UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL

UNIDAD AJUSCO
PROPUESTA DE INTERVENCIÓN EDUCATIVA

Describing and comparing cities with high school students of a public technological school. Intercultural and communicative teaching intervention project for the practice and development of English as a foreign language in a 21st century classroom.

TRABAJO RECEPCIONAL

QUE PARA OBTENER EL DIPLOMA DE
ESPECIALIZACIÓN EN ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA
EXTRANJERA, MODALIDAD EN LÍNEA

PRESENTA:
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UNIVERSIDAD PEDAGÓGICA NACIONAL

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PROPOSAL FOR EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

Describing and comparing cities with high school students of a public technological school. Intercultural and communicative teaching intervention project for the practice and development of English as a foreign language in a 21st century classroom.

Receptional work, which to get the diploma of

Especialización en
Enseñanza y aprendizaje de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera
Specialization in English Language and Teaching as a Foreign Language

presents:

Ricardo Laredo Delgado

Tutor: Norma Susana Rivera Herrera

GENERATION 10

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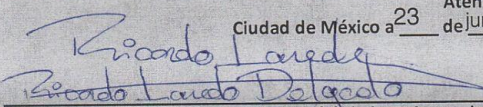
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Introduction

A 'professional' is, broadly speaking, someone whose work involves performing a certain function with some degree of expertise. But a narrower definition limits the term to apply to people such as [...] teachers, [...] whose expertise involves not only skill and knowledge but also the exercise of highly sophisticated judgment, and whose accreditation necessitates extensive study, often university-based, as well as practical experience. (Ur, P.; 2002)

The theoretical and phenomenological configuration of the teacher's being as professional, social and academic agent has become more complex along the history of education. New approaches, theories, strategies, materials, and methodologies are being created at a fast pace, questioning and reconfiguring education and teachers' role in society. These phenomena demand from teachers an integral preparation for the educational task (and a lot of practice), which no longer only consists of learning and transmitting data, but mainly of integrating the human faculties of students in their own educational experience, so they can expand their learning capabilities and horizon of significance by themselves.

This document presents an integral proposal of a teaching intervention project that was carried out with a group of high school English students of fourth semester in a public technological school in Queretaro, Mexico. It incorporates the theoretical background, as well as the planning, implementation, evaluation, results, critical analysis and conclusions.

The first chapter involves a variety of theories and academic/scientific discourses that substantiate and legitimize the processes put into action in class with the students. The project settles on the communicative and inter-cultural approach, but there are more concepts and theories that enrich and strengthen the teaching-learning process. Some significant mentioned ideas are the language itself, the learner-centered

classroom, the socio-cultural theory of learning, the affective filter, and the comprehensible input.

The chapter one also contains the description of the rationale behind the activities that are proposed in the lesson planning. The proposal blends and equilibrates the practice of formal aspects (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) with communicative aspects (skills), as well as the way they were practiced and learned in class: Explicitly or implicitly. Finally, chapter one finishes with the explanation and rationale of the evaluation model, which combines formal/summative with informal/formative assessment to give comprehensible and useful feedback to the students.

The second chapter displays the application of the project. It comprehends lesson planning, which describes all the necessary aspects (objectives, times, materials, sequence, linguistic points) to carry out the activities with the students in class. The instruments of learning assessment (rubrics, rating scale), as well as the materials and resources for learning (texts, videos, visual aids, formats, exercises) can be found in chapter two.

Finally, chapter two comprehends a video that shows a sample of the lessons carried out at school, as well as some evidence of the work made by the students. Chapter three contains a report of the lessons given and an analysis of the outcomes and areas of opportunity. The final chapter presents a series of conclusions.

> A great teacher loves to learn. The reason this is important is because [students] do not see this. They do not see teachers learning in front of them. They see them teaching, but they wish they would learn along with them. [...] [Students] want to be inspired by this idea that learning is important, but they do not see it in schools. (Terronez, 2017)

This project not only shows academic and pragmatic processes, but also a learning adventure. The venture of studying a serious academic degree definitely has the power to change the cosmovision and practice of the contemporary teachers.

The fast progress in the acquisition of knowledge; the dynamic conditions of employment, recreation and leisure; the globalization; the evolution of communication technologies; the creation of new manners of education and communication, among other aspects; demand from teachers higher levels of professional competence.

1. <u>THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS</u>

1.1 Critical statement of my Teaching Philosophy and identity

Since I was a little kid I had always dreamed about traveling to other countries and speaking many different languages. I have always been curious about geography, food, cities, art, and other cultural aspects that build identities. I truly believe that traveling has almost a magical power to transform our human minds and souls, because it helps us open to new different worldviews, letting us know that our cosmovision is not in the center of the world and that we are changing constantly (savoir être). Traveling and appreciating other cultures has always been one of the central motivations that I have had to learn and teach foreign languages. I conceive the language as one of the most powerful tools that we humans have to connect with each other, learn, explain and give meaning to the world that surrounds us.

During my first years of school; the approach, with which I was educated, was absolutely traditional. I consider it is important to mention that because, when I started teaching English, I tended to reproduce the way I was taught. Now I have transformed radically the way I conceive education and the teaching activity, and it has been a fascinating and liberating journey. I do not consider myself anymore as "a benevolent dictator deciding what's best for the powerless underlings in [my] care" (Taak, 1997), but mainly as a mediator and a facilitator of learning experiences.

I studied and learned how to learn in a very repressive system, which has made me appreciate the value of freedom, originality and choice when teaching and learning. The main focus of the classroom must be centered in the students, their needs and their contexts. I believe that the students build knowledge, they do not receive it. They are active agents and the protagonists of their own learning in interaction with others.

This means involving students into the class and making them responsible for their own learning processes. I am aware that I cannot speak, write, read, or listen instead of them.

That is the reason why I try to implicate my students in their own learning experiences with curiosity and creativeness.

> The most respected teachers have discovered how to make students passionate participants in the instructional process by providing project-based, participatory, educational adventures. They know that in order to get students to truly take responsibility for their own education, the curriculum must relate to their lives, learning activities must engage their natural curiosity, and assessments must measure real accomplishments and be an integral part of learning. (Taak, 1997)

I was educated within more vertical approaches. These approaches have not disappeared yet. They continue operating and alienating schools, teachers, and students. They conceive the student merely as a passive receptor and reproducer (subject to come) of the "correct behavior" presented/modeled by the teacher (as the content expert), and not as an active and the most important participant (a subject of full exercise). I decide to stand for a more holistic, communicative, sociocultural and student-centered view of education and language teaching and learning.

> [From this point of view] the [student] enters the discourse [...] as a being of knowledge. [...] His knowledge is respected as that of a "subject of full exercise", because he is a "subject of full exercise" and not a "subject to come" as he is in the eyes of [traditional] pedagogy. It is a knowledge respected in its connection with the enjoyment that envelops it, that animates it, and that is confused with it. (Miller, J. 2017, p. 24)

When it comes to choosing methods, strategies, activities, and theories to develop skills with my students, I prefer to opt for an eclectic approach. Contemporary times are times of conceptual hybridization and democracy of thought. I usually work with large, heterogeneous classes of teenagers. In this kind of group there is a wide variety of learning styles, personal interests, levels of language development, learning strategies, and learning rithms. "A learning style is the natural, habitual way that we go about learning. [...] Learning strategies are the cognitive and communicated processes that learners use in order to acquire a language." (Nunan, D.; 2015). I believe that, in order to address this rich heterogeneity and

boost students' language development, it is necessary to propose and offer them a wide spectrum of diverse tasks and activities.

Developing the communicative skills; reading, listening, speaking, and writing, with my students is one of the main objectives of the class. These skills require the students an active involvement in the activities because, during the lessons, they become dynamic producers of the language. The four mentioned skills do not work isolated from each other. In real life situations, we use more than one skill to fulfill our communicative goals. In class, we sometimes set only one skill appart to working with that specific one. This is like when we go to the gym and do a routine to exercise one specific muscle. Our body does not function like that in the real world, but the strength obtained in the gym can improve the performance of the whole body. It is substantial to mention that, in order to effectively develop the communicative skills with the students, it is necessary to practice them in a mediated, scaffolded, meaningful, and appropriate context.

As we have seen before, the teaching practice has become a very complex and demanding enterprise that, day by day, demands greater levels of professionalization. The teachers need to increase and renew their knowledge constantly and, at the same time, have a balanced and joyful professional and personal life. We have to be very flexible and adaptable.

Finally, I want to end this critical analysis of my own professional activity by mentioning that I deeply believe that human beings are beings for transcendence. We transcend to the extent that we carry out our projects in the world, with others. "Man is not an island, but a moment in the evolution of the absolute" (Gutiérrez, R.; 2001). In the context of this constant change and evolution, reproducing the hegemonic discourses of the dominant power would place us in a position of personal and professional stagnation, at the same time that we could stagnate our students.

> Educate for dynamism, change, evolution, and leave behind the sclerotization, the false defense of the static personality, the false attitude of stagnation, the neurotic behavior of the barrier, the brake and the mask before the inevitable dynamism that constitutes the life, seems to be one of the noblest roles of pedagogy. (Gutiérrez, R.; 2001)

1.2 Theoretical basis about language, language learning and language teaching

"A theory is a set of statements about natural phenomena that explains why these phenomena occur the way they do" (VanPatten; Williams; 2015). The main axis to develop any theory, methodology, approach, technique, or strategy about learning and teaching, is always the manner each person understands the human being and his/her trascendental purposes in our societies and world. The (consciously or unconsciously) chosen and applied approaches, methodologies, and techniques vary depending on any specific context and its particular aspects (social values, religion, politics, institutional philosophies, level of development, leadership, among others). The types of interaction student-student / student-teacher, the activities, the techniques and the objectives will follow and adapt to the cosmology and vision of the human being (or to a reproduction of others' vision and/or cosmology) that each teacher has constituted along his/her life.

In the teaching and learning field, there are some more vertical approaches that can conceive the student merely as a passive receptor and reproducer of the "correct behavior" presented/modeled by the teacher as content expert. In this sense, language can become a tool for alienating or emancipating students' learning experience. The teaching-learning process should be a 'practice of freedom' and dialogue. Students should use the language as a tool to connect and interact with other people, but also to connect with themselves, the world that surrounds them, and the cosmovision that they build of that world. Language can be a very powerful tool to understand, transliterate and transform the world and ourselves. Dialogue is essential in today's education.

> Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, without communication there cannot be true education. Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated. (Freire, 2005, p.92-93)

Learning is a social process that requires people to interact with others who are, at the same time, experiencing, discovering and constituting the world. In English class, the language is students' primary tool to analyze, empathize, and interact with culture and people inside and

outside the classroom walls. Language is also the channel humans use to participate in social knowledge.

> Language is the prime means of an individual's acquiring knowledge of the world, of transmitting mental representations and making them public and intersubjectively accessible. Language is thus the prime instrument of a 'collective knowledge reservoir' to be passed on from generation to generation. But language also acts as a means of categorizing cultural experience, thought and behavior for its speakers. (House, J.; 2007)

"A teacher should try to design a series of activities to enable learners to discuss and draw conclusions from their own experience of the target culture solely as a result of what they have heard or read" (Byram M. et al.; 2002). Many Mexican students have never left the country or spoken to an actual foreigner. But that does not mean that they cannot know the 'outside' world, appreciate and learn about it. The English class could be the first step for them to open to a vast and rich world. It is very important to integrate the development of intercultural competence in class. Byram M. et al. (2002) propose 5 attitudes of the intercultural speaker and mediator. They are the foundation of intercultural competence and they are included in the presented lesson planning to motivate students to become citizens of the world.

- Intercultural attitudes (savoir être): curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
- Knowledge (savoirs): 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.
- Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre): ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.
- Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire): 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.
- Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager): an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

To develop these attitudes, one of the main activities proposed in the lesson planning is to compare the characteristics of different cities around the world. The group used the information technologies to 'travel' to other countries, to have a virtual stroll through Paris, Tokio, Venice, New York, Dubai, and more the same day. Because the activities were learner-centered, the students were the protagonists of the learning process. "In a learner-centered classroom, learners are involved in making decisions about what to learn, how to learn, and how to be assessed" (Nunan, D.; 2015). Students chose one of their favorite cities, did research and presented their city. After that, they compared their cities with their classmates' ones. Thereby, they had the opportunity to learn, compare and appreciate how other people live, organize, educate, and produce culture around the world.

Unfortunately, stereotyping is a common social issue that has impacted our societies and has divided people around the world by creating artificial and irrational classifications of people, based on prejudices. This artificial division has historically legitimated discrimination and social inequallity. "Stereotyping involves labeling or categorizing particular groups of people, usually in a negative way, according to preconceived ideas or broad generalizations about them" (Byram, M. et al.; 2002). The prime base of discrimination is ignorance. "Since stereotypes and prejudices are based on feelings rather than reason, it is important to have opportunities to explore feelings as well as thoughts" (Byram, M. et al.; 2002). One powerful tool to overthrow stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination is to give students the opportunity to know other cultures more deeply, realizing that there are other lifestyles, ideologies and cosmovisions different from theirs. This is one basic step. The dialogue and research can help students to stop reproducing or resisting racism, abuse of power, dominance and/or inequality.

The cultural input was very important for the proposed sequence of activities. The teacher showed flags, videos, images, and texts related to diverse cities and countries. These objects and images really activated students' attention and curiosity. The language used in the classroom was mostly English (L2), with some interventions in L1 (Spanish) to clarify concepts or instructions. The teacher was an important cultural input.

As it was mentioned before, most of the students at public school have never left the country, and they do not usually interact with foreigners. That is one of the reasons why they sometimes do not see a point in learning English (or any other language), because they believe that they are not going to use it. Nonetheless, they have access to a lot of online international content (videos, music, movies, podcasts, among others) that can help them interact and empathize with other cultures and motivate them to learn English.

"Often in language teaching the implicit aim has been to imitate a native speaker both in linguistic competence, in knowledge of what is 'appropriate' language, and in knowledge about a country and its 'culture'" (Byram, M. et al.; 2002). The perspectives and the paths of language teaching and learning have exceptionally transformed during the last decades and they continue evolving day by day. Reaching a native-like language reproduction is no longer relevant. Now, one of the main objectives of the teaching-learning processes is to provide (facilitate and meditate) students with all the necessary tools (grammatical, lexical, sociocultural, intercultural, strategical, socioemotional, among others) to develop communicative, linguistic, and intercultural competences in order to effectively communicate with other people in a globalized world. These three competences are reflected in the objectives of the lesson planning. The first objective corresponds to linguistics, the second to communicative, and the third to intercultural competence. When the students arrive to the English classes, many of them are still very used to the traditional approaches of English teaching and learning of the late 60's. They feel comfortable repeating structures when doing decontextualized grammatical exercises by themselves, but are very insecure when speaking or writing. Two traditional approaches that have hegemonically dominated language teaching for a long period of time are behaviorism and structuralism. "Language learning was viewed as a process of mechanical habit formation. Good habits are formed by having students produce correct sentences and not through making mistakes" (Richards, J. 2006, p. 4).

> Traditional approaches to language teaching gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis of language proficiency. They were based on the belief that grammar could be learned through direct instruction and through a methodology that made much use of repetitive practice and drilling. [...] Techniques that were often employed included memorization of dialogs, question-and-answer practice, substitution drills, and various forms of guided speaking and writing practice. Great attention to accurate pronunciation and accurate mastery of grammar

was stressed from the very beginning stages of language learning, since it was assumed that if students made errors, these would quickly become a permanent part of the learner's speech. (Richards, J.; 2006)

Focusing on linguistic aspects is not evil. The linguistic competence and developing good (phonetic, grammar, etc.) behaviors are actually a good thing, but only if the students are able to integrate and apply them consciously and willingly in their English practices to enrich their present and future lives. Learning cognitive strategies, like how to memorize vocabulary or how to comprehend texts are very valuable knowledge; as well as learning how to translate a text or understand/reproduce an audio, but the students have to understand that knowledge goes beyond what the teacher can control.

Developing linguistic competence is very important though, because it works as a map to navigate the language. The map is not the territory. The rules and the patterns are not the language in use (the territory), but they can aid students in navigating the language more effectively in everyday situations (just like a map). This is the reason why linguistic competence is directly addressed in some of the suggested activities. "Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language" (Richards, J.; 2006).

> Linguistic competences include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system. [...] This component [...] relates not only to the range and quality of knowledge [...] but also to cognitive organization and the way this knowledge is stored [...] and to its accessibility (activation, recall and availability). Knowledge may be conscious and readily expressible or may not. [...] Its organization and accessibility will vary from one individual to another and vary also within the same individual. (Council of Europe, 2001)

The lesson planning presented in this project proposes some tasks that have been specially designed to develop grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary explicitly in the class. The exercises found in the *Student's Booklet* offer visual aids, definitions, and multiple choice practices that are part of the learning process. All these exercises lay in the same context: The description of cities. All the vocabulary, images, definitions, and sentences comprises grammatical, lexical, and visual information, as well as many examples of sentences that

provided students with tools to produce the language afterwards. The students continued applying these rules in the activities that followed these exercises, but they had to focus their attention in the four language skills, more than in the linguistic information. Therefore, integrating and cultivating grammatical and lexical competence in context is a very important point of the planning. It is important to actively work together to change paradigms and turn towards a more communicative, student-centered, intercultural, and integral approach. "The concept of learner-centeredness is not difficult to understand. However, it can be difficult to implement in the classroom. [...] In a learner-centered classroom, learning experiences are related to learners' own out-of-class experiences." (Nunan, D.; 2015)

Teachers have to fulfill many different roles before, during and after the class. Some of them are planner, informer, manager, monitor, involver, diagnostician, facilitator, and mediator. All of them are such important roles.Two of the most significant are mediator and facilitator. Teachers not only facilitate and mediate the language, but also the culture, the attitudes and the general environment of the classroom. "The teacher has not only to reflect on their practice but much more on the interaction between school and society. [...] A reflective attitude is possible only if at some point the teacher can take up a critical attitude" (Klein, A.; Godinet, H.; 2000).

"The affective filter [...] occurs when students feel alienated from their academic experience and anxious about their lack of understanding" (Willis, 2014). The affective filter occurs when the students do not feel comfortable in class, but stressed and strained by task, teachers, parents, and/or classmates. These negative feelings block students' capacity to learn. Neurosciencience has revealed the importance of good emotional balance and management in class is noteworthy.

> Neuroimaging studies of the amygdala, hippocampus, and the rest of the limbic system, along with measurement of dopamine and other brain chemical transmitters during the learning process, reveal that students' comfort level has a critical impact on information transmission and storage in the brain. The factors that have been found to affect this comfort level such as self-confidence, trust and positive feelings for teachers, and supportive classroom and school communities are directly related to the state of mind compatible with the most successful learning, remembering, and higher-order thinking. (Willis, 2014)

The communicative approach is more likely to motivate students, because it gives them the power to learn and learn how to learn. It gives students the opportunity to take ownership of their own learning and knowledge. They feel the knowledge as their own, because they are the authors. The communicative approach offers students more opportunities to develop self-confidence, to dialogue with teachers and classmates, to collaborate and create functional learning communities and, as a result, have success in learning English.

The promotion and development of socio-emotional skills, as well as creating a safe and comfortable environment for the students has become very important when teaching a lesson. When the students feel comfortable and happy in their learning environment, they start taking on more challenges and feel less stressed about mistakes. They start integrating those mistakes as part of their learning process. This confidence boosts students' performance in class and motivates them to participate. They feel part of what is going on, instead of standing as mere spectators.

It has been mentioned that, in order to avoid the affective filter and foster confidence in the students, it is necessary to build a good social environment, as well as good relationships. But the academic environment is also substantial. Too difficult activities can trigger anxiety among the students, while too easy activities can result in a comfort zone, where students do not feel challenged at all. The ideal zone for students to learn and have good and motivating performances is the 'zone of proximal development'. This concept was developed by Lev Vygotsk, and it is part of his Sociocultural Theory of Learning.

> The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. [...]
> Since the 1980s, his work has exerted a major influence on Western education. [...]
> Sociocultural theory sees human development as social rather than individualistic. An
> individual's development is thus to a significant extent a product, not a prerequisite, of
> education—the result of his or her social, historical, and cultural experiences.

> The educational basis for a child's development is encapsulated in what Vygotsky terms the
> zone of proximal development, by which he refers to the distance or the cognitive gap between
> what a child can do unaided and what the child can do jointly and in coordination with a more

skilled expert. [...] Vygotsky sees the development of cognition itself also as the result of participation with others in goal-directed activity. (Gibbons, P.; 2015)

The zone of proximal development comprehends the tasks students can do with assistance and support (scaffolding). They have not acquired this language yet, but they have the resources to do it. Activities in this zone are engaging and challenging. The supporting activities that the teacher does to mediate, facilitate and promote can be called scaffolding.

Scaffolding—in its more usual sense—is a temporary structure that is put up in the process of constructing or repairing a building. As each bit of the new building is finished, the scaffolding is taken down. The scaffolding is temporary, but essential for the successful construction of the building. (Gibbons, P.; 2015)

Krashen defended that language acquisition is a process where the learner is exposed to the target language actively. Not any input of the target language is convenient and/or appropriate if the objective is to develop knowledge. If the input provided is too easy, it will not motivate the learner to deepen his/her knowledge and performance because it is in the comfort zone. If the input is too difficult it would be out of the zone of proximal development and cause anxiety (affective filter). Therefore, the ideal input is the comprehensible input. Comprehensible input is neither too difficult, nor too easy. It can both motivate and challenge students.

Comprehensible input is language input that can be understood by [students] despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it. It is described as one level above that of the learners if it can only just be understood. According to Krashen's theory of language acquisition, giving learners this kind of input helps them acquire language naturally, rather than learn it consciously. (British Council, BBC, 2021)

The internet offers a wide variety of authentic materials, as well as graded comprehensible input, especially created for teaching purposes. Authentic input can also be modified and adapted for our students' needs, levels, and moment of language development. The use of the internet and technology has become a must when teaching a new language.

1.3 The rationale behind the activities of the planning

In the table below, the rationale behind the proposed activities will be explained. The lesson planning involves activities aiming attention on developing speaking, listening, writing and reading skills, as well as grammatical, strategic and lexical knowledge; always incorporating the intercultural feature.

Introduction	"Words matter! They are fundamental to successful language acquisition" (Nunan, D.; 2015). The introductory session was dedicated to developing vocabulary explicitly, as the foundation for further linguistic and communicative exercises. "In any well-structured vocabulary program there needs to be the proper mix of explicit teaching and activities from which incidental learning can occur" (Schmitt, N.; 2000). The vocabulary is a necessary element of the language that enables more complex communicative operations. The vocabulary proposed in the lesson was contained in a more complex process that aimed the development of communicative skills (reading, writing, listening, and reading) in context.
	Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them such as listening to the radio, listening to native speakers, using the language in different contexts, reading, or watching television. (Richards, J.; Renandya, W.; 2002)
	In a learner-centered classroom, learning experiences are related to learners' own out-of-class experiences" (Nunan, D.; 2015). That is the reason why the sequence starts with a question that involves students' worlds and daily activities: *What is your favorite part of the city and why?* This question is also useful to set the context in which we are going to use the language: Cities around the world.
	Learning vocabulary (and, in general, a language) is not a linear process. Schmitt, N. (2000) proposes in the *vocabulary guidelines for the Oxford Bookworms series* that, in

level 2 (A2), the students should develop 700 cumulative words (that are continuously recycled) and 300 new words. As it was mentioned before, this mental storage of words is expanded in a fragmented way. Repetition is imperative, but not only nor mainly a mechanical repetition. The students need the opportunity to identify the new words explicitly. Especially "with rank beginners, it is [...] necessary to explicitly teach all words until students have enough vocabulary to start making use of the unknown words they meet in contexts" (Schmitt, N.; 2000). But these words become part of students' mental dictionaries only when they have listened, read, wrote, and said them incidentally, as part of several communicative tasks. "The mechanics of vocabulary learning are still something of a mystery, but one thing we can be sure of is that words are nor instantaneously acquired. [...] Rather, they are gradually acquired over a period of time from numerous exposures" (Schmitt, N.; 2000).

"Explicit and incidental learning are the two approaches to vocabulary acquisition. Explicit learning focuses attention directly on the information to be learned, which gives the greatest chance for its acquisition" (Schmitt, N.; 2000). The introductory section mainly focused on developing vocabulary and pronunciation with explicit instruction and strategies. The students also had many opportunities for incidental learning of vocabulary along the following activities. "Incidental learning can occur when one is using language for communicative purposes" (Schmitt, N.; 2000). Intercultural competence was not explicitly evident yet, but the group was preparing the language that would mediate intercultural knowledge and attitudes in the following tasks.

All the activities were linked by the same context, therefore, the students had the opportunity to use the same words more than once. At the same time, they had to use some common vocabulary that they had learned before.

Teachers "must [...] make decisions about which [...] aspects [of the word] to teach. With beginners, for example, it is unlikely that [teachers] would want to teach collocations and associations when first introducing a word" (Nunan, D.; 2015). Because of the level the group was working with (A2), the students focused on

	developing four of the elements of comprehensive knowledge of a word proposed by Paul Nation, mentioned in Nunan, D. (2015): Meaning, written form, spoken form, and grammatical behavior. He also mentions collocations, register, associations and frequency, but these elements will be developed in more advanced levels. There is an important distinction between receptive and productive vocabulary. "A learner's receptive vocabulary consists of those words that he or she can recognize but not use. A productive vocabulary contains those words that a person can both recognize and use" (Nunan, D.; 2015). One of the objectives of the activities was for the students to develop and apply as much productive vocabulary as possible. In this introductory stage, it is possible that many words did not reach productive comprehension, but they were introduced in the learners' learning horizon as receptive vocabulary. To start memorizing and using the vocabulary and pronunciation of the parts of the city, two videos that show flashcards (visual aids) were projected. The students watched the images, listened to, read and pronounced the words at the same time (imitation drill). Then, they integrated some art production. The students drew their personal visual dictionary (image word's meaning), thus, they got involved not only in a rational process, but also in an intuitive, sensitive and creative one. To conclude this introductory stage, the teacher confirmed understanding of the words and the students read and matched the definitions of some of the previously seen words (ask for meaning).
Stage 1	Stage 1 proposed activities to develop reading and listening skills. In this case, they involved intercultural competence. The exercises also offered the chance to develop vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation incidentally as well (included in a communicative task). The lesson started with a video that showed some landmarks of some of the most famous cities around the world. This cultural input was meant to introduce the students in the context and connect with the topic, not only with words, but visually. The reading activity was focused on vocabulary recognition in context (which is an

important and useful strategy when reading a text), written forms and pronunciation of the recently presented vocabulary.

"Reading offers a portal of exposure to [a variety of known and unknown] words. [...] Beginning students with a limited vocabulary can benefit from reading, by accessing graded readers" (Schmitt, N.; 2000). The suggested text 'Cities', written by R. Northcott (2016), was a 'realia' graded for learners developing the level A2. The text presented various aspects that characterized different cities around the world, like the buildings, tourism, transportation, housing, and work. This text was meant to help students identify the different cultural aspects of the cities that they can observe, as well as to practice pronunciation. The text offered many visual aids to support students' comprehension. The text was also used to identify, memorize and use more vocabulary about cities. After the students had read the text by themselves and identified new vocabulary, they read the text in group aloud to practice written form and pronunciation of the words that they were using.

> The importance of the written form of words is obvious if those words are to be utilized through reading. Because research has shown that most words are actually fixated upon, it is an advantage to have as large vocabulary as possible to recognize any word that happens to come up. But being able to recognize a word is not enough; it needs to be recognized quickly in order to facilitate fluent reading. [...] Recognition exercises are most suitable for beginners who are at the decoding stage of reading. (Schmitt, N.; 2000)

The students had had interaction with all, or at least most of the vocabulary and grammatical structures presented by the text. In this exercise, the students had the opportunity to identify new vocabulary that they considered meaningful. They wrote a list of those words. It is important to build a strong vocabulary before facing a text. "The more limited the learner's vocabulary, the less will be his or her ability to communicate" (Nunan D.; 2015).

The same text 'Cities' was used to practice pronunciation with an imitation drill exercise. The students had more opportunities to practice pronunciation in communicative situations during the lessons.

> Both imitation and discrimination drills have an important place in the teaching of pronunciation as a means to help articulation become more automatic and routinized, they are best seen as at step toward more meaningful, communicative practice. To be truly effective, drills have to move beyond the simple identification mimicking of decontextualized sound contrasts to the perception of more meaningful, communicative characteristics of input and the ability to move beyond accurate production of discrete sounds to integrating those sounds into effective communication. Drills can also be made more lively and memorable by concentrating not just on oral and aural modalities, but also including visual representations training in the awareness of kinesthetic sensation. (Rodney, J.; 2002)

The next activity was focused on developing listening comprehension and grammar consciousness-rising (comparative and superlative adjectives) together. The teaching of structures is not isolated from its use in real situations connected with students' contexts. "Grammar can be explained, and, therefore, understood in everyday language" (Elis, R.; 2002). The students also practiced some speaking skills answering a few questions made by the teenagers on the video.

The selected input for listening practice and grammar development was made by latino highschool students in the USA. The videos presented grammatical information on how to learn, infer, and use comparative and superlative adjectives. They also provided examples given by those students where they compared daily situations, people and objects. That information was important to develop grammatical proficiency, but even more important, it presented teenagers of the learners' same age who shared some cultural roots and lived in a foreign country. In this way, the learners could feel more related with the presenters, but they could also see the similarities and differences in what they do and how. In Mexico, there are many stereotypes about 'chicanos'. These videos were a great opportunity to overthrow,

	analyze and criticize those stereotypes, in addition to remembering and practicing the use of comparative and superlative adjectives. To finish this session, the students practiced vocabulary using two contextualized mechanical practices of grammar in preparation for further communicative tasks. The exercises presented a series of incomplete sentences to be completed by choosing the correct option (multiple choice). Mechanical practice consists of various types of rigidly controlled activities, such as substitution exercises. Contextualized practice is still controlled, but it involves an attempt to encourage learners to relate form to meaning by showing how structures are used in real-life situations. Communicative practice entails various kinds of 'gap' activities which require the learners to engage in authentic communication while at the same time keeping an eye, as it were, on the structures that are being manipulated in the process. (Elis, R.; 2002)
Stage 2	Stage 2 of this sequence of activities was dedicated to developing writing skills. Both the content (the description of a city) and the form (order of adjectives, spelling, etc.) were important for this task, as well as the intercultural competence. The purpose of writing, in principle, is the expression of ideas, the conveying of a message to the reader; so the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of the writing. On the other hand, the writer also needs to pay some attention to formal aspects: neat handwriting, correct spelling and punctuation, as well as acceptable grammar and careful selection of vocabulary. (Ur, P.; 1999) The first activity was dedicated to present and categorize some adjectives that were used to describe students' chosen cities. The students were already familiar with some of these words because they had used them before. "Learning strategies are the cognitive and communicated processes that learners use in order to acquire a language" (Nunan, D.; 2015). To learn the order in which adjectives have to be mentioned the group used a menotechnics strategy (OSASCOMP). This mnemotechnics helped students remember the types and order of the adjectives.

To enrich the students' tasks, the students were introduced to a list of adjectives to describe places around the cities. After the students had acquired the necessary vocabulary and structures to start producing the function, the teacher provided students with some intercultural input using a video that showed the beauties of Venice, Italy. "In EFL contexts, [...] materials play a particularly important role as they may be the only contact that learners have with English and offer the only opportunities for them to study target texts" (Hyland, K.; 2002). The video served students as a base (input) to identify and describe different cultural aspects in group.

After watching the video and sharing some students' ideas, the teacher showed a model of the writing task. "Models are used to illustrate particular features of the text under study" (Hyland, K.; 2002). This text was an example of what students had to do for homework, therefore, they knew and had seen what was expected for them to perform.

This first writing exercise was focused on creative expression. "From this perspective [...] writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and [...] emphasizes the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic" (Hyland, K.; 2002).

The students also learned about some cities while practicing adjective order with the instructional exercise 3 of the Student's Booklet. "An important role of instructional materials is to provide the foundation for learners' understandings of writing and language use" (Hyland, K.; 2002).These controlled exercises served to give students some ideas and models to write their own descriptions. Subsequently, the students selected and described one of their favorite cities using what they have learnt before using the 'Project format'.

"One of the most important reasons for studying intercultural communication is the awareness it raises of our own cultural identity and background" (Martin, J.; Nakayama, T.; 2010). Here in Mexico, people are generally open and curious towards other cultures. This is an aspect that was exploited to develop cultural awareness and self-awareness during the activity.

Stage 3	The final task was dedicated to developing interactive and speaking skills while developing intercultural knowledge and awareness. Teamwork was an important aspect of this task because it created a more democratic and horizontal environment in the classroom, therefore more appealing and engaging for the students. Pair and group work are the most effective way of increasing students' talking time. [...] Pair and group work have a number of other advantages. For example, if carefully constructed, they maximize opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning. They also give learners the opportunity to engage in genuine conversation, developing skills in turn-taking, speaker selection and change and so on. (Nunan, D.; 2015) In this activity, the students did not only have the opportunity to 'see' other cultures, but to 'see' them through their classmates' eyes as well. They had to negotiate meaning to agree on the shared similarities and differences that they had to describe to fulfill the task. Assessing if students had changed their cultural attitudes was very difficult. It was not possible to quantify tolerance, for example, but there were other types of feedback that could be given, especially informal. The last session, the students shared what they had learned about the places they talked about. The importance of modeling the activities has been already mentioned, so students get a clear idea of what they have to do to fulfill the task, as well as what level and type of performance is expected of them. That is the reason why the class started with the teacher modeling the planned speaking and writing tasks. The example showed a comparison between Venice and Istanbul. A lot of visual aids were used. After that, the students joined their teams and started speaking. When teaching speaking, in general we focus on fluency and/or accuracy. In simple terms, fluency is the ability to talk fairly freely, without too much stopping or hesitating – to 'keep going'. More than that, it also requires that the listener understands what is being said, so there must be intelligibility and meaning. With

	accuracy the emphasis is on 'correct English' – the right grammar, the right vocabulary. (Riddell, D.; 2014) The higher objective in our class should be to design and carry out speaking tasks to promote fluency. Nevertheless, with lower levels, accuracy must be worked more directly in preparation for better fluency. This speaking task was mostly designed to promote accuracy, but some fluency was also expected and required. At this point, the students had developed the necessary linguistic and communicative tools to fulfill the project successfully. The final part of the students' project was to write some of the ideas that they had mentioned in the speaking part. They had the 'Project format' to write their sentences in teams. This task was more centered in accuracy (structures), but also in content (comparing cities). "With writing, the emphasis on accuracy is much greater than with speaking. For a start, the written form is visible and mistakes are seen" (Riddell, D.; 2014).
Fee db ack	The sequence of activities finished with a feedback session. This session will be addressed in the evaluation model.

Table 1. The rationale behind the activities.

1.4 Evaluation model

> Assessment [...] is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student's performance. [...] For optimal learning to take place, students in the classroom must have the freedom to experiment, to try out their own hypotheses about language without feeling that their overall competence is being judged in terms of those trials and errors. [...]

> Informal assessment can take a number of forms, starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to the student. [...] A good deal of a teacher's informal assessment is embedded in classroom tasks designed to elicit performance without recording results and making fixed judgments about a student's competence. (Brown, D.; 2004)

The negative effects that affective filter have on our students disturb and belittle their progress and development. The students should feel comfortable when taking risks while using and/or producing the language more freely. That is one of the reasons why the formal/summative evaluation (The project) was left at the end of the process (when the students were more prepared to face it).

The traditional exams have been historically related to stress, difficulty and a high possibility of failure. In this evaluation model traditional exams were not used; not because they are useless or evil, but because other instruments were considered to better evaluate students' skills and knowledge in the proposed tasks. Even if the students do not like exams, they have to be acquainted and prepared for them. That is one of the reasons why the rubrics to evaluate the project were inspired by the standardized exams designed by Cambridge for the level A2. The first three sessions, the students only received informal and formative feedback. Some examples of this, written and spoken, informal/formative feedback can be seen in the video.

Most of our classroom assessment is formative assessment: Evaluating students in the process of " forming" their competences and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (or formation) of learning. [...]

On the other hand, formal assessments are exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and student an appraisal of student achievement. [...]

Summative assessment aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. A summation of what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished objectives, but does not necessarily point the way to future progress. (Brown, D.; 2004)

The summative evaluation comprehended two parts. The first part was the portfolio, which consisted of the exercises done by the students in the 'Student's Booklet' and their notebooks during the lessons. The second part was a project that focused especially on productive skills (speaking and writing). The portfolio was evaluated with a rating scale and the project was evaluated using rubrics as evaluation instruments. Both instruments were clear, relevant, coherent, and practical to evaluate large groups (35 students), while providing comprehensible and practical feedback. These rating scale and rubrics can be found in this document, in the point 2.2 Instruments of learning assessment.

It was evaluated that the portfolio presented clear evidence of learning according to the academic objectives. The portfolio should have been complete and evidenced the student's commitment with her/his own learning process by doing and correcting their exercises. The portfolio should have shown the students' answers and the auto-corrections made in class.

In the project, productive skills (speaking and writing) were evaluated. They were evaluated with rubrics. Those rubrics were extracted from the Cambridge (2019) proficiency test for level A2, and adapted for the learning and assessing context.

These rubrics, based on international examination standards, were a practical and reliable instrument because they have the backing of a highly prestigious institution that has a great reputation and experience in testing proficiency with a communicative and sociocultural approach. The rubrics were graded for level A2, which was an advantage, because it was the level that was being developed in class. The writing rubric evaluated content, organization, and language. The speaking rubric evaluated grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, and interactive communication.

The rubrics were modified and adapted to the objectives, but also to be more understandable for the students. They were written in Spanish. The auto-evaluation was written in first person, so the students felt connected and responsible for their own progress. Developing autonomy and responsibility is very important, and self-assessment is a great opportunity to do that. In addition, it helped lighten the teachers' workload. The students auto-evaluated their own speaking performance with the rubric.

The portfolio represented the 70% of the grade, while the project represented the other 30%. The grade should reflect, as much as possible, the progress that the students have made within certain parameters, contexts and objectives defined in the planning. Both the process and the products are important, because one leads to the other and they have to be related and coherent. For many students (and parents), the numeric grade is still a very important motivation. That is one of the reasons why teachers should give enough information that backs the number; because the number itself means nothing for the students' progress. The last session was dedicated to receiving feedback.

2. <u>APPLICATIONS: METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICE</u>

2.1 Lesson Planning

All the technological high schools in Mexico are regulated by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2019). We must follow a common curriculum framework. This series of activities are aimed at students who are studying English in their fourth semester. The document that regulates the academic institutional constraints is the Syllabus basic component common curricular framework of higher education secondary education for English IV. The general purpose of the course is the following one:

> The students build descriptions extensively using syntactic and grammatical elements, <u>they make comparisons of two or more objects that have common or contrasting elements</u>; they can express using intensifiers in different contexts; they use tag questions to confirm suppositions and connect sentences and ideas using specific vocabulary, all of this <u>considering communication as the main idea of the speech development</u>. (SEP, 2019)

This global purpose also contains the specific goals that we will develop. The specific content for this lesson is the "use of comparatives and superlatives in different contexts." (SEP, 2019), and the expected outcome is to "express similarities or differentiations about prices and personal interests." (SEP, 2019).

Level: A2.
[The student] can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. (Council of Europe, 2001)
Topic: Describing and comparing cities around the world.

Vocabulary: Places around the city (library, museum, stadium, etc.), adjectives to describe cities (big, rich, modern, etc.), transportation (bus, car, train, etc.).

Objectives:

1. **Linguistic objective**: By the end of the lesson, students will use comparative and superlative adjectives, as well as the determiners both, either, and neither to express similarities and differences. They will apply the rules of adjective order when describing places.

2. **Communicative objective (Functions)**: By the end of the lessons learners will be able to describe and compare different characteristics of cities around the world and their places in written and oral ways.

3. **Intercultural objective**: By the end of the lessons learners will collect, recognize, describe and compare diverse cultural aspects that they are aware of about their favorite cities of the world.

Communicative skills considered: Reading, writing, speaking, listening.

Main grammar structure (Linguistic point): Comparative and superlative adjectives.
Complementary grammar structures: Adjective order, determiners (both, either, neither), there is / there are.

Hours of implementation: 6 hours and 30 minutes.

Number of sessions: 4 sessions and a half. The sequence of activities will take place over two weeks. Each week has three hours: One session of one hour and one session of two hours. There is half a session dedicated to feedback.

Materials: (All the links, materials, exercises, and evaluation instruments can be found in the *Section 2.2 Instruments of learning assessment* and in *Section 2.3. Materials and resources for learning*)

1. Student's Booklet [Section 2.2. A].
2. Video: *Parts of the City I - Vocabulary for Kids*. [Section 2.2. E]
3. Video: *Parts of the City II - Vocabulary for Kids*. [Section 2.2. E]
4. Video: *Cities From Around The World | Hyperlapse & Timelapse | 4K* [Section 2.2. E]
5. Book: *Cities*. [Section 2.2. B].
6. Video: *Comparatives Part 1 - English with Sound and Light*. [Section 2.2. E]
7. Video: *Comparatives Part 2 - English with Sound and Light*. [Section 2.2. E]
8. Chart: *Adjectives Word Order* [Section 2.2. C].

9. Video: *Venezia*. [Section 2.2. E]

10. Video: *Istanbul, Turkey [4K] - Travel Video 2022*. [Section 2.2. E]

11. Project format [Section 2.2. D].

12. Project writing rubric [Section 2.1. A].

13. Project speaking rubric [Section 2.1. B].

14. Students' portfolio rating scale [Section 2.1. C].

15. Postcards, maps, flags and souvenirs.

Session 1. Introduction.

Time: 1 hour.

Practiced content: Vocabulary and pronunciation.

Session goals:

● The students will Identify and memorize the vocabulary of parts of the city. They will associate pictures with words and definitions.

● The students will prepare for pronunciation .

Comprehensible input: Video flashcards (visual, written and aural), pictures and drawings (visual), definitions (written).

Procedures	Teacher's activities	Students' activities
Introduction	1. **Warm up (5 min.)** - The teacher shows some postcards, maps and souvenirs from different cities and asks students what their favorite part of the city is, then stimulates students to participate. 2. **Vocabulary and pronunciation activation (10 min)** - The teacher projects the videos '*Parts of the City I'* and *'Parts of the City II - Vocabulary for Kids'*. The teacher asks students to pronounce the words aloud right after the voice of the video, and pronounces the words with them.	1. **Warm up** - The students see the postcards, maps and souvenirs from different cities and mention some of their favorite parts of the city. 2. **Vocabulary and pronunciation activation** - The students watch the videos and pronounce the presented words aloud while watching the images. 3. **Vocabulary drawing exercise** - The students

3. **Vocabulary drawing exercise (15 min.)** - The teacher writes a list of some places of the city on the board and asks students to draw those places.	copy the list of places and draw those places on their notebooks. Some students draw the places on the board.
4. **Checking understanding (5 min.)** - The teacher erases the names of the places on the board. Then, the teacher points to the drawings and asks students to say the name of the pointed places aloud.	4. **Checking understanding** - The students say the name of the pointed places aloud.
5. **Labeling pictures of places (10 min.)** - The teacher explains Exercise 1 of the Student's Booklet, asks students to complete the exercise, monitors the students' practice, and checks the results with the group.	5. **Labeling pictures of places** - The students label a series of pictures that are shown in Exercise 1 to have a visual dictionary.
6. **Labeling definitions of places (15 min.)** - The teacher explains Exercise 2 of the Student's Booklet, asks students to complete the exercise, monitors the students' practice, and checks the results with the group.	6. **Labeling definitions of places** - The students read some definitions that give a description of some places of the city and choose the correct places among a list of words.

Session 2. Stage 1.

Time: 2 hours.

Practiced skills: Reading, Listening.

Linguistic point: Comparatives and superlatives.

Session goals:

- The students will identify and distinguish the vocabulary of parts of the city, transportation and building in written texts.
- The students will retrieve and practice the use of comparative and superlative adjectives.

● The students will compare common situations and objects. **Comprehensible input:** Video showing different cities (visual), extract of the book '*Cities*' (written), Video that explains the use of comparative and superlative adjectives and presents a series of situations to be analyzed by the students (visual, aural and written).		
Proced ures	**Teacher's activities**	**Students' activities**
Stage 1	1. **Warm up (5 min.)** - The teacher projects the video: '*Cities From Around The World	Hyperlapse & Timelapse	4K*' that shows different cities and asks students what their favorite part of the city is, then stimulates students to participate. 2. **Reading and identifying vocabulary (30 min.)** - The teacher projects some texts of the book '*Cities*' on the board and asks students to identify vocabulary of places of the city, buildings, and transportation. Then, the teacher reads the texts aloud and asks students for the required vocabulary. The teacher highlights the words on the board. The teacher also uses the text to retrieve previous grammatical knowledge (there is / there are). 3. **Grupal reading (30 min)** - The teacher asks students to read the texts aloud collectively. The teacher guides the reading. After the reading, the teacher asks students what they can see in a city, then motivates students	1. **Warm up** - The students mention some of their favorite cities around the world. 2. **Reading and identifying vocabulary** - The students listen to and follow the reading of some texts that talk about cities. They identify vocabulary of places of the city, buildings, and transportation. Then, they mention and jot down that vocabulary. They retrieve the use of there is / there are and give some examples. 3. **Grupal reading** - The students read the text aloud collectively. Then, they mention the new vocabulary that they just learned. 4. **Grammar and listening practice** - The students watch two videos that show high school students comparing different

	to check their lists of vocabulary and participate. 4. **Grammar and listening practice (30 min)** - The teacher projects the videos '*Comparatives Part 1 - English with Sound and Light*' and '*Comparatives Part 2 - English with Sound and Light*' and requests and stimulates students to say the comparisons proposed by the videos aloud to practice comparative and superlative adjectives. 5. **Grammar exercise (25 min.)** - The teacher explains Exercises 4 and 5 of the Student's Booklet, asks students to complete the exercise, monitors the students' practice, and checks the results with the group.	common situations using comparative and superlative adjectives. They say some comparisons of different situations presented by the videos. 5. **Grammar exercise** - The students read some sentences and select the correct form of comparative and superlative adjectives to complete some sentences that compare cities.

Session 3. Stage 2.

Time: 1 hour.

Practiced Skills: Writing.

Linguistic point: Adjective order.

Session goals:

- The students will categorize, memorize and use a list of adjectives to describe cities.
- The students will recognize and apply the adjective word order.
- The students will search information about some cities, deduce and select its description.

Comprehensible input: List of adjectives with opposite meanings (written), videos of cities (visual), descriptions of some cities (written), students' individual online research (can vary).

Procedures	Teacher's activities	Students' activities
Stage *2*	1. **Warm up (5 min.)** - The teacher shows a map of Queretaro and asks students how they can describe Queretaro, then stimulates students to participate. 2. **Categorizing vocabulary (15 min.)** - The teacher writes a list of adjectives to describe cities on the board, checks the meaning of unknown words with the group, and asks students to write a list of opposites/antonyms. 3. **Grammar explanation and examples (10 min.)** - The teacher explains the order in which adjectives are usually said in English. The teacher projects the chart '*Adjectives Word Order'* to help students identify the order in which they have to use the adjectives when describing something or someone. 4. **Example of description of a city (30 min.)** - The teacher projects the video *'Venezia',* shows a map of the city, a flag of the country, and gives some information (population, language, etc.), then uses the presented adjectives to describe that city. **Homework 1 - Research about some cities** : The teacher explains Exercise 3 of the Student's Booklet, and asks	1. **Warm up** - The students mention some adjectives to describe Queretaro. 2. **Categorizing vocabulary** - The students write some adjectives in a list of opposites/antonyms. 3. **Grammar explanation and examples** - The students use a mnemonics strategy to identify the order of the adjectives more quickly and effectively. They use the invented word "OSASCOMP" to remember the order as presented in the chart in ANNEX 3. 4. **Example of description of a city** - The students watch a video of a city, mention what they see and how it is. Then, they read and listen to the description given by the teacher. **Homework 1- Research about some cities**: The students look at some pictures and do a quick online research about some cities. Then they read some descriptions and select the

	students to do a quick research online and complete the exercise at home. **Homework 2 - First part of the project - Writing. Describing a city**. The teacher asks students to choose a city, do an online research, and write a description of that city using the format presented in ANNEX 4.The teacher invites and motivates students to have a curious and open attitude towards the analyzed cultures, avoiding stereotypes.	one that describes the presented city. **Homework 2 - First part of the Project - Writing. Describing a city**. The students choose one of their favorite cities, do an online research, and write a description of that city.

Session 4. Stage 3.

Time: 2 hours.

Practiced skills: Speaking, Writing.

Linguistic point: Comparative and superlative adjectives, determiners.

Session goals:

- The students will describe and compare places and characteristics of some cities.
- The students will describe the similarities and differences of some cities using comparative and superlative adjectives, as well as determiners (both, either, neither)..

Comprehensible input: Videos and pictures of some cities (visual), students' descriptions of a city (aural and written).

Procedures	Teacher's activities	Students' activities
Stage 3	1. **Teacher's example of the activity (30 min.)** - The teacher projects the video '_Istanbul, Turkey [4K] - Travel Video 2022_', shows a map of the city, a flag of the country, and gives some information (population, language, etc.) of both Istanbul and Venice (That	1. **Teacher's example of the activity** - The students watch the videos of two cities, listen to the teacher's descriptions, and compare them collectively mentioning some differences and

we saw in the class before). Then, the teacher reads the descriptions of those cities. After that requires and stimulates students to say differences of the cities using comparative and superlative adjectives, as well as to mention some similarities using the determiners both, either, neither. 2. **Project. Speaking section. Comparing cities (45 min.)** - The teacher gives students the rubric and checks it with the group. The teacher organizes the group in teams, requires students to present their cities to their teammates, and compare them in a conversation. Then, the teacher asks students to auto-evaluate the speaking section with help of the speaking rubric. 3. **Project. Writing section. Comparing cities (45 min.)** - The teacher gives students the writing rubric and checks with the group the points that will be evaluated. The teacher organizes the group in teams, and requires students to compare and write some similarities and similarities of the presented cities with help of Project Format.	similarities. Some students write examples on the board. 2. **Project. Speaking section. Comparing cities** - The students check the points that they have to pay attention to and evaluate during this activity. The students join their teams, present their cities, and compare them using comparative and superlative adjectives, as well as the determiners both, either, neither in a conversation. They use the expressions to give an opinion, agree and disagree. After that, they auto-evaluate their own performance with help of the speaking rubric. 3. **Project. Writing section. Comparing cities** - The students write some similarities and differences of the presented cities.
***Session 5**. Feedback.*	
Time: 30 min. **Session goals**:	

Procedures	Teacher's activities	Students' activities
● The students will receive feedback and validate their results. They will detect strengths and weaknesses.		
	Evaluation. The teacher evaluates the writing section and the students' portfolio with help of a rubric [ANNEX 5] and a rating scale [ANNEX 7], makes annotations and takes the average for the summative evaluation. 1. **Feedback (15 min.)** - The teacher gives feedback to the group and gives the students their projects and portfolios with the corresponding rubrics. 2. **Lesson closure (15 min.)** - The teacher asks students what they learn about new cultures and why is that important for them.	1. **Feedback** - The students listen to the group's general feedback and read their individual annotations and rubrics. 2. **Lesson closure** - The students share what they learn about new cultures and the importance, influence, or curiosity that it causes in them.

Table 2. Lesson Planning.

2.2 Instruments of learning assessment

A. **Project writing rubric**. Describing and comparing cities - Writing Rubric.

Name:_____ 4ºA VPR - English 4				
Describing and comparing cities - Writing Rubric				
A2	😵 😵	😳 😳 😳 😳 😳 😳	😬 😬 😬 😬 😬 😬	😎 😎 😎 😎 😎 😎
Content	No presentó. (0 points)	El/La estudiante interpretó la tarea de manera equivocada. El texto es irrelevante y/o desconectado del tema requerido. Presenta poca información acerca de la descripción y comparación de ciudades. (5 points)	El texto presenta algunas irrelevancias y/o ideas no relacionadas con la descripción y comparación de ciudades. (10 points)	Todo el contenido es relevante y está relacionado con la descripción y comparación de ciudades. (15 points)
Organization	No presentó. (0 points)	El texto presentado presenta ideas aisladas y desconectadas. El uso de signos de puntuación es mínimo. (5 points)	El texto está conectado y es coherente. Hay algunos errores en el uso de signos de puntuación. Algunas ideas son confusas y/o incoherentes. (10 points)	El texto está conectado y es coherente. Se usan correctamente los signos de puntuación y algunos conectores textuales. (15 points)
Language	No presentó. (0 points)	El/La estudiante utiliza con muchos errores los comparativos y superlativos, así como los determinadores para comparar ciudades. Hace un uso limitado y repetitivo del vocabulario de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (10 points)	El/La estudiante utiliza con algunos errores los comparativos y superlativos, así como los determinadores para comparar ciudades. Hace un uso variado, pero repetitivo del vocabulario de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (15 points)	El/La estudiante utiliza correctamente los comparativos y superlativos, así como los determinadores para comparar ciudades. Hace un uso variado y rico del vocabulario de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (20 points)

Based on Cambridge Assessment English (2019). Cambridge English Qualifications A2 Key Handbook for teachers for exams from 2020. Cambridge University. United Kingdom.

B. **Project speaking rubric**. Describing and comparing cities - Speaking Rubric (Auto-evaluation).

Name:_____ 4ºA VPR - English 4				
Describing and comparing cities - Speaking Rubric (Auto-evaluation)				
A2	😵😵	😨 😨 😨 😨 😨 😨	😬 😬 😬 😬 😬 😬	😎 😎 😎 😎 😎 😎
Grammar and Vocabulary	No presentó. (0 points)	Cuando hablo, <u>me cuesta mucho trabajo comprender y usar correctamente</u> **comparativos y superlativos**, así como **determinadores**. <u>Logro recordar, entender y usar menos de la mitad</u> del **vocabulario** de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (10 points)	Cuando hablo, <u>cometo algunos errores al momento de usar</u> **comparativos y superlativos**, así como **determinadores**. <u>Logro recordar, entender y usar por lo menos la mitad</u> del **vocabulario** de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (15 points)	Cuando hablo, <u>logro usar correctamente</u> los **adjetivos comparativos y superlativos**, así como los **determinadores** (both, either, neither). <u>Logro también recordar, entender y usar la mayoría</u> del **vocabulario** de partes de la ciudad y adjetivos para describir ciudades que vimos en clase. (20 points)
Pronunciation	No presentó. (0 points)	Cuando hablo, mi **pronunciación es parcialmente clara**, de modo que <u>mis compañeros y compañeras de equipo comprenden la mayoría de lo que digo. Muchas veces me piden repetir palabras</u>. (5 points)	Cuando hablo, mi **pronunciación es suficientemente clara**, de modo que <u>mis compañeros y compañeras de equipo comprenden la mayoría de lo que digo. Algunas veces me piden repetir palabras</u>. (10 points)	Cuando hablo, mi **pronunciación** es **bastante clara**, de modo que <u>mis compañeros y compañeras de equipo comprenden todo lo que digo sin esfuerzo</u>. (15 points)
Interactive Communication	No presentó. (0 points)	**Tengo muchas dificultades para mantener una conversación simple en inglés acerca de ciudades con algunas dificultades** usando las <u>expresiones para dar opiniones y expresar acuerdo y desacuerdo</u>. **Necesito usar el español constantemente para aclarar cosas** durante la conversación. (5 points)	**Soy capaz de mantener una conversación simple en inglés acerca de ciudades con algunas dificultades** usando las <u>expresiones para dar opiniones y expresar acuerdo y desacuerdo</u>. **Necesito usar el español para aclarar algunas cosas** durante la conversación. (10 points)	**Soy capaz de mantener una conversación simple en inglés acerca de ciudades** usando las <u>expresiones para dar opiniones y expresar acuerdo y desacuerdo</u>. **No uso el español para nada** durante la conversación. (15 points)

Based on Cambridge Assessment English (2019). Cambridge English Qualifications A2 Key Handbook for teachers for exams from 2020. Cambridge University. United Kingdom.

C. **Students' portfolio rating scale**.

Students' portfolio rating scale	Incomplete	Satisfactory	Meets expectations
The portfolio presents clear evidence of learning according to the academic objectives. The portfolio demonstrates the student has mastered the knowledge and skills for the course learning outcomes and can apply them in practice.	1	3	5
The portfolio is complete and evidences the student's commitment with her/his own learning process. The portfolio shows the auto-corrections made in class.	1	3	5
		Total:	

2.3 Materials and resources for learning

A. **Student's Booklet (Click to open)**:
   https://docs.google.com/document/d/12eJtWygD3vjDtgMY5p_hqPPfZNgAdMfcTQOn
   0iW3tJ4/edit?usp=sharing

B. **Example of the text presented to the students**. Extracted from: Northcott R. (2016).
   Cities. Oxford University Press, UK.

C. **Chart: Adjectives Word Order**. Extracted from: Woodward English (2022).

Adjectives - Word Order [website].

https://www.woodwardenglish.com/lesson/adjectives-word-order/

D. **Project format (Click to open)**:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/18pOceNkhAkUk_Sj7cZ4xi3kh2mzKGs24BZM8YKR_J3U/edit?usp=sharing

E. Videos

- Smile and Learn - English (2020). Parts of the City I - Vocabulary for Kids [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsWIJj04oQw
- Smile and Learn - English (2020). Parts of the City II - Vocabulary for Kids [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73t85FVRiDs
- 3rdfFloorVideos (2010). Comparatives Part 1 - English with Sound and Light [video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrxTrvrCohE
- 3rdfFloorVideos (2011). Comparatives Part 2 - English with Sound and Light [video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8lX5I5sTPQ&t=452s
- Shainblum, M. (2019). Cities From Around The World | Hyperlapse & Timelapse | 4K [video]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qy0vb4V3B-4
- Astrologo, O. (2016). Venezia [Video]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peQMP-b0XqM
- Esos Word (2022). Istanbul, Turkey [4K] - Travel Video 2022 [video]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gO1sfhG1W2k&t=62s

2.4 Video: Sample of the lessons (Click to open)

➢ Click here to access the video on Google Drive:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wSLfHaTdMqtK-3-ohYYZ-vxGz3Jm0a_R/view?usp=sharing

➢ Click here to access the video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/WvBcYRrdsas

2.5 Evidences (Click to open)

- Portfolio and rating scale samples:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/10DCxQbhLEw25tPUtfjj_4muwVgBBKtRe/view?usp=sharing
- Notebook exercises and notes samples:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MTIz9s7KR1NPfPgwk6om4gp_7zUYvJWE/view?usp=sharing
- Project and rubrics samples:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kjGDdguoZL1mJSV4LL7J1ApG2LNPj4H6/view?usp=sharing

3. REPORT OF THE LESSONS GIVEN AND OUTCOME OF THE ACTIVITIES

The activities were implemented according to the lesson planning proposed previously in this document. The general results of the application of the sequence of activities were very positive. Most of the students were able to receive/produce the requested grammatical structures and vocabulary to describe, compare and contrast diverse cultural characteristics and aspects of some cities. The sequence in which activities were carried out was logical and comprehensible for the students. The following points describe the development and results of the lessons.

Session 1. Introduction.

The introductory session was dedicated to developing the vocabulary necessary to carry out the consecutive sequence of activities, framed in the context of the cities. This lesson was dedicated mainly for the explicit learning of vocabulary. It was considered important to use explicit Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS), particularly because of the age of the students and their level of language development (A2).

A variety of vocabulary active learning strategies, compatible with the substantial diversity and great energy of the group, were used. In this lesson, the focus was especially on four elements of comprehensible knowledge: Meaning, as well as written, spoken, and grammatical form. Today's students are very used to a great amount of visual stimulation. The visual aids (maps, videos, flags, among others) were really useful to attract students' attention and interest in the topic. The images aided students to start memorizing the vocabulary, because they had not only the linguistic reference, but also the visual one.

The students should learn and acquire as much productive vocabulary as possible. This first lesson, much of the vocabulary was still in the receptive stage, because the students had not used it yet. That is the reason why the students were offered more opportunities to acquire

vocabulary incidentally (and also explicitly) in the following sessions. The learning and acquisition of vocabulary is an incremental nonlinear process. The vocabulary introduced in this session was also echoed during all the subsequent lessons.

The first session was beneficial for the students. They remembered the vocabulary that they already knew. They also identified and included some new words, ready to be used, in their 'mental dictionary'. The controlled and semi-controlled exercises are still useful in our times (especially for beginners), only if they are contained in wider objectives, oriented to achieve effective communication, and are connected with the students' needs and interests.

Session 2. Stage 1.

The class started with a video. The visual aids were a very powerful and necessary tool to involve students in the class. The video activated students' attention and directed it to the topic.

The graded text that was used for developing reading skills was very convenient. It coincided with the students' zone of proximal development; therefore, it was both motivating and challenging at the same time. The book offered visual aids as well. The activity was focused on vocabulary recognition in context. The students identified and elicited the meaning of some specific words from the text. They had had an introduction to the vocabulary presented by the text, but now that vocabulary was interacting with other words and variants. The students also had exposure to new vocabulary, which they wrote down in their notebooks.

The same text was used as an imitation drill to practice pronunciation. The students had already read the text, and they knew what it meant. This fact was convenient, because the students felt more connected and comfortable with the input. The imitation drill was useful to present and start practicing the pronunciation without losing the context and objective.

The listening section was attractive for the students. They felt related with the teenagers presenting common examples of the use of comparative and superlative adjectives in their daily life. The power of comprehensible and intercultural input is very potent. Most of the

students answered or tried to answer correctly the proposed comparisons presented by the video.

The students also answered some controlled exercises focusing on grammar developing. In addition to serving as grammatical practice, the sentences proposed on the exercises served as examples/models for students to compare and contrast places around the world. Which they used later in their projects.

Session 3. Stage 2.

To generate curiosity and warm up the lesson, the teacher showed a map of the city. It is interesting to realize that teenage students are very curious, and this kind of details are compelling and help them to enter the topic more easily.

After that the teacher enriched the vocabulary with a list of adjectives to describe places and cities. The students had to think and write the antonyms of those adjectives. Even if the exercise was semi-controlled, the students were not passive, they had to think and move/build their knowledge. They also realized that there is not only one correct answer for some questions.

The grammar explanation was easy to understand for the group. They showed a clear idea of the types of uses of the adjectives, and the mnemotechnics 'OSASCOMP' helped them memorize the order rapidly.

Finally, the teacher presented an example of the writing task required in the first part of the project. The teacher presented a model of the final product, but first, the teacher modeled the writing process step by step. It started with a video (visual aid), then the group read some information about the city, and then the students shared what they thought about Venice. The students had a clearer idea of what they had to do (according to the objectives of the planning).

This was a creative writing task, therefore, the students' products were very diverse in content and form. Some texts had limited content, but most of the students used the grammar correctly. A few of them copied information from the internet. These aspects were indicated in the feedback as an invitation to be more original and creative.

Session 4. Stage 3.

This lesson was dedicated to completing the Project. In the first part of the session, the teacher gave the instructions to fulfill the tasks. The instructions were given in Spanish, because they needed to be very clear for the entire group. Immediately afterwards, the teacher modeled the speaking and writing process with the students with help of some videos and other visual aids (maps, flags, among others).

Having understood what was expected of them to perform, the students started to speak. Taking into account how difficult starting speaking can be, they really made a great effort to communicate and negotiate meaning in English with their teammates, and they did a good job. Not all the students had the same learning pace, hence the teamwork was a convenient scaffold for them to communicate. They helped one another. One of the factors that influenced the success of this speaking task was the environment of trust and willingness to develop academically. The students were prepared for the task, they were also very committed to the school and had good social bonds. These aspects let students take more risks, be relaxed, and enjoy the activity. They auto-evaluated this activity. This self-assessment promoted the sense of auto-progress and responsibility of their own learning process.

Finally, the students wrote their conclusions in teams. The activity flowed quickly, because the students already had the ideas in mind. The students showed a good control of the grammatical structures, content and vocabulary.

Session 5. Feedback.

The final session was dedicated to give formal feedback. The individual feedback was given in the form of rubrics, a rating scale, and written corrections and comments. The general feedback was given orally by the teacher. The feedback was useful for the students to identify some mistakes and correct them, but also to understand how they learn and produce the language, as well as the factors that influence that process. The students recognized the importance of originality, creativity and intuition when producing a language.

4. CONCLUSIONS

➔ The different theories that have been created along history are a very important tool for the teachers. These theories give us a broader view of what language, language learning, and language teaching mean. The theories help teachers interpret and constitute our teaching practices from deeper, clearer, and more constructive perspectives. They broaden their horizon of significance. Good teachers should constantly educate and re-educate themselves by studying new theories and experimenting new approaches. The language teaching/learning field is constantly changing and reinventing the way we think of ourselves, our students, and the language itself.

➔ The lesson planning is a fundamental stage of the teaching process. It is in the planning stage where the teacher can put the theories into action and build an effective sequence of activities. In the class, teachers are pure action, the theories dilute in the processes. Having a good map of the activities, objectives, materials, contents, and times makes teachers easier to teach. The planning stage offers the teachers a moment to evaluate the coherence, comprehensibility and relevance of all the necessary elements that conform and mediate the students' learning experience.

➔ When the group has better social bonds and feel comfortable in the class, they start to participate more and take more risks when speaking or writing. This phenomenon really influences the development of students' performance. If they interact more frequently, they have more opportunities to develop the language. Avoiding the affective filter has become necessary within the classrooms, neuroscience has proven that humans learn better when they are relaxed. The teachers should also be relaxed and convey peace because it is the teacher who mediates the process. The teachers should practice and foster self-care.

➔ The interaction between students is indispensable for language development. When the students have the opportunity to interact more often, they seem to start gaining

confidence and control over language and emotions (they tend to get nervous). When the students support each other, the process becomes more fluent and requires less effort from the teacher. It is important for them to understand that they do not have to produce the language perfectly yet, and that integrating the errors and mistakes as part of the learning process is actually positive. When the students have the opportunity to negotiate meaning, the process becomes more personal, and they become more responsible for their own learning. They have the opportunity to understand how they learn.

➔ A learner-centered classroom offers a more efficient environment for learning. When the students realize that they are the protagonists of their own learning, they become more responsible and the knowledge development becomes more fluent, personal and pleasurable. Very often, the students are used to more teacher-centered lessons, and they are not able to take responsibility for the tasks by themselves, especially at the beginning. The mediation of the teacher is very important and it is a radical change factor. That does not mean that the students are all alone by themselves. The students need guidance and mediation to carry out the activities in their zone of proximal development.

➔ The evaluation has to be useful for both teachers and students. The feedback is an important process that can boost students' performance. It can also provide teachers with valuable information to direct their decisions. The evaluation must be aligned with the objectives, activities, strategies and materials in order to be effective. Otherwise the students can easily get confused and fail to fulfill the objectives. The assessment process has been historically related directly with traumatizing testing experiences and fear. In our era, this is no longer acceptable. Both teachers and students should integrate the assessment as an important step in the whole language learning process.

➔ The teachers have the possibility to blend different approaches, theories, strategies, and materials. Our era offers teachers a great amount of documents we have access to via the internet. Developing creativity and flexibility has become a necessity for language teachers.

➔ Teachers should take time to reflect on their own practice. In our hyperconnected, busy world, people do not take time to be in silence and listen to themselves. But it can become a very powerful practice. Teachers should also listen to their students and try to understand them. When teachers connect with students, the teaching/learning process becomes more organic, because communication is about human connection.

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