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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ACCENT IN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

LA RELACIÓN ENTRE LA IDENTIDAD Y EL ACENTO EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Valeria Paola Toro Reina

Rebeca Naranjo Corría

Ecuador

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The relationship between cultural identity and accent in learners of English as foreign language

La relación entre la identidad y el acento en los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera

Valeria Paola Toro Reina[1]
valeriaptr@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2248-675X
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador
Sede Esmeraldas
Ecuador

Rebeca Naranjo Corría[2]
rebeca.naranjo@pucese.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5825-3321
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador
Sede Esmeraldas
Ecuador

ABSTRACT

A Quanti-qualitative research was done at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas to know the relationship between cultural identity and accent in learners of English as a foreign language with the students from the Foreign and National Language Pedagogy career, the methods used were analysis, synthesis and hermeneutics, and the techniques of survey, reading passages and interview. The investigation was carried out from September/2024 to March/2025. A survey was conducted among 20 students. It revealed that students' cultural identity has a big impact on students' performance when they learn a second language. Besides, reading passages were presented to students and revealed that they had problems concerning speech production due to their natural accent and way of talking. There exists a relationship between cultural identity and accent when speaking in English, so they need a good pronunciation and accent if they want to be understood.

Keywords: relationship; cultural identity; accent; English; foreign language learners

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RESUMEN

Se realizó una investigación cuanti-cualitativa en la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Sede Esmeraldas para conocer la relación entre la identidad cultural y el acento en los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de la Carreara de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, los métodos utilizados fueron análisis y síntesis y la Hermenéutica y las técnicas de encuesta, lectura y entrevista. La investigación fue desde septiembre de 2024 a marzo de 2025.Se realizó una encuesta a 20 estudiantes, esta reveló que la identidad cultural tiene un gran impacto en el rendimiento de estudiantes cuando aprenden un segundo idioma. En las lecturas presentadas se reveló que estos tenían problemas en la producción del habla debido a su acento natural y forma de hablar. Existe una relación entre la identidad cultural y el acento en habla en inglés, por lo que necesitan una buena pronunciación, acento si quieren ser entendidos.

Palabras clave: relación; identidad cultura; acento; inglés; aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera

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INTRODUCTION

The present investigation is about the cultural identity and how this influences the production of learners of English as foreign language. It is of utmost importance to know how the cultural identity that each person has influenced both positive and negative the production of English. “Identity is understood as that nucleus from which the self is formed. It is a fixed and coherent nucleus that together with reason allow the human being to interact with other individuals present in the environment” (Rodríguez, 2009).

Every human being has his/her own identity which differentiates them from different social groups. Moreover, this identity is represented by the accent and way of talking. From decades ago, the accent has a lot to say about people’s identity since it shows not only the place in which that person lives but also the conditions and the culture of that place.

It is very important to know the accent that people possess according to the place in which they operate. In many cases this can serve as a guide to understanding people because the same word can be pronounced differently depending on the person's accent. It is important to see how the accent we have can negatively or positively influence the production of the target language, in this case: English. By knowing this, teachers will be able to understand their students more and understand why they make certain mistakes when using the input language and how to help them overcome this situation.

In the globalized world in which we live it is mandatory to learn English as it is considered as the universal idiom, becoming in this way in one of the most spoken languages around the world. This is why people for every single part of the world decide to learn this language. However, we know that every single person has his/her own identity and way of talking, what makes everybody different. This is reflected at the moment of speaking in English since each person does so, being influenced in some way by the mother tongue.

This is what happens with university students because they do not speak a formal language but an informal one which affects in some ways not only the understanding but also the production of the target language.

It will be seen why this happens and how it can be controlled as people do not do it intentionally but as something natural. Besides, the relationship between identity and accent will be stated. Because of this, the main question of this investigation is the following one: What is the relationship between cultural identity and accent in learners of English as foreign language? The general objective was to analyse the relationship between cultural identity and accent in learners of English as foreign language. These were the specific objectives: to identify the cultural identity of University Students in Esmeraldas, to determine the students' accents when they learn English as a foreign language and to establish the relationship between cultural identity and accent.

What is identity?

"Identity" has been a term that has been talked about for a long time, even in debates. However, there are currently several definitions of it that vary depending on the author. Within the field of linguistics, we have the point of view of Ochs (1996), who says:

"Social identity encompasses participant roles, positions, relationships, reputations, and other dimensions of social personae, which are conventionally linked to epistemic and affective stances". (p.424).

Every single time when we use the language, we use it as individuals with social histories. This is represented by the place in which we live, our race, our religion beliefs, economic status and our gender. For instance, we might be female or a male, we might be Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, we might be of low economic status or of the middle class, all these aspects represent what we are and is represented in the way in which we communicate.

Globalization and Cultural Identity

In the 21st century or era of globalization, people become aware of many aspects, one of them is their own cultural identity since it gives a sense of belonging. Deng (2005), points that:

Cultural identity answers the questions of “Who am I?”, “Where are we going?” and “What do we Have?” Since people construct their identities through their cultures, they will defend them. The answer to all those questions defines who we are as human beings this brings awareness of our roots.

In terms of science, knowledge and economic development globalization has helped a lot worldwide. Nowadays there are a lot of scientific advances which will help us to live better and in a comfortable way. Besides, globalization has also helped a lot in the economic development since now if anyone wants to buy something he or she can do it at home through the internet, people can buy things from different parts of the world and the last but not the least is the knowledge, thanks to the internet people has access to a wide-range of information will undoubtedly is helpful for everyone.

What is culture?

Culture is a term which has been hard to define. Since long ago many people have tried to construct a clear definition. Apte (1994), writing in the ten-volume Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, summarized the problem as follows: “Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature. There was a conflict regarding how to define “culture” in the correct way”.

However, there are several authors that try to define this term by his or her own, like the case of Matsumoto (1996), who defines “culture” as “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next. Culture is the customs and habit that characterize a group of people”. (p.16)

Another definition of culture is the one created by Spencer-Oatey (2008), which has a similarity with the one exposed above. The authors define culture as follows:

It is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.(p.3).

It is important to remember that our surrounding and the people that live around us has a direct influence on us and they are part of our culture. Therefore, our culture is determined by the group of people with whom we have contact in our daily lives.

Acculturation

Acculturation is the process of adapting to a new culture, according to Berry (2003):

It involves changes that take place when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into extended, constant, direct contact with each other. The changes that may occur in this direct contact can be both at the individual level, such as individual's values, attitudes, beliefs, and identities as well as at the group level, such as social and cultural systems.

To adapt to a new culture sometimes people must change their way of talking as well as their perception regarding beliefs, holiday, food and even entertainment, in a way they must change a bit their manner of seeing the world. "Acculturation generally includes the psychological and social changes that a person experiences when s/he moves into a new and different cultural environment" (Cabassa, 2003)**.** When someone moves to a different environment, a different place, undoubtedly, he or she will have to change since people have different thoughts, religion beliefs, etc. according to the place in which they live.

Brown (1986), adds that there are several contexts involved in the second language (L2) and second culture:

One of the contexts is "learning a language within the culture of that second language". In this case, the acculturation level is strong. This makes the learners develop new skills for them

to establish in different settings. Learners must be able to live in a foreign environment as well as to learn the language which is required within that place to communicate effectively. (p.34).

Acculturation stress

Riverside Acculturation Stress Inventory (RASI) (Benet-Martínez & Karakitapoglu, 2003)**.** According to the acculturation and ethnic minority literature Gil, Vega & DIMAS (1994); Mena (1987); Saldana (1994) state that:

Stress associated with the acculturation process is a multifaceted experience related to interpersonal, intellectual/professional, and structural pressures. The acculturation process encompasses more than simply adapting to a new culture. This is linked to many aspects of the person whether they are professional, intellectual or interpersonal, which leads to this process becoming stressful and, in some aspects, tedious.

The RASI was developed because none of the few existing acculturation stress measures systematically and evenly covered all the domains identified see (Benet-Martínez & Karakitapoglu, 2003), for detailed information about RASI's development and refinement. This included 15 items related to cultural challenges. They were divided in 5 domains: language skills (when someone is misunderstood because of his or her accent), work (when someone has to work harder than a non-immigrant), intercultural relations (disagreements between people for behaving "too ethnic"), discrimination (being mistreated due to ethnicity), and cultural/ethnic makeup of the community (living in an environment which is not diverse).

The relationship between native like a speech and identity

There is a theory that explains the relationship that exists between native-like speech and identity, and it is called CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory).

Considering Williams (1999), CAT was developed "to describe and explain aspects of the way people modify their communication according to situational, personal, or even interactional variables" (p. 152). "CAT has two main perspectives: speakers may adjust their speech either towards the speech of their interlocutors (convergence) or away from the speech

of their interlocutors (divergence)" (Jenkins, 2000). Within this theory, it is possible to see how speakers tend to change the way they speak according to the person, the place in which they are, between others. Besides, within this theory influence two important aspects: the convergence and the divergence. The first one has to with the accommodation the speaker does to be understood, changing in some cases their accent to be accepted by the people with whom he or she is speaking to.

In the second part, divergence, the speaker tries to diverge his/her speech from the interlocutors' speech in order to maintain his/her own in-group identity and stay loyal to his/her speech community (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005). This occurs when the speaker emphasizes his or her accent with the one or the ones he or she is speaking to, which sometimes can be a negative aspect.

Identity categories and educational change

From the position of Norton & Toohey (2004) **:**

While many investigations concerning second language identity try to focus on the multiple and intersecting dimensions of learner's identity, there is a growing body of research that seeks to investigate the ways in which particular relations of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation may have an impact on the language learning process.

Many researches do not see these issues as variables but as sets of relationships that are socially and historically constructed.

Regarding sexual orientation Nelson (2004), explores the extent to which this might be an important identity category in the second language classroom: "It is the responsibility of the teacher to create a learning environment in which all the students feel secure. Especially those students who might be of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Community since they constitute a vulnerable minority".

It is important to understand the point that everybody: males, females, disabled and minorities can learn, maybe in a different way and pace but they are capable to improve and acquire knowledge.

Bi-cultural identity integration

In the study by Benet-Martínez & Haritatos (2005), we can find the following fact:

Being bicultural makes me feel special and confused. Special because it adds to my identity: I enjoy my Indian culture, I feel that it is rich in tradition, morality, and beauty; confused because I have been in many situations where I feel being both cultures isn't an option. My cultures have very different views on things like dating and marriage. I feel like you must choose one or the other.

—19-year-old second-generation Indian American

In the example exposed above it is shown clearly a case of bi-cultural integration. Bi-cultural integration is also known as biculturalism and it is a condition in which a person internalizes two different cultures, it can occur whether in the same country or when a person moves to live to another country totally different from his or her own. In some cases, individuals have conflicts in mixing or combing these two different cultures because in one something can be in one way and in the other in another way. Sometimes it becomes a challenge for them.

What is accent?

Becker (1995) states that "An accent is the part of a person's language that serves to identify the speaker's regional origin or national/ethnic identity no matter what language the person is speaking" (p. 37). The accent is a way of speaking that differentiates a person from different regions. Accent, as one of the most effective indicators of identity Seidlhofer (2001); Sifakis & Sougari (2005), not only influences communicative fluency but also has a role in judgments of social belonging and identity (Moyer, 2007). Accent defines peoples' identity, and this is important since according to this people can treat you whether in a good or a not so good

way. Within the teaching-learning process, accent has a lot to do when learning a second language because this is noted at the moment of producing that language. Hinkel (2006) suggests that “teaching needs to address the issues of clarity (such as the articulation of specific sounds), word stress and prosody, and the length and the timing of pauses”. It is fundamental for teachers to teach their students how to articulate the words taking the adequate timing at the moment to speak. Moreover, Otlowski (1998) suggests that for the success of a students’ pronunciation of a foreign language, the teacher and student need to work collaboratively during the language learning process. It is good to highlight that this is not only responsibility of the teacher but of the students too, both parts must work together to achieve that goal.

What is the foreign accent?

A foreign accent is considered today as a natural phenomenon suffered by those who speak more than one language. According to Cantero (1994), the local or foreign accent is not only due to a particular or "incorrect" pronunciation but to a characteristic intonation integration of the whole phonic matter, whether or not it is pronounced correctly. Sounds are grouped into phonic blocks, and not all are of equal importance. For this reason, despite the fact that LE learners can pronounce each of the sounds correctly, they normally retain a foreign accent, by organizing the phonic speech according to their own mother tongue (Cantero, 2003).

For this reason, people who acquire a second language after childhood show certain pronunciation patterns which may vary depending on the age at which l2 began to be learned, the experience, among other factors that vary from person to person. Something that should always be kept in mind is that the foreign accent is something that cannot be hidden, so it has its advantages and disadvantages.

In this way**,** Flege (1988) and Cortés (2002), point out that “the foreign accent can have several consequences for the speaker”. On the one hand, it can be an advantage since it informs the announcer that he/she is facing a non-native, making him/her more tolerant and adapting

his/her oral production. On the other hand, it can influence in a negative way, causing the message to be misunderstood due to the accent.

Non-native speakers pronunciation errors in spoken and read English

One of the methods teachers apply to diagnose their non-native speakers' students is to ask them to read passages which include a variety of pronunciation targets.

Oral reading is commonly, though not invariably, used as a technique in published textbooks Dauer (1993);Grant (2001); Smith, Meyers & Burkhalter (1992) to diagnose pronunciation accuracy, and a host of reading passages have been constructed to efficiently provide full coverage of many phonological targets at the same time. For example, Prator & Robinett (1985):

Offer a diagnostic passage of 166 words that is designed to provide coverage of six areas related to stress and rhythm, seven related to intonation, four related to vowels, eight for consonants, and four for combinations of vowels and consonants (such as the pronunciation of allomorphs for the -s and -ed endings), as well as a section for general comments.

These types of reading passages have many benefits. Through these, vowels and consonant sounds can be controlled. Besides, intonation in questions, the intonation of lists, and the rhythm in sentences, between others can be diagnosed, too.

However, reading aloud is not an actual speech. It includes spoken performance abilities that have no clear parallel in spontaneous spoken language. Reading aloud uses a dual-route processing architecture (Coltheart, Curtis, Atkins, & Haller, 1993) in producing phonological form, in which lexical knowledge may be more important when orthographic regularities are not strong (Rosson, 1985). Second, reading aloud is affected by knowledge of English spelling and its relationship to the phonological form of words (Glushko, 1979). When reading aloud students commit some mistakes since there are words, they did not know so they do not know how to pronounce them. Another important point is that people do not often "Read". So, this becomes a weak point for them and when they do it, they do not read aloud unless they are reading a book

to their children, they are elementary teachers, they teach literature, they are actors, etc. To overcome these errors, it is important to read, watch movies and listen to songs in English, in this way the ear gets used and listening skill gets developed.

Common underlying proficiency

This theory is based on Cummis (2000)**,** which is centered on cognitive competence:

Where the primary language (L1) provides a base for competency in the second language (L2). This theory explains the relationship that exists between (L1) and (L2) as well as the interaction they have. Furthermore, he said that once skills, content and linguistic content are learned in (L1), this will help when learning the (L2). This also has an influence upside down since what is learned in (L2) is automatically transmitted into (L1).

In the process of learning one language a child acquires a set of skills and explicit metalinguistic knowledge what can be beneficial when learning another language. This theory provides the basis for the development of both languages: (L1) and (L2). As Cummis (2000) states "conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible". If a child already understands the concepts of the terms in his or her mother tongue, he or she just needs to acquire the label for these terms in English.

Language acquisition

Ortega (2003) claims that SLA is the "scholarly field of inquiry that investigates the human capacity to learn languages other than the first, during late childhood, adolescence, or adulthood, and once the first language or languages have been acquired"(p. 1-2).

It is the scientific discipline of applied linguistics which has to do with the mental processes and human capacity to learn another language apart from the mother tongue. It is important to highlight that the language that the learner already knows can have a significant influence on the second language they want to acquire. Learners become more advanced the longer they use the language and the more time they spend on it.

The role of first language in second language acquisition

In this part, it will be shown in what way the mother tongue of any individual affects in the second language acquisition, how this happens, and how can we deal with it. “Subsequent empirical studies of errors made by second language students led to the discovery, however, that many errors are not traceable to the structure of the first language, but are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds” (Richards, 1971); (Buteau, 1970).

One of the first causes of the bad second language performance is word order since it varies depending on the language and can cause misunderstanding in people. Another aspect is that in some cases the environment does not help. People learn better when are immersed in an environment in which the second language is exposed. If you are learning a language and you do not have anyone to practice to apart from your teacher, it is going to be difficult for you to perform it correctly.

Language and culture

Both language and culture are important terms especially within the linguistic field. For that reason, before talking about them as a whole it is important to define each one in isolation. Concerning language, Saussure (1974), believes that “language is a system of signs. For him, a sign consists of a signifier (the sound- image or the written shape) and a signified (a concept), in the manner that, they both are inseparably linked with each other”. In other words, both the sound-image and the concept need to be together, they cannot be separated.

Moving to the definition of culture, Roohul (1989), believes that “Culture has multifarious meanings. Culture meant farming” (p.15) which means that culture is everywhere, it is used not only in linguistics but also in several fields since it is said that is culture what differentiate human beings from animals.

From the aforementioned definitions it can be concluded that in cooperation, language and culture have a deep relationship since language is the emblematic representation of a

nation or community thus being in that way the language the emblematic representation of a culture and confirming the fact that language has a direct effect on culture.

Speaking skill as a second language

"Spoken English is the most important among the four language skills in an increasingly globalised world today" (Manan & Shamsudin, 2012). The principal function of the speaking skill is to enable speakers to develop communicative competences for them to use the language in real life. However, it is important to mention that there are three more important skills within the teaching of English: listening, reading, and writing.

"One of the advantages of spoken language is that the process of thinking as you speak allows you to manifest a certain number of performance hesitations, pauses, backtracking and corrections" (Brown, 2001). This implies that learners are capable to correct some of their mistakes when talking, and not only that, this also helps the speakers to take a pause and think a little bit before talking to avoid misunderstandings.

As a disadvantage when developing this skill, Ting, Mahadhir & Chang (2011), denoted that "in a non-native English-speaking environment, it is difficult for non-native speakers of the target language to be able to speak as accurately and fluently as native speakers". Not being immersed in an environment in which English is used, apart from the classroom, makes the ability to speak really complex and difficult to develop.

Antecedents

In the University of Kebangsaan Malaysia, a paper related to the interconnectedness of language and culture, and how language and culture impact upon one's identity was done by (Kim, 2003)**.** During this research, an overview of some social theorists and educationists was taken into consideration to support the main aim of the investigation, which was "Exploring the Relationship between Language, Culture, and Identity". Also, the interplay of language and culture and its impact on social and cultural identity was highlighted all this within the field of

Second Language Acquisition to demonstrate how this influence people's production of the target language.

Regarding the impact of culture on English language learning, a research was done at Aligarah Muslim University in India by (Mohammed, 2019).This paper intended to demonstrate the influence of culture on English language learning in the Arabic World. This paper also aimed at answering the following questions: - What is the effect of the Arabic culture when learning English and what are the difficulties these students face when learning said language due to the differences in culture? Through this investigation, it was possible to see the influence of the Arabic culture on learning English especially in the development of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Moreover, it demonstrated the impact of language on people's culture.

In the University of Bilken at Turkey, a research related to the relationship between cultural identity and accent was carried out by (Aydemir, 2013). This investigation was focused on the perceptions of 20 native speakers of English, who have been living in Turkey for a long period of time, and their Turkish accent in terms of nativelikeness. For this, a cultural identity questionnaire was administered to the participants. Besides, their reading aloud of a few Turkish passages was recorded and some interviews were conducted with four of the participants. At the end of the investigation was possible to see that there is a relationship between cultural identity and accent, in the sense that the more the participants identified themselves as Turkish the more 'native-like' their accent score was. The findings further indicated that the participants tended to prioritize comprehensibility over the presentation of speech. At the pedagogical level, this is a reminder that during their practices, second language teachers need to be aware of the language learners' goals to avoid mismatches.

With regards to the bicultural identity; specifically: (1) unpack the construct of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII), (2) identify the personality and acculturation predictors of BII. Differences in BII, acculturation stress, and bicultural competence were measured with new

instruments developed for the purposes, Benet-Martínez & Haritatos (2005), carried out an investigation at the University of Michigan under the title: “Bicultural Identity Integration: Components and Psychosocial Antecedents”. Using as a sample a group of Chinese American biculturals, researchers concluded that variations in BII do not define a uniform phenomenon, as commonly implied in the literature, but instead encompass two separate independent constructs: perceptions of distance and perceptions of conflict between one’s two cultural identities or orientations. Besides, results also indicated that cultural conflict and cultural distance have a distinct personality, acculturation, and sociodemographic antecedents.

An investigation was carried out in California under the title “Bicultural Identity and Language Attitudes: Perspective of Four Latina Teachers” by (Weisman, 2001)**.**
This work aimed to address issues of bicultural development and linguistic attitudes within a context of existing societal power relations. Interviews were carried out with four Latina teachers in order to examine the relationship among their bicultural identities and their attitudes toward English and Spanish in doing so it was demonstrated that it is important to incorporate issues concerning bicultural development and language domination into the professional development especially of bilingual teachers.

Pretelt (2016) published a research study about “Cultural Identity in Bilingual Schools”. The present study sought to analyse if the systematic teaching of a foreign language in a bilingual school at Barranquilla, Colombia constituted a risk factor for the mainstream cultural identity. The main purpose of the study was to determine to what degree learners used foreign cultural markers and to characterize how school community perceived the status of a foreign culture. The data was collected from a group of fifth-grade students what showed that learners have not adopted a foreign cultural identity, and that mainstream culture prevails in the school ground.

METHODOLOGY

The current investigation took place at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeralda's city with the students of the career of Foreign and National Language Pedagogy. The present investigation was a qualitative-quantitative one. It was formed by 20 students in total. Furthermore, the methods of this investigation were: analysis, synthesis, and hermeneutics. The first one was used to analyse the bibliography and the development of students during the production of the English language meanwhile the second was used to synthesize the theories that support this research, and the last one was used to interpret the information collected in the theoretical framework. Also, some techniques were applied to gather information such as survey, interview, and reading passages.

Survey: It was applied to the students of the career of foreign and national language pedagogy at Pucese. For this a questionnaire was used. The different questions about cultural identity were carried out to identify students' cultural identity.

Reading Passages: this technique was used to explore the situation with the students and to identify the common mistakes they committed when reading and speaking in English, being influenced by their mother tongue in this case (Spanish).

Interview: An interview was applied for the students in which they were asked some questions in English to analyse how the development, production, and performance of their English were as well as to analyse the relationship between cultural identity and accent.

To apply the techniques some instruments were used:

- For the survey, a questionnaire was used to identify the different aspects of one's cultural identity.
- For the reading passages, some passages were used for the teacher to identify the common mistakes students committed when reading and speaking in English.

- For the interview, a question bank was done to analyse the accent, pronunciation, and intonation of the English language in students.

It is important to mention that the hypothesis of the current research was the following one: The more English teachers know why cultural identity influences their student's performance and production of the English language the easier is going to be for them to understand and help them overcome those barriers.

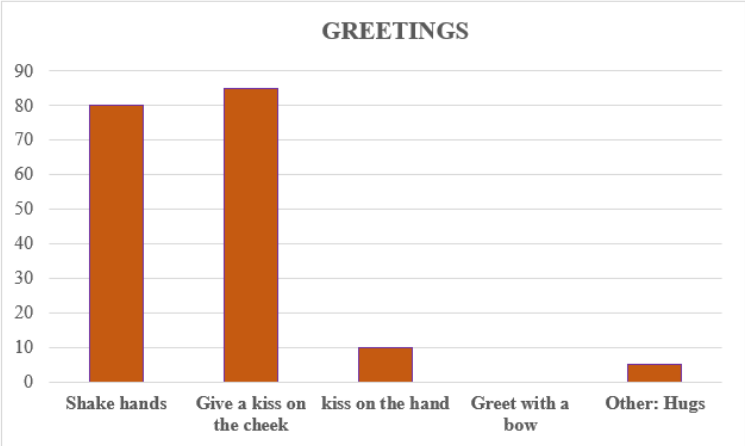
Finally, the information obtained from the application of the different techniques was tabulated manually.

RESULTS

Survey

Figure 1

What is normal to you in greeting someone.

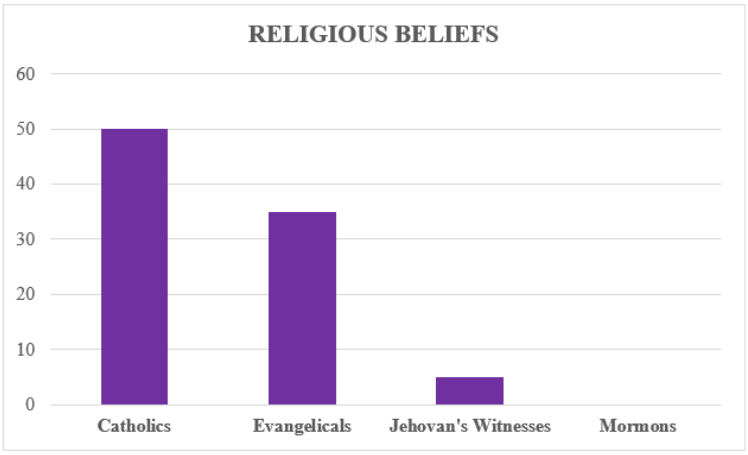


Source: How students normally greet people.

The results show that in the students' culture for people it is normal to give a kiss on the cheek as well as shake hands when greeting. On the other hand, 10% of the students say people kiss on the hand while just 5% of the students affirm that people hug each other what demonstrates that in students' culture people are happy and friendly.

Figure 2

What religious beliefs do you have?

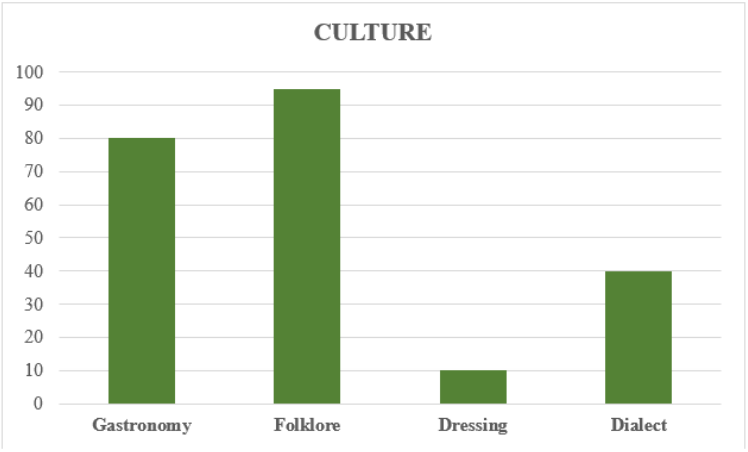


Source: Students' religious beliefs

As can be seen in figure 2, 50% of the students expressed they were Catholics, while 35% said they were Evangelicals and just the 5% mentioned they were Jehovah's Witnesses. This demonstrates that in students' culture there exist a religious freedom that shows that everyone can choose in what they want to believe, and everyone must respect that decision without discrimination.

Figure 3

What do you consider to be the most important trait of your culture?



Source: Most important cultural aspects

Concerning this question, as can be seen in figure 3, it is remarkable that most of the students (95%) revealed the folklore as the most important trait of their culture followed by the gastronomy with an 80%. Besides, 40% of the students said the dialect also plays a fundamental role in the culture trait and the last but not the least is the dressing that corresponds to 10%.

Reading passages

The reading passages purpose was to determine the students' accent when they learn English as a foreign language, and it had two different passages: one about an opera and other about dolphins. The results of the reading passages revealed that students accent influence a lot in the production of the target language in this case (English). It was possible to see that students did not feel comfortable when talking, sounding in many cases as robots what made them sound unnatural.

Regarding the practice of language, it was possible to see that students lack of practice because of their wrong pronunciation in certain words. For instance: society, primary, singer, ill, among others.

Another difficulty, students faced when recording the audios was in their speech production. They did not speak with intonation. They did not respect the punctuation marks. They omitted some letters at the end of the words as in Spanish.

Therefore, due to both: students' lack of practice as well as students' accent. They had some problems in pronunciation. Being these the following ones:

1. Problems with the words in past. For example: presented, imagined, conveyed. It was difficult for the students to pronounce these words since they are not used to put the emphasis at the end of the words.
2. In addition to this, students showed problems with the vowels sounds especially when the sound was at the beginning of the word as in the case of Europe, easily, etc.

3. And the last but not the least was the pronunciation of the sound /th/. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the students had this problem, they could not pronounce in the correct way words such as: through, theatre or both.

Interview

The interview included 7 questions about the importance of pronunciation/accent when speaking a foreign language and how to overcome this problem. Students think that the pronunciation and accent are of utmost importance because they facilitate the understanding of what people want to communicate and without a good use of them, people could not understand each other.

Thanks to this interview it was possible to see how the cultural identity influence in people's accent as well as in the development of the target language in this case English. This instrument let me know the main problems students commit due to their cultural identity and hence their accent.

Students accentuate the words in a bad manner. This occurs because in Spanish we read the words as they are written what obviously does not happen in English. Moreover, students have problems with the plural of the nouns since in Spanish to make the plural you must add and "s" to the word but in English there exist some rules with the plural forms like: man-men, person-people, child-children what results really difficult for non-native speakers.

Another problem students have is in the word order, especially in the case of the adjectives since in Spanish we say first the noun and then the adjective but in English is the contrary. On the other hand, due to the accent the students have, they do not make a good intonation when speaking English.

Another characteristic of these students is that they speak too fast and, in doing so they do not pronounce well the syllables of the words causing the omission of certain consonants as the "-s" at the end of the words. Additionally, students lack vocabulary, which is shown by their lack of confidence in answering questions.

This interview shows the difficulties students face with some sounds in English such as: /th/, /sh/, /s/, as well as in the sound /ed/ of the verbs in past.To overcome the problems, students practice a lot, record themselves talking, listen to songs, watch movies in English, talk with native people, use platforms, and try to imitate the native accent. However, it is important to bear in mind that our accent will always demonstrate who we are and that is not so bad because it represents us somehow.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained coincided with the ones found by Kim (2003), in relation to how the second language acquisition influence in people's production of the target language since within the present investigation it was possible to see how the mother tongue or first language impact in the production of the second one, taking into account also the cultural identity the person has.

Even though people cannot get rid of the cultural identity because it is something that represents them in a way, they can practice and be exposed to the second language in this way they will do a better performance of the target language which in this case is English.

Mohammed (2019) also argue that culture has a big impact on English language learning. He stated the difficulties his students had when learning English especially in the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) what it is very similar to what I found in my investigation because I realized that due to student's cultural identity and accent students had problems not only when speaking and reading but also when listening and writing in English.

The results obtained coincided with those found by Aydemir (2013). There is a relationship between cultural identity and accent. This author applied the same techniques as me: passages, questionnaires, and interview. Similarly, in my research, I discovered that both cultural identity and accent positively or negatively influence the production of the target language. Therefore, it is essential that, at the pedagogical level, teachers are aware of this problem faced by students and help them improve and avoid mismatches.

Although the current study does not speak in depth about bicultural identity, it was important to consider the research of Benet-Martínez & Haritatos (2005) since thanks to this, it was possible to know what bicultural identity was. Furthermore, through this research, it was possible to see what it is like to know two different languages and have different cultural identities at the same time and to know that cultural conflict and cultural distance have a different personality, acculturation, and sociodemographic background.

Also, in the same line, the investigation about “Bicultural Identity and Language Attitudes: Perspective of Four Latina Teachers” by (Weisman, 2001), in which it is explained the relationship among bicultural identity and teachers’ attitudes toward English and Spanish was of utmost importance for the current investigation since it showed that there is important that bilingual teachers incorporate bicultural issues and language domain into their professional lives to improve as teachers.

Furthermore, this research contains a couple of similarities with Pretelt's (2016) study on "Cultural identity in bilingual schools" in which the author wanted to determine how cultural identity influences second language learners and to what degree they use foreign cultural markers to see how the school community perceives the state of a foreign culture. Like my research, here it was possible to see that, despite the students' exposure to the language, they maintain their cultural identity, since it is what represents them and is an important feature of their background.

CONCLUSIONS

Students’ cultural identity has a big impact on students’ performance when they learn a second language. This occurs because students have their own accent, they have acquired due to the culture. Therefore, they acquire an accent with notably affects in a way their speaking skills when talking in English since they tend to commit the same mistakes, they do in their mother tongue.

In relation to the student's accent, it was significant to know they had problems concerning speech production. Due to their natural accent and way of talking they lacked intonation and practice. They showed some pronunciation problems which are the following ones: pronunciation of the words in the past tense, problems with the sound /th/ and with the words that started with vowel sounds like Europe, easily between others.

There exists a relationship between cultural identity and accent when speaking in English. Students need to have good pronunciation and accent if they want to be understood. However, sometimes the accent plays a fundamental role when talking in English this was demonstrated in this research since students had problems with: the accentuation of the words, plural nouns, word order, among others. To overcome all these difficulties, it is important for them to practice and practice a lot every single day.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I declare that I have no conflict of interest related to this research.

Author Contribution Statement

Valeria Paola Toro Reina: Methodology, Conceptualization, Data Curation, Funding Acquisition, Software, Resources.

Rebeca Naranjo Corría: Formal Analysis, Supervision, Review and Editing, Visualization.

Artificial Intelligence Use Statement

The authors did not use Artificial Intelligence in any part of the manuscript.

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