures behavior.
2. The capacity to understand and differentiate one culture from another.
3. The ability to realize the real world that surround them.

- What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I can differentiate and understand the differences between cultures, I can realize that each culture has its own beliefs but more than that, I respect their thoughts and the different ways to act or react when facing some aspects of life. I think I have to improve the element that talks about analysing their different behaviors, I think I have to go deeper, to look for more information and to have enough and good arguments to support my ideas.

-

1. What aims have you set for this course?

During the whole British Cultural Studies course I hope to obtain a broad knowledge about some aspects that British Culture involves such as politics, history, geography, fauna, flora, literature, music and so on. Also I expect to express my ideas about any particular topic discussed in the class either in a

written or an orally form. Finally, I would really want to state my personal opinion about any aspect of a different culture keeping a critical thinking.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

With the purpose to achieve those aims stated previously; I compromise to be more interested in some issues that are more complex for me to assimilate them finding out extra information about any suggested topic in class to have a clearer idea of it.

3. What aspects of British Cultural studies are difficult for you?

In general when you study a different culture from yours the majority of aspects that involve it, result a little more complex to understand because you belong to another one, so it means that you do not know correctly everything about certain culture. For that reason, although I find some unfamiliar topics about this culture, I consider that one of the most problematic ones to deal with are all the aspects related to politics and history.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

There are several ways that I can implement to improve my working habits. One of them might be for instance to find out extra information about any particular topic suggested by the professor in order to have more background that help me to support my point of view about the topic that is proposed in class encouraging the use of a critical thinking.

5. How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I consider that Intercultural Communication refers all the aspects that distinguish between one to another culture. This concept also shows how people from different countries can handle with all distinctions.

6. What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

Within the elements that Intercultural Communication includes, it is observable the ability that each person from a different country has to tolerate and respect the different interests, points of view, beliefs, thoughts, life styles and so on from the others when they interact each other.

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I think that I can tolerate all those kinds of different life styles and points of view from other cultures. However, I consider that the fact of being part of a culture sometimes it can prevent to see the world from another perspective.

- What aims have you set for this course?

There are some aims that I have for this course. The first one is to be immersed in the British Cultural Studies and in the intercultural communication for understanding this culture and being able to share ideas and information about different cultures. The second one is, help me to understand everything about cultures and finally to know how people talk because it is very important to understand that because, as Dell Hymes said, there is a relationship between language and social context and communication is required in each and every aspect of our life.

- What are you doing to reach your aims?

I spend my time reading and writing about what I learn every day and everything that I learn I put in practice in my daily life. Also, I research into new topics and subjects what allows me to reach my aims.

- What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

I understand that there are cultural differences, which varies from country to country however it is not a barrier for interacting with other culture. I think that if we analyze the behaviour and beliefs of the others, it is possible to cooperate with them. The only thing that is difficult for me is to understand how the cultural differences affect us because when one thing that is considered well in our culture might be considered as bad in other culture. I realised how different cultures are when I read about Hofstede Cultural Dimensions because there are some aspects that are noticeable from one culture to another. I think that taking into account these dimensions it is easier to have a point of view.

- How do you improve your working habits?

I particularly focus my attention only in one thing and I put all my concentration in everything and I put out anything that can distract me. Also, I make a schedule because if I make it I can fulfill my tasks and an important thing is, to read for having a good point of view. Finally, keeping up my self- discipline

when I have to do something or working in complex subject.

- How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I understand that Intercultural Communication is related to Cross Cultural Communication when I can communicate with people from different cultures and different backgrounds.

- What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

I think that the most important is how people interact with people from another culture and understanding their beliefs, values, customs, and behaviour. I believe that Intercultural Communication includes to know about the history, government, and folk of a country

- What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I'm good at understanding how people behave, I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others and to tolerate other people's actions and ideas that can be different from my own or my point of view. Also, I am flexible and able to adjust to other cultural ideas. For me, it is easy to adapt and to accept values, beliefs and lifestyles. Maybe I want to improve my confidence and trying to be less afraid of making mistakes.

1. What aims have you set for this course?

Since the very beginning, just by looking at the name of this subject, I was preparing myself to go through history lessons about England and everything related to its culture. So, the initial and unique aim I had for this class was just having the chance of assisting to a kind of a history class in which I were able to grasp and get the picture of what British culture is to better understand it.

Nowadays, I can tell that I regret being so wrong for having such a perspective at the beginning, and that I feel really glad of having changed so. Now my current and only aim has been accomplished: To widen my vision of what a culture is, in order to become a more reflexive, understanding, tolerant and respectful person, and consequently, to be better prepared when having a look, analyzing, and sharing experiences in different places with people of different cultures.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

Making an effort to frequently get in touch with the worldwide reality, and getting as much information I can, looking forward to learn a little about other cultures, even (especially) about my culture, because I firmly believe that

nobody can dare pretending knowing neither understanding other cultures without even knowing the culture each one makes part of. These days, having the chance of surfing through web sites and having access to international channels at home, make this kind of cultural awareness task something easier to accomplish and I'm taking that into advantage. Notwithstanding, I'm really conscious about the mere fact that getting involved with people's live beyond the boundaries of my country and having a look to other cultures is not enough, as it just constitutes an input of the information we need to finally achieve the most significant part of it: Making a reflection upon the current undeniable worldwide reality and realizing that it's completely alien to us

3. What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

Definitely, the thing I find the hardest to do, is having to memorize names of people, places and dates, as my capacity to memorize that sort of information (and almost anything) has always been very limited. Regardless I have never felt obliged, neither put under pressure by anyone for doing so, it makes me feel somehow "disabled" compared with my classmates, who seem to easily keep in mind that sort of information. I don't have any trouble when it comes to analyze and to understand the readings assigned for this class. As a matter in fact, I think I'm keen on it, so I enjoy doing so; though, when it comes to learn names and specific information by heart (as it is simply necessary), I just have to admit that, personally, it's not my thing.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

I try to improve my working habits by resorting to any single thing which constitutes a useful tool for me: websites, journals, original materials, even my free time, everything I have at the reach of my hand, but specially, by making a superhuman effort (for a person my age) to become a better administrator of my time, organizing my priorities in the best way I can, and the most important fact, by making associations and applying what I learn to my daily life, to avoid finding everything I learn senseless, aimless, and consequently also boring to me.

5. How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I see Intercultural Communication in a very funny way, which I would like to illustrate through the following analogy:

If the world were a big house in which a very different group of people were living together as a family, a family in which all can dance and talk with each other, because they're people who don't even care about what music they like, what clothes they're are wearing, how they look, people who just care about sharing time with someone different from them but without stop being themselves neither forcing the other people to behave the way they want, so they can manage to understand and respect each other to leave peacefully in the same place. That's intercultural communication for me:

A “**conversation**” among the cultures all around the world, a universal choir, in which regardless every single person has a different voice, they respect, try to understand and appreciate those differences, helping each singer to keep on performing his role, because they know that choir wouldn’t sing beautiful polyphonic melodies if their voices were all the same.

6. What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

There are several skills, but personally, I think that definitely the most important one among the ones which are necessary to get the best of a real intercultural communication is being a truly open minded person, as it provides yourself indispensable values such as tolerance and comprehension (among others).

7. What skills are you good at?

As I have always loved reading, I guess it has helped me to develop my writing skills; and as I was born into a family in which every single person is good at music and plays at list an instrument, I think my ear is more trained, developed and sensitive than average people, something which has been really useful when it comes to understand what I listen to something in other languages, and also when it comes to improve my pronunciation. Anyhow, I know that staying still without wanting to refine and increasing what you already know is the ruin of any person, no matter how smart and good you are at what you do, there’s always something that you can improve (not to say everything).

- What aims have you set for this course?

In this course I want to try to understand the principal aspects of the British Culture, its main characteristics, its complexity and the way British people behave. I wish to learn more about its socio-economic system and its government context. Finally, I hope to be able to make a comparison between my culture (Colombia) and this culture, with the objective to establish clear differences and similarities among them. For me, it is important to acquire a background about this culture with the objective to enrich my knowledge.

- What are you doing to reach your aims?

With the purpose to reach these aims I am reading and looking for texts and online information that provide me with excellent sources that help me to understand this culture that is still unknown in some aspects for me. Another way to reach my aims is coming to classes and paying attention to the professor explanations and to the readings assigned by her. Her orientation is important to obtain good results.

- What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

An aspect that was difficult for me at the beginning was trying to understand the concepts given by some authors about culture; sometimes due to the vocabulary presented by them. To make clear that some ideas could be understood in a different way depending of the country; some aspects that for us are simple for another culture could represent an insult.

- How do you improve your working habits?

I improve my working habits maintaining a basic routine, with discipline, being in contact with readings about the topics. Another way to improve my working habits is correcting my mistakes and failures.

- How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I think that Intercultural Communication is when we are able to exchange our ideas with a person or with a group of people from a different culture. This communication avoids misunderstandings and confusions between countries.

- What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

I consider that elements of the Intercultural Communication are related to the understanding of the language, the respect for the other's person opinion or ideas, the mutual comprehension. Every single act of communication must have an objective, a clear message; in this case a feedback is good to know if the ideas or concepts were assimilated.

- What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I am good at listening people, understanding their problems, proposing solutions. I can improve my patience in front of people that talks a lot without a clear purpose or idea. Another important aspect I consider that I can improve or enlarge is my vocabulary.

What aims have you set for this course?

First of all, I wanted to learn as much as possible. In order to do this I was determined to carry out every assigned task. I was also determined to listen and try to take advantage of all the information the Professor would provide me. I was prepared to read all the material related to our subject matter.

What are you doing to reach your aims?

Well, I have sent all the assigned reflections and I also made a presentation about Franz Boas' thoughts on the topic of culture. I always pay attention to the Professor when she is talking about the British culture or even her own culture. I'm trying not to be an irresponsible person, so I do as much as I can.

What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

It is difficult for me to make comparisons between something of the British culture with something of my own culture because to do a comparison I consider important to understand and share the way of thinking of both subjects I'm comparing, but as I haven't been to Great Britain I can't understand many of the things they do or the behavior they have. I know that I can get information from the internet but for me sometimes it's not enough.

How do you improve your working habits?

I think the way we are working in this subject have helped me to be a little bit more autonomous. I think it is a great idea to make reflections on the readings we make because in that way we can say what we think of the reading. I think these reflections really encourage students to read the materials. This subject has helped me to improve the way I write my opinions about others' thoughts.

How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I understand intercultural communication just in the way we are working in this subject; studying the culture of a different country (in our case Great Britain) and trying to understand and perceive the way they behave and think.

What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

I think it is crucial to understand the nature of racial, ethnic and cultural differences between your own culture and the one you are studying. I consider important to be respectful and tolerant with the culture you are studying. It is also relevant that you are open-minded in order to understand or perceive the culture of other country.

What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I consider I can express my opinion very easily as long as I understand what I'm discussing. I am also very good at learning of my own mistakes; if I do something in the wrong way I really try my best to do it better later. On the other

hand, I think I'm not very good at writing essays; I need a lot of time when I try to write a paper, so this is maybe what I should improve.

1. What aims have you set for this course?

My principal aim was try to understand the British Culture on important aspects that embodies the word culture like religion, education and sociology. Although we have studied significant authors who defined what culture is, I feel that we spent much time studying those writers. To be honest we should have covered more topics on British Culture. However I can say that now that I have an academic knowledge of what culture is.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

To reach my aims I try to do all my British cultural assignments following the steps given by the professor and the two class monitors. In addition I like to look for information on internet and I enjoy reading academic articles which involve British Culture.

3. What aspects of British cultural studies are difficult for you?

At the beginning of the course it was difficult to me understand what the academics authors say about culture because the complex vocabulary. And also it was difficult to me understand other cultures and maybe tolerate them but, thanks to the authors now I can appreciate different ways of life.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

Reading and writing more, spending a lot of time doing my assignments and the most important issue this subject let me be autonomous with my learning. Although it is a slow process I realize that I can use those working habits to improve my grades on other subjects.

5. How do you understand Intercultural communication?

I think that intercultural communication is the way of people from different cultures interact and communicate between them. Sometimes we share customs with other cultures and we do not recognize those things because we are reluctant to accept and to know new things.

6. What elements and skills does intercultural communication include?

It includes listening without judging, repeating what you understand, confirm meanings, give suggestions and acknowledge a mutual understanding. Knowing those skills let us avoid the misunderstandings when we interact and communicate with people from others cultures.

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I think that I am good at listening without judging and confirm meanings because I enjoy listening what the other people have to say and I am trying to be tolerant with other's opinions.

- What aims have you set for this course?

My aims are obviously to learn as much as possible about the British Culture and enrich my intercultural awareness since these two aspects are definitely very important and necessary for our job, for teaching a language.

- What are you doing to reach your aims?

Paying careful attention to the class discussion and topics and researching and reading different sources and material in order to build my opinions and reflections with proper information and arguments. By reading different sources, I can have the big picture of different cultural aspects we have analyzed, not only from the UK but from other cultures around the world, as we are all the time comparing and contrasting UK's culture, ours, North America's, Asia's, etc and in this way, I can enrich my intercultural awareness.

- What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

Well, the readings and most of all the sources I need to research in order to back up my opinions take me a lot of time (to read and to find them), so perhaps that is the difficult part; organizing my time in order to carry out my duties not only in this subject but in the others as well.

- How do you improve your working habits?

I have always been a good student, I try to keep in mind my purposes and goals in life, that's why I take university and studying very seriously and since this subject is so important for our job which is teaching a language in this evolving world, I find it exciting to work on it and do my assignments.

- How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I think it is the knowledge and understanding you should have about the different cultures in the world in order to be able to communicate with people from a different culture than yours. In order to tolerate, understand and interact

with people from another country you should know about the way they behave, communicate and perceive the world around them.

- What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

In general, a deep analysis of the diverse aspects regarding culture in each country, I mean, aspects such as religion, history, customs, politics, education, etc... It is also important to be tolerant towards other view points and to have good communication skills.

- What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I believe I'm good at writing and reading and I think I need to improve my fluency.

1. What aims have you set for this course?

My major aim for this course is to learn as much as possible about the British people, not only culture; because, at the beginning of this course, I thought that the term culture was just referring when a person is sophisticated and well-educated. Now I see that I was totally wrong; culture is more than what I can imagine. It is a complex whole, including many important things that make every person different and unique. but also I would like to learn where is geographically placed, about religions and many aspects about the country, in order to get this, I have to do all the assignments, listen carefully what the professor and my classmates are talking about and also participating in the debates.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

First I started reading about the term culture what it means and its implications in every single person, then about the authors who agree, disagree and complement many definitions about the term; later I was making some researches about what identify a person as member of his or her culture; for example, that we as Colombian people are more confident, more happy than many people around the world. I would continue making researches and reading a lot in order to learn as much as I can about cultures.

3. What aspects of British cultural studies are difficult for you?

It is difficult for me to establish some comparisons between people, for example between Colombian and British people; because I think that I have to know a person or to share some time with a person in order to establish a comparison, with what I read or what I heard about a British person I think is not enough, and I couldn't make a truly comparison.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

I think the way we are working in this subject is really good, the interaction between professor and students and reading the material have helped me to sort out some confusions about the topic that we are working in every class, also is very important the reflections because at home we can think in a deeper way and then give a reflection about the topic and also about the reflections that we made in class.

5. How do you understand intercultural communication?

I understand intercultural communication as communication between people from different cultures in a respectful way in which they can interact sharing beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts in order to achieve better understanding.

6. What elements and skills does intercultural communication include?

In think should include first of all respect for all cultures, then we have to be tolerant about the differences that we have, and that make every person and every culture unique. Also we have to be open-minded to understand and appreciate every culture.

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I think I'm good enough understanding cultures, I'm very tolerant and I'm always trying to be open-minded in order to learn more and better, but I have to accept that always is something to improve and I have to do my best effort.

1. What aims have you set for this course?

I have basically three aims for this course. The first one is try to learn more about what word culture mean, what is specifically all things are involve in it, what aspects make this word such a unique and relevant and also why culture

is defined is so many different term, the second one is learn and know about culture in British countries, all about then, look the way I can understand more about people and at the same time learn to tolerate customs. And third one to learn what authors have said about culture, their comments about it , their definitions and also relevant points of view about culture.

2. What are you doing to reach your aims?

I started reading about authors talking about culture, countries and customs; also I am really interested in making clear why we as a Colombian people is so difficult to tolerate and understand culture not only around the world, but also culture inside our community, next to us and I am reaching as well, in the journal, "Cultura y Desarrollo Humano" by german rey all the aspects that make culture be link with development. At the same time I am learning and knowing more about British culture specifically in religion part.

3. What aspects of British Studies are difficult for you?

I think that probably for me is difficult to learn that all people do not share and believe the same as I do and at the same time try to understand that culture is so far away from the concept of customs and festival, indeed it includes a lot of different meaning that I still have to learn.

4. How do you improve your working habits?

At the beginning of this course I was so confused about what culture and society means, but with the progress of this course and with the help of reading and comments in class, I do think that my perception about world, people, culture and communication have advanced, taking into account that the only view that we had of culture was the way we live separated in different countries and that is all, but now I do believe and realized that culture involve such a different and relevant aspects that make us unique and also several issues that we have not learn about living together as a one.

5. How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

I can understand Intercultural Communication as communication between people but with different linguistics and cultural backgrounds. This kind of communication must to be from people of different countries, societies and one definite goal of this communication is the exchange of knowledge across culture.

6. What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

I believe that Tolerance, intelligence and kindness is absolutely necessary to develop intercultural communication.

7. What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I think I am good enough in this Intercultural Communication just because I really love and enjoy to learn, to know and to share with other people not the same close to me, so I think I am good with this kind of communication but still I have to develop and improve my tolerance and understanding of it.

- What aims have you set for this course?

There are three main objectives I have for this class and which were set taking into account my experience with a previous subject called “English Speaking Countries”, which was not an enriching experience for me as an ELT student, and with the challenges this course presents in the way to carry out the classes and their content. One of those objectives is to learn about British societies to find out how they are established and constituted. Another objective is to try to understand how these societies behave in order to avoid wrong interpretations and judgements about them. Finally, I wanted and still want to take advantage of a course which I consider really important since it will be a key to have access to societies that are different from the one in which I am.

- What are you doing to reach your aims?

I spend time reading, analysing, comparing, researching about what we discuss in class as well as about other topics related to it since it give me more possibilities to have a better understanding and a bigger picture of British cultures.

- What aspects of British Cultural Studies are difficult for you?

To really understand how people from British countries live. That is why I have got some contacts from such places to talk about how things are there and what they can perceive from their immediate environment.

- How do you improve your working habits?

I take more time to analyse things and to look for more sources that can help me to understand what causes me some trouble. In that way, I get more ideas and can make meaningful comparisons to link what I study with my reality.

- How do you understand Intercultural Communication?

This is an exchange that takes place between or among different cultures. This implies people having contact with others that do not belong to their same background and whose norms of behaviour, customs, lifestyles, beliefs, values, etc. are different from theirs in many cases.

- What elements and skills does Intercultural Communication include?

The elements present in Intercultural Communication are the [beliefs](#), [attitudes](#), [values](#), [expectations](#), [norms](#) of [behaviour](#), customs, and ways of thinking that are part of every culture; and the skills involved are the capacity of understanding that there are differences among cultures, the ability to adaptation to other societies as well as respect and tolerance towards them.

- What skills are you good at? What can you still improve?

I know I'm able to understand that other people have a totally different background and that this brings with it a certain number of variations in most aspects of their lives. Also, I can tolerate a number of differences which are part of other cultures, what is probably what I need to improve, but I'm quite aware of the fact that I won't yield to tolerate many things because that will be against my own being.

Annex 4

Assessment checklist

<p>Writing reflects student's point of view and his engagement with the problem at hand</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Writing demonstrates understanding of and is informed by the issues discussed in reading assignments</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Writing has an adequate structure and displays a good command of grammar and vocabulary.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>