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Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence in the English Classroom to Prevent
Ethnic Bullying

Sandra Cabrejas Sanz

Tutor: Elena González-Cascos

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ABSTRACT

Within the worldwide problem of bullying, an overlooked but equally harmful issue exists -ethnic bullying. This study investigates the possibility of preventing it by teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in English lessons. Consequently, the main causes of ethnic bullying are analysed from the point of view of Intercultural Education and EFL teaching to retrieve theoretical evidence about it. Furthermore, aiming to elaborate an anti-ethnic-bullying proposal for English lessons, an already existing anti-bullying program was selected to assess its effectivity and modify it accordingly to this study's aims. The investigation revealed that students could develop positive attitudes towards foreign students following this method, but this still needs to be proven by further investigation. Additionally, a suitable didactic proposal for preventing ethnic bullying while learning English was developed, yet statistical support is needed to measure its effectiveness. Further, it shows that English teaching and bullying prevention can be combined without having to compromise.

Keywords: Anti-bullying proposal, Ethnic bullying Prevention, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Bullying in the English Classroom, Intercultural Education, Multicultural Classrooms

Dentro del problema mundial que supone el bullying, existe una cuestión ignorada pero igualmente perjudicial: el bullying étnico. Este estudio investiga cómo prevenir el bullying étnico enseñando la Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural en las clases de inglés. Por consiguiente, se analizan las causas del bullying étnico desde la Educación Intercultural y la enseñanza de inglés para obtener evidencias teóricas al respecto. Además, con el objetivo de elaborar una propuesta anti-bullying étnico para las clases de inglés, se seleccionó un programa anti-bullying ya existente para evaluar su efectividad y modificarlo de acuerdo con los objetivos de este estudio. La investigación revela que los alumnos podrían desarrollar actitudes más positivas hacia los estudiantes extranjeros usando este método, pero aún debe ser comprobado. Además, se elabora una propuesta didáctica apropiada para prevenir el acoso étnico aprendiendo inglés, pero necesita apoyo estadístico. Asimismo, se

demuestra que es posible prevenir el bullying y enseñar inglés sin tener que renunciar a una.

Palabras clave: Propuesta anti-bullying, Prevención del bullying étnico, Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural, Bullying en el aula de inglés, Educación Intercultural, Aulas multiculturales

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1. Introduction

Bullying is a major worldwide problem that, according to UNESCO'S report about bullying, affected a third of the world's children in 2018 (UNESCO, 2019). Not only due to the consequences this entails for children's mental health, but also its influence on performance and school drop-out, bullying is one of the major concerns of organizations that advocate for children's fundamental rights such as UNESCO and Save the Children. Moreover, the increasing racist tendencies spreading hate speech against immigration and the fact that race, nationality, or skin colour is the second most common reason of bullying in the world (UNESCO, 2019) causes an even more serious problem for education: ethnic bullying. For this reason, institutions such as the Council of Europe and numerous studies (Byram et al., 2002) (Sercu, 2004) (Briga, 2019) advocate that educators should receive training as cultural mediators to transmit their students the necessary tools to develop tolerant and reflective attitudes towards diversity, act as mediators in conflictive situations, and avoid stereotypes and prejudices. Although there are previous studies that open a similar field of research, such as avoiding bullying in the English class through different strategies influenced by interculturality (Jiménez & Díaz, 2018), (Férez Mora & Alderete Díez, 2017), they do not address the problems of ethnic discrimination, whose relevance today is indisputable.

This final project will follow the same perspective of those studies; hence it will aim to complement research on the integration of the intercultural dimension in the classroom. Nevertheless, it will offer a more specific focus on teaching English and its intercultural application for preventing and minimizing ethnic bullying. Besides, this research will also focus on demonstrating a theoretical relationship between ethnic bullying and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in terms of ICC being potentially beneficial for the prevention and reduction of ethnic bullying. Therefore, the first objective is to offer a well-documented investigation about this relationship in order to assist experts in the field to prove it in a practical setting. Secondly, as regards to the second objective, this consists of elaborating an innovative didactic proposal that combines the three focus of this project -

i.e., ethnic bullying prevention, ICC, and English teaching- by assessing and modifying a previous study on bullying prevention and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in a Spanish high school: Jiménez and Díaz (2018). Additionally, as a secondary aim, the possibility to maintain a successful acquisition of English skills will be explored while the focus is on ethnic bullying prevention instead of the usual content of English lessons.

Concerning the structure of the project, in the first place it is the relevance and justification of the research, which will offer an overview of the worrying state of ethnic discrimination and Intercultural Education (IE) in Spanish high schools; secondly, the theoretical framework is presented, in which concepts such as intercultural dimension, ICC and their application in language teaching will be deepened; Subsequently, it will be examined the plausibility of avoiding and reducing ethnic bullying through interculturality in the English class by contrasting findings of the outcomes of integrating ICC in foreign language teaching and those of anti-bullying strategies. Furthermore, this project will analyse the research article by Jiménez and Díaz (2018) -which aims to prevent bullying in the EFL class using Kiva Project's guidelines and given activities- to value its effectivity on bullying prevention and reduction and will propose some possible modifications to make it more effective preventing ethnic bullying. Finally, a brief conclusion will condense the key findings and estimations that have been reached through this project aiming researchers in the field to continue investigating this issue.

2. Justification and relevance of the research

Teaching in such a multicultural and diverse country as Spain, in which there are 13'8% of foreign students in Primary Education and a 10'7% in Secondary Education, has been a real challenge for teachers of all areas of knowledge (Ministerio de Educación, 2019). These educators have had to adapt their lessons to make these new students not only learn as much as their classmates but also making them feel comfortable and integrated into an environment that is not totally familiar for most of them. The main problem is that not all the teachers have the necessary training, knowledge, and means to succeed in these tasks.

In fact, according to the international report TALIS conducted in 2018, 17% of Spanish high school directors expressed that there is a general lack of teachers trained for educating in a multicultural environment; indeed, in some other regions such as La Rioja, Catalonia, and Valencian Community, that figure rose over 25%. Moreover, the report showed that 18% of the Spanish teachers recognized a growing need for receiving training on how to teach in multicultural and plurilingual classrooms (Ministerio de Educación, 2019).

It is important to consider the effects on foreign students of not providing training on multicultural education to teaching staff. For example, Etxeberría and Elosegui relate the difficulties to adapt themselves to what the Spanish system requires to the foreign students' lower school performance, lower expectations on joining higher education, and high rates of school dropout (2010). Therefore, we can argue that schools have not been able to supply the necessary means for foreign students to be entirely integrated into the system and be as successful as the native ones. Moreover, Etxeberría and Elosegui (2010) include among their recommendations for fighting inequality and discrimination in schools: "improve teaching training", "offer more resources for the education with immigrant students", "develop authentic intercultural educational programs that favour the integration and coexistence of students" (p. 259) which reassures the need for teachers specifically trained and with the necessary resources to develop and promote intercultural competences between their students.

Additionally, it is undeniable that native students also play a determinant role in creating an inclusive and enriching educational environment that can facilitate foreign students to feel comfortable and integrated into the class. However, native students' attitudes towards classmates of different races and cultures are not always friendly and respectful. Besides, it has been shown that natives are typically influenced by stereotypes and prejudices created mainly by the media -when it focuses on the negative aspects of immigration- or parents' damaging attitudes towards foreign students (Fernández et al., 2019). If this is already serious enough, the situation is even worse when these stereotypes and prejudices turn into ethnic bullying. When this occurs, foreign students have to deal

with the difficult enough task of adapting to a new place added to the rejection and humiliation by their schoolmates. Because there are no specific protocols of action in cases of ethnic bullying, schools will make the mistake of identifying these cases of ethnic discrimination as isolated and not considering them as a major problem only affecting a specific group of students.

In addition, the data collected in the last 10 years shows that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. For example, according to the PISA report in 2018: in Spain, students from migrant backgrounds are significantly more exposed to bullying than native students (Ministerio De Educación, 2019). Furthermore, according to OBERAXE (The Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia), 10.7% of victims of bullying believed that the reason why they suffered bullying was due to being born in another country, another 9.2% stated that the reason was because of the colour of their skin and, finally, 5.5% specified that it was because their ethnicity is gypsy or Romany (Ministerio de Educación, 2010). Thus, it is possible to conclude that there is a significant number of cases of discriminatory bullying regarding race and ethnicity to consider the need for a change in the Spanish educational system.

A thread of union between native and foreign students is required to solve the issue of inequality and tension in the classroom and to encourage respect, understanding and companionship and, at the same time, helping them to communicate effectively. This is where English –as it is the most spoken language in the world as L2 and considered the international language or *lingua franca*- can serve as an intercultural link in a multicultural environment. Indeed, according to Jiménez and Díaz (2018), "[students] need a language different from their mother tongue; a language such as English, which was able to generate an environment of equality in the classroom, without bullies or victims" (p. 215). In fact, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) promotes teaching foreign languages such as English to make learners develop ICC, which plays an important role in reducing stereotyping (Larzén-Östermark, 2008). For this reason, this dissertation

will examine how to avoid bullying in high schools by integrating ICC in the English Classroom.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Intercultural Dimension and Intercultural Communicative Competence

Byram argues that the main aim of the intercultural dimension is "to develop learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who can engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid stereotyping" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 9). When this intercultural dimension is applied to language teaching, learners will be able to acquire both linguistic competence and intercultural competence (Byram et al., 2002). It is necessary to highlight that Intercultural Dimension and IE are often used interchangeably by experts.

Since IE started to be key in educational research, well-known authors within this field -such as Byram and Deardorff- have struggled to find the perfect definition for intercultural competence. For this reason, Deardorff created a questionnaire in which globally recognized intercultural scholars had to select the best definition for this concept, the top-rated was "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 249). However, she added at the end of the study that definitions for this concept should be revisited to "keep them current and relevant" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 259). Based on this recommendation, the following definition -included in *Competences for Democratic Culture Living Together as Equals in Culturally Diverse Democratic Societies* by the Council of Europe- has been chosen: "Intercultural competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations" (2016, p. 10).

Therefore, it is possible to determine that, when it comes to defining this competence, both linguistic and intercultural aims need to be included, this is the reason why the best term to refer to it is "Intercultural Communicative Competence" (ICC) since it

comprises the communicative competence -a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully (British Council, n.d.)- together with the intercultural dimension. Conversely, it is usual to find in academic texts the shorter version "intercultural competence" referring to the same idea.

Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish which are the components of intercultural competence in order to understand how teachers and learners can acquire it. Byram establishes that these components are knowledge, skills, and attitudes, all complemented by the individuals' values attained as members of social groups (Byram et al., 2002). He describes the intercultural attitudes as the foundation of this competence and calls them *savoir être*. These attitudes imply "a willingness to relativise one's own values, beliefs and behaviours" and are summarized in the following characteristics: "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram et al., 2002, pp. 12-13). The second component is "knowledge" or as appears in Byram's classification *savoirs*, this is described as "knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). The next components are "skills" and he distinguishes between two types: skills of interpreting and relating or *savoir comprendre* -that consists of the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13)- and skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) -which represents the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction*"* (p. 13). Both skills are necessary to predict potential misunderstandings and to find a way to resolve them. Finally, the last necessary component to be interculturally competent is the "critical cultural awareness" or *savoir s'engager* which is the "ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13).

Additionally, it is also essential to know in which contexts the IC can be developed, in this case, Byram creates a general framework that allows the acquisition of this competence through teaching and learning in both the classroom and fieldwork and through independent learning (Byram, 1997).

3.2 Discriminatory Bullying

Cambridge Dictionary defines discrimination as "treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin colour, sex, sexuality, etc." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a). It is important to highlight the phrase "in a worse way" since that is the distinction between "positive discrimination" –"the act of giving advantage to those groups in society that are often treated unfairly because of their race, sex, etc" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-c), such as offering free remedial classes to foreign students who do not know the language of the country they are in- and negative discrimination, that is the one in which we are going to focus on this project. Negative discrimination occurs when the difference in treatment discourages certain oppressed groups (modified from Elame, 2013, p. 26). However, it is not necessary to remark every time that it is negative since according to Elame (2013 "Generally, when one talks about ''discrimination'', it refers to negative discrimination, because it is legally relevant." (p. 27)

Regarding the definition of bullying, this one written by the recognized expert on bullying Olweus (1993) was chosen as the best one to define this term: "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 17). Moreover, Olweus determines three criteria that this behaviour must comply with: firstly, being aggressive or harmdoing; secondly, being recurrent; and thirdly, there should be an imbalance in strength between the bully/bullies and the victim(s) (Olweus, 1993)

Taking into consideration both definitions, we can say discriminatory bullying "a form of abuse and victimization linked to disability, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religion that occurs repeatedly in the course of time by one or more companions" (Olweus, as rephrased in Elame, 2013, p. 5). As it can be seen in the definition, it can be linked to different features of the victim or victims, in fact, each feature constitutes a different type of discriminatory bullying. For example, if the bullying is due to sexual orientation, we will be talking about homophobic bullying. Besides, if the discrimination is regarding ethnic origin, we are dealing with ethnic bullying -which we will be focusing on in this study.

3.3 Ethnic Bullying

Ethnic Bullying or also called "Ethnobullying" goes unnoticed most of the times since it does not usually involve physical aggression. On the contrary, it is more indirect and verbal -involving insults and bad words affronting to their ethnic, humiliations, exclusions, etc.- and that is why it can be considered more "subtle" than other kinds of bullying (Elame, 2013)

Additionally, Elame (2013) points out a serious problem of verbal racism in schools throughout Europe and warns that if this behaviour is repeated frequently on the same person, it can become a case of ethnic bullying. For this reason, he highlights the importance of guaranteeing an education that promotes equitable communication not only among students but also among teaching staff and management team and emphasises that verbal bullying can "produce an immense psychological damage" (p. 35) on the victims.

4. Method

The methodology of this dissertation has been divided into two subsections since each of the research questions needs different procedures to be answered. First, it will be described what procedures will be followed to determine if IE can be employed in the classroom as means to avoid ethnic bullying between students. Then, the second section, which focuses on the second objective, will give an account of the procedure for selecting the studies, valuing the strategies' effectiveness in their context and its adequacy and

flexibility for the aim of this study. Additionally, if possible, modifications of these strategies will be suggested so they can be applied for avoiding ethnic bullying.

4.1 Theoretical evidence

The lack of expert research on this issue, especially empirical research, seriously hinders proving its effectiveness. Moreover, the lack of means for performing empirical research leads to limiting ourselves to a theoretical analysis of experts' findings. For this reason, four issues closely related to ethnic bullying -i.e., Racist language and verbal violence, stereotypes and prejudices, lack of social cohesion and low empathy- have been selected to explore their origin, causes and consequences -especially on immigrant students. Furthermore, it will also explain why and how IE can be beneficial to tackle these issues. Additionally, some strategies that can be performed in the English Classroom will be explored to deal with them at the same time other English skills are promoted.

4.2 Assessing and modifying Jiménez and Díaz's study (2018)

Firstly, the study under analysis will be introduced through an explanation of the authors' aims and the anti-bullying programs and EFL theories on which they base their procedures to create their didactic proposal for bullying prevention. Moreover, the program's effectiveness will be valued by examining the percentages of bullying reduction and educators' perspectives on the classroom atmosphere before and after the sessions. Furthermore, it will be evaluated whether this study is able or not to stop ethnic bullying and it will be explained why it is necessary to modify the sessions so they can be advantageous for ethnic bullying prevention and reduction. Finally, each of the four sessions will be presented in terms of aims and activities; besides, the possible modifications for them will be proposed mainly following the judgments made in the theoretical evidence regarding ethnic-bullying-prevention procedures using IE.

5. Theoretical evidence

According to the CEFR, IE was particularly created to "fight all the new forms of racism and xenophobia generated by these phenomena [internal divisions within a society]" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 64). In addition, IE works towards the 'active deconstruction' of ethnocentric behaviour by facing prejudices and stereotypes and providing tools that contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity between ethnic, social, and cultural groups (Huber et al., 2012). Due to all these reasons, it was selected in this study as a possible method to prevent ethnic bullying in multicultural and multilingual educational such as English classrooms in Spain. Below, four determinant concepts for ethnic bullying are going to be analysed in order to demonstrate that it is possible to solve these problems through an integration of IE in the EFL classroom so students can become interculturally competent and be aware of behaviours negatively related to ethnic bullying.

5.1 Racist language and verbal violence

As it has been mentioned in the theoretical framework, ethical bullying is more verbal than physical since it is normally perpetrated through insults and threats (Elame, 2013). However, even if occasional episodes of racist language are not considered bullying, they can affect the self-esteem of foreign students, so this behaviour should not be underestimated. In the next paragraphs, the possible causes of the use of racist language and verbal violence will be explored as well as the response of IE to this issue.

It is widely known that young students are highly influenced by media, especially series and movies. Nonetheless, this can lead to a very damaging problem if they try to imitate some racist behaviours present in them. For example, Abad Villamor and Fernández Romero, who analysed racist attitudes in two famous Spanish series -i.e., *Aída* and *La que se Avecina*-, have detected a great use of discriminatory language regarding race, nationality, religion, and culture in them (2018). In addition, Abad Villamor stated that the most influential aspect of television series in teenager's personality building process is the

appropriation of the language that is used in them. In fact, in the class analysed in Abad Villamor's study, Spanish adolescents use expressions from the Spanish series mentioned above daily and even consider this habit part of their identity as a group (2012). For this reason, in the classes of any subject, expressions acquired in these contexts, which may be offensive, should be considered very seriously before it becomes a case of verbal violence and bullying "verbal racism, which is repeated at school towards the same person, can produce bullying" (Elame, 2013, p. 34).

This is where the role of IE comes in, since the Council of Europe considers that "it is important to develop pupils' capacity for reflective verbal expression about otherness" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 65) and advises holding discussions between students and teachers in classes to "negotiate" the use of respectful language regarding otherness (Beacco et al., 2016). Furthermore, it should also be considered including in those debates the issue of racist vocabulary in media so students learn to differentiate between fiction -in this case, parody- and reality, as well as the consequences of this behaviour towards oppressed communities. When it comes to a foreign language class, they mention that these discussions may be held in the language studied, that in this case, it would be English. By doing this, not only could the use of verbal violence among students be solved -and therefore, preventing a potential ethnic bullying episode- but they would also gain communicative skills in English.

5.2 Stereotypes and prejudices

Stereotypes and prejudices play an important role in the lives of immigrant students not only since these experiences seriously affect their self-esteem (Fernández et al., 2019) and hamper their full integration (Bergamaschi, 2013), but also because they "may also lead to aggression, bullying or physical or verbal assaults on the immigrant child" (Elame, 2013, p. 36). Further, according to Houghton et al. (2013), "Ethnic stereotypes are frequently highly rude, abusive and used deliberately to humiliate people (stereotyping people apply so-called "humiliation strategy")" (p. 8). Moreover, in the 2017 report-survey on racism in Spain, they

pointed out that the two main factors of rejection perceived by immigrant students are racial prejudices and poverty -which, it is a widely known racial stereotype towards non-Caucasic immigrants. Therefore, it can be stated that the presence of stereotypes and prejudices in educational settings can lead to nonacceptance and ethnic bullying.

Further, it is important to know how students acquire these stereotypes and prejudices about immigrant students. Some authors attribute them to group characteristics, educational institutions, and economic and political circumstances (Ward et al., 2009). On the other hand, other authors blame the means of communication as the cause of the arousal of stereotypes and prejudices since they tend to focus on the negative aspects of immigration (Fernández et al., 2019). In fact, according to Martínez Lirola and Olmos Alcaraz, a substantial percentage of news about immigrant minors deal with youth gangs, problems caused by immigrant unaccompanied minors (called "menas" in Spain) (2015). If students are continually exposed to these kinds of attitudes and especially if these are reinforced by family and friends, they can develop stereotypical ideas such as that immigrants are violent, difficult, ungrateful, and troublesome. That is why, experts on violence prevention and ethnic and racial identity such as Peguero and Williams (2011) claim that "school faculty and staff should implement programs that disrupt racial and ethnic stereotypes for their students" (p. 559). Therefore, it is possible to confirm that it is the responsibility of schools to fight against stereotypes and prejudices through different approaches.

One of the approaches to prevent and reduce stereotyping in educational settings is the integration of IE and dialogue (Council of Europe, 2016). As it was explained in the theoretical framework, one of the components involved in the acquisition of ICC, the *savoir etre* or "intercultural attitudes", deals with preparing learners to "suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others." (Byram et al., 1997, p. 34), which can be understood as leaving aside one's own preconceived and acquired ideas -especially negative ones, such as prejudices- about a community and being opened to seeing them through their eyes. For example, students that think it is dangerous to play with immigrants because they have been warned that

immigrants are violent would learn why that is an unfair generalization; besides, they would be able to see the consequences of this behaviour on the discriminated ones: isolation, stigmatization, non-acceptance, etc. Furthermore, another component is "knowledge" or *savoir*, which aims to increase students' knowledge of different social groups and customs in their country and elsewhere. This is important for reducing stereotypes since they would learn about different cultures in a more objective way than what they can hear "in processes of informal socialisation, within the family or in the media, for example" (Byram et al., 1997, p. 36). Furthermore, in order to promote cultural learning in the English classroom, Mathieson suggests -and applies successfully in a lesson- an exercise in which students have to find information about countries they might have negative stereotypes about in order to give a brief presentation (2005). By doing this, students will not only develop openness to learn about other cultures but will also enhance their cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as beneficial communication skills in English.

Moreover, IE when applied to a multicultural environment, attempts to make students aware of why the information they received is sometimes fragmented or distorted and how this affects the development of prejudices (Huber et al., 2012). The approach that IE promotes to deal with stereotyping in multicultural environments is not a repressive one - for example, saying that stereotypes are negative and shouldn't be used- (Huber et al., 2012) but a discursive one: "cultural stereotypes can be used as a springboard for class discussion and activities" (Mathieson, 2015, p. 15). Therefore, the solution to deal with stereotypes and prejudices correctly in a classroom is through communication: debates, peer-to-peer discussions, presentations, etc. that, as in the case of verbal violence, must be performed in English in order to improve their communicative skills.

5.3 Lack of social cohesion

Springer et al. (2016) define school social cohesion, as:

> How well students get along with each other and their teachers; how well teachers support students; and a general climate of caring, respectful and supportive relationships, is a key dimension of school-level constructs that include school climate, school context, and school-as-community (p. 38)

Therefore, it can be confirmed that this attribute is key for maintaining healthy relationships between all the members of a school, including those who could belong to potentially oppressed communities; and it cannot be denied that a healthy environment in school can be determinant to avoid bullying, especially since "Lack of cohesion may be reflected in conflict, sometimes violent conflict." (Reitz and Banerjee, 2009, p. 17). This is also confirmed by Springer (2015), who confirms that "students engage in less school misconduct and risk behaviour when schools are organized as caring school communities" (p. 38). Moreover, Elame (2013) mentions that "Active citizenship, social cohesion and the promotion of equality require a significant educational investment to stop the acts of discriminatory bullying" (p. 373), which although might be worrisome due to economic reasons, it is a piece of evidence of that discriminatory bullying can be solved through promoting this feature in our schools.

Regarding the causes that can affect social cohesion, Reitz and Banerjee claim that inequality, as a consequence of diversity within a group, can make individuals feel less integrated and unfairly treated (2009); and Chiong and Menzies mentions that socio-economic disadvantage hampers the sense of cohesiveness even in the less oppressed areas (2016).

Fortunately, IE, which aims "to build understanding, tolerance and social cohesion" (Abu-Nimer & Smith, 2016, p. 395), has been proven effective in several studies -as, for example, in Grimminger-Seidensticker and Möhwald (2020)- to gain social cohesion in educational settings and qualified as "extremely important for [...] enhancing the cohesion of democratic societies" by the Council of Europe and Barrett (2016, p. 10).

Regarding the ways students in a multicultural classroom can acquire social cohesion, making use of body language to teach was proven the most effective strategy for students who have language difficulties due to being foreign since it had a "strong inclusion effect" (Fotopoulou et al., 2019, p. 11). The way that can be applied to the English classroom could be by explaining those gestures that change from one culture to another or talking about those that are taboo in some cultures. Additionally, the teacher can ask the native students in the class to show foreigners the most useful gestures they know and ask them about the ones in their culture -this can be in a more interactive and dynamic way if they are asked to mingle. Thus, by asking students to use body language at the same time they socialize with different people in the class -especially with those from a different ethnicity- they will be overcoming some language and cultural barriers that will improve social cohesion and intercultural awareness in the classroom, necessary competences for avoiding ethnic bullying.

Additionally, the second method that Fotopoulou et al. tried in their study that also gave good results was to encourage students to share emotions in the classroom (2019). This is particularly good for conflictive situations among pupils, such as after an episode of racist verbal or physical violence. Likewise, if these confessions are made in English, this can be useful for helping them to enrich their vocabulary regarding emotions and encourage them to express what they feel in a different language than their mother tongue. Furthermore, creating a talking circle while they make their confessions can help them to feel more comfortable since they will be looking at each other at the same level, which will produce a feeling of equality and sense of a group together with more benefits for the group "they allow children to see their community as a place of significance, a place of positive change and a place where their voices are heard" (Bintliff, 2014). On the other hand, as opposed to the latter method, this activity is less appropriate for those who have language difficulties since only talking is involved.

5.3 Low Empathy

According to Cambridge Dictionary, empathy is "the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b). Additionally, it has been confirmed that "the presence of empathy facilitates prosocial behaviour and inhibits anti-social behaviour" (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006, p. 540). Therefore, just by reading this information, it is possible to say that this attitude can be beneficial to improve the understanding and sympathy between natives and immigrants in a multicultural classroom and, consequently, to avoid conflicts provoked by anti-social behaviour and racism like ethnic bullying. In fact, the terms *"Ethnocultural empathy"* -which refers to the "empathy directed toward people from racial and ethnic cultural groups who are different from one's own ethnocultural group" (Wang et al., 2003, p. 221)- and *"intercultural empathy"* - are more specific for the aim of this section since it focuses on the ethnic and cultural aspects of empathy. However, due to the scarce number of studies about them, it has been preferred to research about "empathy" instead.

Several studies have hypothesized about the relationship between low empathy and bullying (Smith & Thompson, 2017) (Olweus, 1991) (Hare, 1999) saying, for example, that "Children who bully others may be less empathetic to the feelings of others, such as potential victims" (Smith & Thompson, 2017, Chapter 1). Nevertheless, the ones that showed a statistical correlation between these two attitudes were Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) since they demonstrated that male and female bullies had lower levels of empathy than those who did not. Therefore, it is important to consider the necessity to make our students more empathetic with their classmates -especially with those from other cultures, since, due to having less things in common, it will be harder for natives to "put in their shoes"- in order to avoid serious conflicts in the classroom.

However, as in the other cases, IE can also be beneficial for enhancing empathy among students and teachers since ICC consists of an *"affective component"* that makes people more empathetic and tolerant (Ballesteros Moscosio & Fontecha Blanco, 2019).

Furthermore, empathy is also one of the desired internal outcomes of IE, as Krajewski states (2011); besides, it can be acquired by the acquisition of the attitudes (respect, openness, curiosity, etc.) knowledge (cultural self-awareness and deep cultural knowledge) and skills involved in IE (Deardorff, 2006). Thus, by teaching and information about their own and other cultures, besides promoting intercultural attitudes and skills, students can become more empathetic with people from other ethnicities and, consequently, less prone to be offensive and violent with them -which can result in ethnic bullying. Besides, it is also important to foster student's curiosity about otherness so they "can go beyond personal boundaries and try to learn about the experiences of people who are different from their own, so as to know others with an empathic eye" (Zhu, 2011, p. 117) which will prevent cultural conflicts and enhance their openness and respect.

As regards the application of intercultural activities that can foster the acquisition of empathy in the English classroom, reading and discussing ethnic literature has been the chosen one. Many experts have already proven the innumerable benefits of using literature in the EFL classroom (Kuru Gönen, 2018) (Tevdovska, 2016) (Karap, 2017), one of them is the possibility to improve student's social skills such as empathy (Achiri and Hadjeris, 2016). Nonetheless, several problems can arise from the inclusion of extra readings as homework in the English lessons, since students might allege that they have no time to read at home or teachers can be reluctant to include activities in their teaching plans that are not contained in the course's curriculum. A solution can be substituting one of the reading tasks proposed by the textbook for a piece of literature -a poem, an extract of a novel or short story, a play, etc.- that deals with any kind of ethnic discrimination. This text may be an authentic text or an adapted one depending on the student's level, but this must be comprehensible input written in English in order to develop their reading skills while acquiring cultural knowledge. Moreover, tasks of discussion and reflection upon the work are necessary so they can make use of their *savoir comprendre* and *savoir apprendre/faire* to understand better the perspective of the author and feel empathy for him or her. As the final stage of the activity, students can be asked to relate the work to their experiences as or

with victims of ethnic discrimination so they can have closer examples of this issue to highlight the relevance of it.

In conclusion, through the analysis of these four elements, a proposal with great background of experts in bullying and interculturality has been elaborated. This proposal maintains that ethnic bullying could be solved by attacking some their causes by providing students with ICC -through the integration of IE in the English class- since they would be more aware of their negative attitudes and behaviours towards foreign students. Moreover, they would also develop other beneficial traits for the prevention and reduction of ethnic bullying and the improvement of the classroom atmosphere and interpersonal relationships: the use of respectful language, having an open mind towards otherness, being more empathetic, inclusive, and rejecting unfair stereotypes and prejudices. Finally, some methods and suggestions have been proposed in order to show that it is possible to address and solve these issues in the English Classroom without compromising foreign language learning and the acquisition of essential English skills.

6. Assessing and modifying Jiménez and Díaz's study (2018)

The study by Jiménez and Díaz (2018) was selected to create a didactic proposal for preventing ethnic bullying in the English Classroom since it deals with how to prevent bullying and encourage equalities in the English classroom, which is similar to the aim of this study. Moreover, it follows the theories, recommendations, and materials of the KiVa project, which is a well-known anti-bullying program that has been implemented at state level in Finland. This program has been proven effective and beneficial for preventing and solving bullying while improving the atmosphere of the classroom "KiVa has been found to increase school liking and school motivation, whereas it has led to significant reductions in anxiety, depression, and negative peer perceptions among children and youth" (Salmivalli et al., 2013, abstract). In addition, the study by Jiménez and Díaz considers that English can be used as a Medium of Instruction to create anti-bullying attitudes in the classroom by telling students to share their thoughts and feelings in this language while they complete the

anti-bullying activities. Further, some of the sessions include activities intended to improve students' English skills while bullying awareness increases, so it is not necessary to obstruct the usual timings of high school English lessons to incorporate the program. Moreover, they probably developed ICC since these educators focused on promoting empathy, inclusion, and respect towards openness, which is also what the present study aims to reach by integrating ICC in ethnic bullying prevention programs.

Additionally, their study was proven effective since it did not only accomplish a reduction of 18% in bullying cases and an abolition of 80% but also showed that the activities used helped to create "an atmosphere of equality, respect and well-being in the classroom" (Jiménez & Díaz, 2018, p. 217). They measured the differences by asking the students to complete the same test twice, one of them before the program took place and the other after the program's finalization. Thus, since the effectiveness was calculated using statistical measure, this study is more reliable than others that only considered teacher's or investigator's perspectives to value the accomplishments.

For all these reasons, it has been considered the best study to take as an example for developing an anti-bullying program for the English lessons of a Spanish high school.

However, unlike the present study, their study only focuses on bullying in general and does not delve into ethnic bullying issues in the Spanish high schools -probably due to the fact that the high school where the study takes place is private, and the presence of immigrant students in Spanish private schools is scarce. That is why it has been considered necessary to modify some elements of the activities proposed in the sessions -for example, books, texts, discussion topics, etc.- to address a more specific target: preventing and reducing ethnic bullying and building a better relationship between native and immigrant students. In order to do this, it will also be necessary to have into account the theories and proposals made by IE to foster ICC, a skill that has been proven effective in the later section to prevent and reduce ethnic bullying.

Regarding the first session of the original program's study, it deals with a storytelling activity and some group discussions in which students comment on the novel *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki & Lee, 2018) -which deals with bullying during WWII- and discuss their personal experiences on the topic (Jiménez & Díaz, 2018). Through these activities, they aspired to foster empathy, reflection, and communicative skills. In order to approach ethnic bullying and racial discrimination in this session instead of conventional bullying, it would be required to change the reading proposed for one that deals with this topic in specific. For example, the novel *Hurricane Child* by Kheryn Callender (2019) -winner of the *Stonewall Book Award Winner* of the *Lambda Literary Award*- deals with the situation of a girl who suffers bullying from their classmates and teachers due to her skin colour and ethnicity. Further, it is considered to promote diversity since it deals with different ethnicities, sexual orientations, and family types, that is to say, otherness. Therefore, it can be the perfect reading for creating empathy, bullying awareness and openness to otherness among students, as well as a sustainable discussion afterwards since it can make students more receptive to talk about their personal experiences with bullying. However, since it is a 256-page novel, it will not be possible to read the novel in only one session. The solution to this could be selecting a chapter or extract in which an episode of ethnic bullying takes place and discuss it in the session. Moreover, due to the presence of verbal bullying in the plot, there are some examples of racist vocabulary and verbal violence in the novel, which can be also dealt with in the discussions after the reading. Students can be asked to identify instances of racist speech in the chapter and discuss why and how they think it can be damaging to the victims. In this way, they will put themselves in the other's foot and will be less willing to use racist language in their daily lives and more respectful language with their peers. By doing this, students will develop their intercultural capacities for "reflective verbal expression about otherness" as the Council of Europe values (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 65). Moreover, they will improve their English reading and listening skills -since some of them will be reading aloud and other listening- and communicative skills -during the discussion since all the activities will be conducted in English.

As regards the second session in the original program, it consists of a running dictation of a text dealing equality, respect, and empathy -competences that IE considers vital for improving ICC. At first sight, it is possible to think that these topics are suitable enough to deal with ethnicity and otherness in the English classroom. However, it would be beneficial to choose a text that, apart from promoting these competences, includes some information about other cultures' customs or traditions so students can develop their *savoir* and be more interculturally competent- which will make them less prone to believe in stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, after the dictation, another discussion can take place debating about student's perspectives towards cultural and ethnical stereotypes and prejudices and how to be more open to know about other cultures. For instance, it has been chosen as an example of a suitable text for the aim of the session, the activity created by Pereira (2015) -which is based in Chimamanda Ngozi's TED talk (TED, 2009)- since it deals with some stereotypes and prejudices that American students have about Nigeria and, besides, it teaches about Nigerian culture -i.e., music, cinema, literature, etc. Therefore, it is suitable since it will teach students to distrust stereotypes and, consequently, to be more open minded and respectful when meeting people from other cultures. Moreover, the cultural knowledge they acquire by listening and reading the text will help them to build a more realistic and healthier image of immigrants and be less prone to build prejudices -which can lead to ethnic bullying.

Regarding session 3, in Jiménez and Díaz's study (2018), they carry on an activity called "identity text" that consists of creating a mural formed by human silhouettes with good things about each one of the students, by doing this, they aimed "to remove tags and discover lots of things you did not know; and to foster the idea that we are all good at something" (Jiménez & Díaz, 2018, p. 217). This activity can be easily adapted to be able to prevent ethnic bullying if some elements from IE are introduced -i.e., *savoir être, savoirs, savoir comprendre* and *savoir apprendre*- and if the focus is made on cultural learning and dealing with stereotypes and prejudices -by creating a mural about cultural differences. For example, through a discovery exercise before making the mural, students can improve their intercultural skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*)

by searching information about other cultures they might have prejudices on -as it was proposed by Mathieson (2005)- and work collaboratively in the elaboration of the mural. Next, they will acquire intercultural knowledge -i.e., *savoirs*- from other cultures from searching information and displaying it in the mural which will make them more open-minded and will activate their curiosity about other cultures. Moreover, by telling students to work collaboratively and divide the tasks equitably, the social cohesion and environment of the classroom will improve. Furthermore, students can be asked to show their mural to the rest of the class and present and interpret the content they have found about other cultures relating it to their own culture, this will make them use their intercultural skills of interpreting and relating -i.e., *savoir comprendre*- and will improve their communication skills. Therefore, by making these changes, this activity will be able to reduce students' stereotypes and prejudices about other cultures and to establish a better social cohesion in the classroom, since native and immigrant students will work together for a common aim, and, as it has been demonstrated in the later section on theoretical evidence, by tacking stereotypes, prejudices, and lack of social cohesion through IE, it is possible to prevent and reduce ethnic bullying.

In relation to the last session, the investigators carried out an activity called "hearts on the back" aimed to work on emotions and inclusion and "to raise awareness about the importance of supporting victims" (Jiménez & Díaz, 2018, p. 217). This task, which resulted very successfully in the classrooms that it was implemented according to the authors, can be effective to gain social cohesion in the classroom since it encourages students to be more open and transmit their emotions to other classmates -as it was proved by Fotopoulou et al.'s study (2019). Although this activity is probably already effective for any kind of bullying -since it will improve the self-confidence of victims of any origin- it is possible to give a more ethnic-related turn to the activity if native students are encouraged to write on the hearts some questions that they might have of the immigrant students' cultures or countries of origin -always checking that questions are asked with respect for their colleagues and not with harmful attitudes. This will stimulate healthy communication and inclusion in the classroom -especially if these doubts are solved in a talking circle when

all the students are present- which will improve the social cohesion and the atmosphere of the classroom, contributing to prevent future episodes of ethnic bullying. Finally, regarding the acquisition of English skills in this task, students will not only improve their writing skills, vocabulary -especially adjectives, as in the original activity- and grammar -when asking questions and answering to them- but also their communicative skills by discussing the questions aloud in the talking circles.

To conclude, although Jiménez and Díaz's study is considered effective and very positive for bullying prevention in the English classroom and enhancing healthy and peaceful relationships between classmates, it is not specific enough for tackling ethnic bullying or assuring empathy and respect between foreign and native students. Therefore, it was considered necessary to modify some activities or elements of the sessions to make them comply with the issue under discussion, such as, for instance, the novel of the first session for the awarded *Hurricane Child* (Callender, 2019), the running dictation text of the second session for a transcription of a TED talk (TED, 2009) about ethnic stereotypes or creating a mural to discover more about other cultures.

7. Conclusion

This study implies great guidance for ethnic bullying prevention and the fight against racial and cultural discrimination since it has offered a potential but promising solution for this worrying issue for multicultural education. In addition, it has shown that it wouldn't be necessary to jeopardise the acquisition of skills and vocabulary in the English lessons as a consequence of putting the main focus on bullying prevention since English would still be the language of instruction in all the proposed activities. In fact, many of the activities encourage the use of communication skills and the acquisition of new vocabulary and knowledge in other areas not related to English (history, customs, religions of other cultures and of one's own, etc.). Additionally, it can convince foreign language teachers that it is not necessary to take extra time or stray from the teaching curriculum to combine language teaching and the acquisition of ICC and bullying awareness.

Regarding the first objective, which was to demonstrate a theoretical relationship between ethnic bullying prevention and ICC, it can be confirmed that it has been accomplished since a well-documented proposal determining this relationship has been developed. This proposal aimed to determine the possibility to prevent and tackle episodes of ethnic bullying when their main causes -racist language and verbal violence, presence of stereotypes and prejudices, lack of social cohesion and low empathy levels- are targeted individually and explored using the principles of IE. Moreover, it is also suggested that, by acquiring ICC through this method, students can develop more positive attitudes towards foreign students which will allow creating a better classroom atmosphere and will lower down the potentialities of emerging new ethnic bullying cases.

On the other hand, although the data suggest that it is very likely to be a successful strategy, it is necessary to highlight that it is only based on theoretical evidence and that empirical studies are needed to determine the effectiveness in real educational environments. Therefore, in order to draw an accurate conclusion, further research in such an unexplored but promising theory is necessary, particularly in a practical setting.

As regards to the second objective, it can be established that the study by Jiménez and Díaz (2018), although it shows a very high proven effectiveness in the prevention and reduction of conventional bullying as well as improving classroom atmosphere, cannot be considered adequate enough for ethnic bullying prevention because its sessions are not specific enough to tackle the causes of ethnic bullying -which is understandable since this is not the purpose of their study. However, by adding and modifying the activities of this study -taking into account the present study's theoretical proposal- it has been possible to develop a more suitable didactic proposal for the prevention of ethnic bullying. However, as in the case of the first objective, it cannot be stated that the present study's didactic proposal is effective since it is not supported with statistical data, so further investigation is necessary to determine how successfully can prevent ethnic bullying and improve the class atmosphere. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the second objective has also been accomplished, but it requires statistical support.

Through this work and its investigation process, it has been made clear that the situation of racism and ethnic bullying not only in Spain but also in the rest of the world is worrisome and that educators and legislators need to be aware of the gravity of the problem and take action. Moreover, it has also be pointed out how necessary is to have a healthy classroom atmosphere in the EFL lessons that promotes inclusion, equality, respect, and openness in order to ensure both native and foreign students a successful and enriching learning experience.

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