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**Interculturality as a tool to improve oral expression: perspective of American professors  
applied B.A. students**

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**Resumen**

El presente artículo de reflexión es un análisis acerca de la importancia de participar en un programa de inmersión para obtener un nivel adecuado en la expresión oral de los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés, tomando como eje principal de reflexión, el programa “Language and culture program 2013” del Instituto de idiomas (ELI) de la Universidad Estatal de Missouri. Se analizan las experiencias de dos estudiantes de la licenciatura de inglés de la Universidad La Gran Colombia y dos profesoras del instituto de idiomas (ELI) quienes participaron del programa de inmersión durante el 5 de julio al 3 de agosto del año 2013, a fin de contrastar los factores de interculturalidad que potencian la expresión oral con la realidad de un contexto de inmersión.

Se describe que los estudiantes en proceso de aprendizaje de una segunda lengua, practican y fortalecen las habilidades orales, adquiriendo conocimientos relevantes al verse influenciados por componentes culturales y emocionales tales como la confianza y la seguridad. Los estudios de dicho programa demuestran que la influencia de procesos de interacción intercultural en el estudio de una segunda lengua tiene como resultado la obtención de un desarrollo potencialmente eficaz en el uso oral de la lengua inglesa.

**Palabras clave:** Programa de inmersión, interculturalidad, expresión oral , aprendizaje del inglés.

**Abstract**

This article is an analysis about the importance of participating in an immersion program to acquire an appropriate level in the oral expression of English learners, taking as the focal point of reflection, the program “Language and culture program 2013” of the English Language Institute (ELI) at Missouri State University. The experiences of two students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia and two professors of the English Language Institute (ELI) who attended the immersion program during July 5th to August 3rd, 2013 are analyzed in order to contrast the intercultural factors that enhance oral expression with the reality of an immersion context.

I describe within how students in the learning process of a second language, practice and strengthen the oral skills, acquiring relevant knowledge influenced by cultural and emotional components such as trust and security. Studies of this program show that the process of intercultural interaction in the study of a second language has as a result, a potentially effective development in the use of the English language.

**Keywords:** Immersion program, interculturality, tools, oral expression, English learning.

**Introduction**

This article is focused on the immersion course: Language and Culture offered by Missouri State University (MSU) as an instrument to enhance the oral skills of the students in the BA in English from Universidad La Gran Colombia. The immersion program contains elements that promote the enrichment of oral levels of the students who are learning English. From there, it is possible to contrast theory and practice. In order to accomplish this, I review the factors that foster the English language usage by analyzing the experiences of students who participated in the program and the theories related to second language learning, oral expression, intercultural interaction, monocultural levels, affectivity, and the interactional theory through the conceptual contributions by Albert Ellis (1985), Jane Arnold Morgan (2000), Douglas Brown (2000), Daniel Goleman (1996), among others.

In the theoretical framework, there are a series of interviews of two students from the B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia and two professors of the English Language Institute (ELI) who were part of the immersion program in 2003. The interviews focused on the interculturality of participants and the results obtained at the end of the immersion.

Throughout the research, a qualitative approach was adopted that allowed the social world revision, which it is used by the English Language Institute at Missouri State University, when they receive students from different countries and integrating intercultural elements that strengthen and enrich the oral expression development processes.

**Problem statement**

At the present time, English is categorized as the main language of international discourse. Mainly, due to the economic, educational, political, scientific, and cultural needs that emerged during the last centuries, beginning in Europe and gradually spreading across the entire world. “English ranks first as for to the expansion of usage is concerned” as several studies show (Labrie and Quell, 1997; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997; Hyrkstedt and Kalaja, 1998; Petzold and Berns, 2000; Berg et al., 2001). The learning of a second language is directly related to knowing how to communicate in the language, indicating that the oral expression of students is one of the most important elements in the learning process. Acquisition of the English language requires the development of the four communication skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the skill that normally a person commonly uses most often is oral expression. Thus, it is imperative to seek to show an effective way of how to improve the oral skills of English students in a context of cultural interaction, while analyzing aspects such as the acquisition of a second language, the intercultural interaction and the oral expression.

The linguistic evolution that has been unleashed on the world in recent years and has left the English language as the primary language. According to Graddol (1997)

Globally there can be more speakers of the English language as a foreign language than as mother tongue or second language and it is expected that in the future speakers of English as a foreign language will exceed the number of speakers of the English language as a native language and second language (p. 14).

With this, it is possible to consider that “the English language is becoming increasingly important and indispensable in the professional and academic development of anyone, its

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knowledge is almost an essential condition for professional success” (Fishman, 2001, p. 15). In the case of students that learn English as a profession it is important to emphasize that it is vital that these students of B.A. in English have mastered each of the four communicative skills of this language. As stated by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) “The international language of research and scholarly publication is English” (p. 10).

During the acquisition of the native language it is possible to analyze that there is a learning pattern in the learning of the language development: humans naturally first listen, then speak, read and write. Yet, for any reason, when human beings are immersed in a process of learning a second language, such as English, language development is not the same, since students commonly show more often than not certain weaknesses in oral expression. In most cases, speech is the last skill to be learned and with which the student has the greatest difficulties. This can be attributed to some emotional variables such as security, anxiety, or fear to speak due to linguistic habits that students grapple with in their native language. In this way “sometimes the anxiety before learning a new language is negatively related with a skill and not with something else. This demonstrates the negative correlation of anxiety with academic performance in oral exercises” (Arnold, 2000, p. 77).

Regarding the development of oral skills of English learners, it can be said that the idea of expressing oneself in a second language one is not completely familiar with, increases insecurity rates compared with others, as a response to the fear that is often experienced when the student feels that he can make mistakes, given that oral skills development largely involves intrinsic aspects of a social approach, such as spontaneity, creativity, agility and safety; and that “these common forms of apprehension among psychologically healthy people can be broadly classified as social anxieties” (Leary, 1990, p. 39).

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Although students have the basic knowledge of a second language, such as grammar and spelling, anxiety can appear at any time and generate speaking fear to speak, and “a good part of the research has shown that anxiety is associated with problems in the learning of a second language” (MacIntyre y Gardner, 1991, p. 41). However, this kind of situation often becomes somewhat paradoxical, given that for most people, speaking is the most pleasurable activity that can be conducted in the native tongue, leaving aside activities that involve reading or writing. But how is it to be explained what kind of factors hamper the development of oral skills of English students who want to communicate certain ideas orally?

It can be said that students who learn English are faced with so many difficulties in trying to improve their oral expression in this language, because of some situational and contextual aspects in which the learning process is done, which mostly focus on the emotional, such as anxiety, as asserted by Leary and Levitt (1990 – 1980) “relations between anxiety, cognition and behavior is best viewed as recursive or cyclic, where each influences the other” (p. 44). One of the most common problems during the improvement of oral skills of students, who are learning English, is the fear of making mistakes, forgetting what to say, pronouncing certain words correctly, feeling ashamed when speaking in front of someone who has mastered a second language, and not having sufficient fluidity and spontaneity to have a proper conversation.

Particularly when talking about interaction, it refers to a collaborative effort between two or more people that is mutually enriching in this way. Nevertheless, the interaction between people from different countries often becomes more beneficial to the extent in which practiced with people who are not part of the common environment. This is usually accessed, for example, in the case of Colombian who is learning English, the best option related with the method of progress in oral skills. It is directly aimed at foreign students who speak English. Because if

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people who want to enhance oral expression seek help in friends who come from the same country and have the same native language for obtaining long-term results, it can become more difficult, because during this kind of interactions, students always use the native language to respond to certain concerns and excuse some shortcomings. Otherwise, when the interaction takes place with a foreign student who does not speak Spanish, the person is bound to face diverse situations as a student in which to understand and make themselves understood, achieving integration to their academic training, fluency, mental agility and more factors that will enhance oral skills, in this kind of situation, students “must be willing to set up situations in which fluency can develop, and then encourage the students to actually communicate” (Brown, 2003, p. 7).

The English Language Institute at Missouri State University, henceforth known as ELI at MSU, offers the opportunity to develop and optimize the communicative skills of English learners through the use of culture as a useful tool for teaching and learning, through its immersion program called "language and culture". The pedagogical tools that are found in the institute are constantly related with intercultural interactions between participants of different nationalities who attend this institute with the objective of encouraging appropriate development of communicative skills. “The most modern research in methodology emphasize that the positive aspects of cooperative learning and oral interaction are the most natural way to implement it” (Ramirez, 2002, p. 168).

In order to emphasize the benefits that an immersion program as "language and culture" of the ELI offers in order to improve English learners' oral expression through intercultural processes, I focus on the development of the programs at this educational center throughout the document in order to discover, explore, and reflect on the academic processes that students from

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the Universidad La Gran Colombia undertook during four weeks of summer in 2013 as participants of a “language and culture” program that had as a objective to allow the learning of English through the strengthening of knowledge and practice thereof.

It is also relevant to consider various aspects of the social environment that immersion programs have intrinsic in the context, since that provides valuable opportunities to the extent that the only way to improve the communicative competence of students who are learning English is through practice that is exercised in the new language. Owing to, it is possible to use techniques of oral interaction with foreigners who speak English, avoiding the common use of Spanish language.

All of the above inform the following question, ***Why can intercultural interaction prove to be a tool to improve oral expression of English students in an immersion context?***

### **Literature review**

The theoretical framework is divided in learning a second language, oral expression, anxiety as an intervention element in communication and intercultural interaction.

*Learning a second language.* The learning of a second Language is related with the ability to navigate communicative skills, since its main objective is aimed at the transmission of ideas or thoughts in another language, but the main focus of the communication points directly to the skills that the students have when they talk. However, it is important to note that:

The learning of a second language is the product of many factors pertaining to the learner on the one hand and the learning situation on the other. It is important, therefore, to start by recognizing the complexity and diversity that results from the interaction of these two sets of factor (Ellis, 1985, p. 4).

So, the development of communicative skills that students have in the use of a second language is intrinsic in the culture of the language and in the contextual environments where these factors are found. When a student is learning a second language, it is possible to understand that:

Language is one of the most observable expressions of culture and because in second language setting the acquisition of a new language is seen as tied to the way in which the learner's community and the target language community view each other. (Ellis, 1985, p. 252).

From another perspective, it is possible to analyze that many students around the world have experienced the socio cultural influences that are found in the process of learning a second language are largely responsible for the main difficulties that they may have. "It is used the socio

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cultural term to refer to any process or phenomenon related to social and cultural aspects of a community or society” (ABC, 2007, para. 1). Stress, shyness, fear and shame are aspects that develop in relation to people that are around the students and whereby is more difficult acquire some skills, such as, speaking.

Culture is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below the threshold of consciousness, yet all of which govern human behavior just as surely as the manipulated through movement strings of a puppet control its motions (Condon, 1973, p.4).

***Oral expression.*** Realizing that security controls much of the behavior of a human being, it is understandable that many students learning English have great difficulty with oral expression and trying to say something. Most of time these situations are given with a classmate who speaks the same native language because the fear of making mistakes is an emotional situation that hardly can be controlled and the idea of the idea of losing face with people who usually share in everyday life is very difficult. Campbell and Ortiz consider that the anxiety levels in the learning of languages among college students are "alarming" and estimate that up to half of all language students experience debilitating anxiety levels with language (Campbell and Ortiz , 1991, p. 159).

Yet, it is important to know that: “oral expression is the ability to convey wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas meaningfully using appropriate syntactic, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological language structures” (Myers & Cassel, n.d., p. 14). It is a communicative skill that is normally enjoyed much in the usual context in which students are formed, and which human beings learn instinctively first, to know more about the natural development of language. Thus, “Interaction is an inescapable and inescapably crucial aspect of classroom life” (Allwright, R. L., 1984, p. 159). It is essential to identify and overcome each of the factors that hinders the proper

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management of communicative skills, in this case specifically the oral expression of students who are learning English.

In order to consider the components that contribute to the interiorization of the expression process that a human being acquires at the moment of communicating properly in a certain language, below is presented the formulation component and the joint component, which contribute and explain how communication processes are developed through oral expression.

The formulation component takes the result of the planning component and merges into a linguistic form. This comprises lexical, grammatical, phonological processes (and in the case of writing, spelling) which are distinguishable and seem to have (e.g. in cases of dysphasia) some independence, but whose exact interrelation is not fully understood. The articulation component organizes the motor innervation of the vocal apparatus to convert the result of phonological processes in coordinated movements of the speech organs in order to produce a succession of waves of speech that constitute the statement, or, alternatively, the motor innervation of the musculature of the hand to produce a text written by hand or typed. (M.C.E, 2002, p.89)

***Anxiety as an intervention element in communication.*** In order to achieve the creation of a clearer idea of what the elements involved in the communication processes are, it is important to note that anxiety is one of the emotional states that most betrays the safety of students of a second language. In so far as, every time an activity that involves anxiety comes and the lack of security persuades the will and pleasure of interacting with other people, regardless of whether the person knows the grammatical structures well and the use of language.

Jane Arnold Morgan and Douglas Brown (1999) through their writing, "A Map of the ground" in the book "Affect in Language Learning", explain the effect of anxiety in the

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classroom and the situations that arise from this anxiety. This provides a deeper and more thorough analysis of the actual contexts for those students who face this daily and in which it is possible to know that:

When anxiety is present in the classroom, there is a down – spiraling effect. Anxiety makes us nervous and afraid and thus contributes to poor performance; this in turn creates more anxiety and even worse performance. The feeling of fear and nervousness are intimately connected to the cognitive side of anxiety, which is worry. Worry wastes energy that should be used for memory and processing on a type of thinking which in no way facilitates the task at hand. Morgan (p.9)

Thus, the main task to be performed in the classroom or outside the classroom, is based in discovering how students of a new language can achieve speaking and expressing their ideas properly, without the situation becoming uncomfortable or unpleasant. Considering that “In the real world, learners need to act pragmatically in order to survive linguistically, not simply learn to perform adequately to pass some standard in a classroom situation” (McDonough, 1995, p.30).

***Intercultural interaction.*** When observing the processes involved in enhancing the oral skills of students who are learning English effectively, it is possible to start talking about intercultural interaction as a tool to enhance the oral expression of students who are learning English. Firstly, interculturality is a process of communication between people with different cultural identities, where respect is promoted, and enrichment and integration between cultures is sought after. This kind of interaction allows for the enrichment of language learning through culture, strengthening important aspects of the training process of the students who want to enhance their oral expression in learning a new language.

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The concept of interculturality or intercultural competence arose many years ago in the cultural research. By this time, culture and language were separable factors and without any characteristic in common. However, during the XX century it was possible to determine that culture and language were daily realities that have many things in common, made up of the same inherent elements, “So much so that in the teaching of second languages and foreign languages is paid increasing attention to the cultural component” (Méndez, 2012, p.101). Because of these connotations and the frequent use of immersion for learning another language, it became necessary to redefine the cultural concepts and the observations that so far were known of communicative competence. In this way, according to Byram (1995: 2001), “sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and cultural competence, described by J. Van Ek (1986) in his model of the components of communicative competence, are the predecessors of the concept of intercultural competence” (p. 57).

At this moment, cultural interaction, is defined and explained through two approaches: The social skills approach and the holistic approach.

The first, based on the model of the native speaker, part of the pragmatic dimension of language skills to defend the using of techniques of cultural assimilation. The objective is to make that the learner to behave in such a manner with respect to the rules and conventions of the speech community involved that happens to be a member of this. Since this approach of the language is conceived as an obstacle to communication between people from different cultures. On the other hand, the proposal of the second approach consists in develop in the learner certain affective and emotional aspects, among which highlights an attitude, a sensitivity and special empathy towards cultural differences. Only thus, overcome ethnocentrism without renouncing his personality or his identity and, by reducing the impact of culture shock, will be able to become a mediator between cultures

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in contact. In this approach the language is understood as an element (member) of culture (Mendez, 2012, p.101).

Although both approaches have differences, it is also possible to observe that both the approach of social skills, such as holistic approach, have certain characteristics in common that allow the attribution of particularities of great importance to intercultural competence and intercultural interaction as such. In this way, it is considered that this competence integrates to its development significant processes through the affectivity of the students that internalize, becoming own and coherent, through the acquisition of cognitive, affective, and communicative elements that enrich the academic process of students learning a language, in this case English. Thus, the process of learning a second language through intercultural interaction is distinguished by three stages:

1. Monocultural level: the learner observes the foreign culture since the interpretive limits of their own culture; 2. Intercultural level: the learner takes an intermediate position between the own culture and the foreign, which allows for the comparisons between both; and finally, 3. Transcultural level: the learner reaches the proper distance with respect to the cultures in contact perform the function of mediator between both (Mendez, 2012, p.102).

But as it was possible to ensure that the language is linked to the culture and it is very difficult to separate, it is essential to find how students that are learning English can achieve to improve their oral expression using as a tool their own culture along with the second language and interculturality that exists in immersion programs offered in English-speaking countries, in order to overcome the main difficulties encountered with this ability, trying to find a pleasant and comfortable context for students. The bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange

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Programs of United States of America shows that immersion students: “Learn new skills and as an exchange participant you will develop communicative skills, leadership skills, self-confidence, and a greater understanding of the complexities of the world around you” (Exchange Program.U.S.A., 2009, par. 5).

Regarding places that can offer methodologies and elements that promote culture as a tool for learning and improving English as a second Language, it is possible to find that the English Language Institute at Missouri State University is an educational center that has in its pedagogical methodology, intercultural aspects that foster the cultural growth, and the obvious progress of the communication skills of the English learners. In this sense and in order to know the main objectives and academic aspects of ELI, explaining a clearer idea of academic work of this university, in which it is emphasized in order to generate an objective reflection in this document, the following information found on the ELI website.

The English Language Institute began classes in June 1996 with five students. Since that time, the program has experienced continued grow and now serves more than 150 students. The ELI offers ten levels of study in core areas of writing, grammar, reading/vocabulary, academic listening skills, and speaking pronunciation classes. The English Language Institute wants, preparing scholars for global citizenship by enhancing cultural competence and increasing linguistic excellence, because Global knowledge and English fluency are key skills to success in today’s interconnected world (ELI, 2006, par. 2).

It is thought that intercultural interaction is a positive tool in improving in the oral skills, because the students that have difficulties in this issue say that the biggest problems they have when it comes to talking comes from the fear of making mistakes in front of their social circles.

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Since, most difficulties that are experienced in the oral expression of students in a second language appear more frequently in the usual context in which the student moves normally, but the fact of meeting new people who have different views and lifestyles, of which it is possible to learn and know different aspects through every interaction to be established, will improve both personal safety as well as academic performance in the oral skills due to this environment becoming a motivating source for the student. In this sense, the intercultural interaction area may be the best tool for enhancing the communicative skills of students because, it is important to note that "In teaching an *alien*" language, we need to be sensitive to the fragility of students by using the techniques that promote cultural understanding" (Brown, 2000, p.189).

The effectiveness of the intercultural interaction, as a tool in the learning of a second language, lies mainly in the capacity that the cultural environment has for encouraging students, through diversity and respect that are part of these spaces, to try to improve on all activities undertaken to progress in the practice and the use of a second language. It is an element of stimulation that allows students to leave behind all kinds of emotions connected to personal insecurity, such as fear, anxiety, or stress when interacting with someone else, in order to learn that it is valid making mistakes and to try to improve every day through personal aspects that enable one to be better every day. This means that the students who are learning English are able to develop self-confidence.

Features like the ability to motivate ourselves, to persevere in the effort despite the possible frustrations, to control impulses, to defer gratification, to regulate our own moods, to avoid that the anguish interferes with our rational faculties and, last but not therefore less important, the ability to emphasize and trust each other (Goleman, 1996, p. 25).

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Undoubtedly, the above sustained related with personal motivation that a student who is learning English should be used at the time to undertake an educational task aimed to enhance the oral expression as an ability of the communicative interaction, it is possible to affirm because it is appropriate to show the relation between the affective aspect and the learning a second language in one of the many theories that exist related with English language learning, such as the manufacturing meaningfulness. "Manufacturing meaningfulness: is a potentially powerful factor in human learning. We can make things meaningful if necessary and if we are strongly motivated to do so" (Smith, 1975, p. 162).

In this instance, it is imperative to talk about motivation in the development of communicative interaction to enhance the oral expression of second language students, because it is the main factor in this case. Students who are learning English have motivation when participating in an immersion program, regardless of whether these aspects are focused on people, places or culture. The last observation can be analyzed in the writing, intercultural communication: a classroom experience, written by Jorge Turizo and Pablo Gómez (2006). They emphasized the idea that:

The pedagogical implications of embraced by intercultural communication programs include a) a reflection on the fate and native cultures; b) a ransom of voice experiences and of life of student and teachers; c) a concept of culture not only understood as a fixed set, normative phenomena, but rather as a dialogic process; d) an understanding of preconceived ideas, self-conception and stereotypes about themselves, about the target culture, and about their own culture; e) the full adoption of a native identity as linguistic, communicative and cultural; f) providing the necessary adaptability of students to consciously select or reject the values, beliefs, metaphors and attitudes that should

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avoided, successful interaction of the situation, are a challenge (Turizo and Gómez, 2006, p. 142).

In the same way, one could speak of meaningful processes as the most effective ways to learn a new language which adequate management of intellectual knowledge is generated an adequate management of intellectual knowledge, in order to obtain a favorable learning process that relates both theory and practice. Here comes again to annotation, the capacity that students should foster progress in front of academics aspects with certain weaknesses that develop inadequate situations and uncomfortable for students. Everything is centered on the fact that learning something new and incorporating it into what we already knew can be beneficial.

Meaningful learning may be described as a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure. As new material enters the cognitive field, it interacts with, and is appropriately subsumed under, a more inclusive conceptual system (Brown, 2000, p.84).

From another perspective, to make effective the meaningful learning of the students in learning a second language in the progress of the communicative skills, it should also be mentioned about the personal, emotional, and intellectual disposition of the students. This means, it is necessary that people are willing to face different academic situations in order to obtain positive elements in the formation process of the second language in an appropriate way. Here the student's behavior is directed rightly to achieve personal goals that encourage the educational process. This means that students must also develop and get to have certain attitudes towards the development of communicative skills, especially oral expression.

Leaners possess sets of beliefs about such factors as the target language culture, their own culture and, in the case of classroom learning; of their teacher and the learning tasks they

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are given. These beliefs are referred to as “attitudes”. They influence language learning in a number of ways. (Ellis, 1985, p. 293).

From a much closer perspective it is relevant to note that in Colombia the process of analyzing the feelings and the meaningful processes of affectivity of the students that learn a second language, had already been done. This promotes much of the process and academic performance in language learning, which is brought out in the work by Dora Inés Mesa López did in the thesis: *The English learning by tandem in communication mediated by computer*.

There, she says accurately and concisely that:

It has been shown that attitudes, feelings and perceptions of language students in the abroad toward a cultural exchange, increases the English level to contact with native English speakers and reduces anxiety and fear. The intercultural learning opportunity is a great motivation for students (Mesa, 2014, p. 13).

In order to have an objective analysis on the process of reflection concerning how the intercultural interaction is the most appropriate tool to improve oral expression of students who are learning English in an immersion context, it is important to continue studying the cultural aspects that involve all these contextual situations that are framed in international level in order to comprehensively study the intercultural interaction. That task, finally, is the main focus of work in this document. Given its connotation and importance in the findings and implementation of tools that support the development of the oral expression in students who are learning English, as explained above, it becomes possible to define interculturality, as:

The possibility to know another culture and analyze that experience. The intercultural competence acquired from doing this helps individuals to understand cultural difference better, establish cognitive and affective links between past and future experiences of that

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difference, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of their own cultural group and milieu. (Beacco, 2011, p. 2).

Thus, students who learn a second language acquire through cultural issues, tools that enrich the learning processes of a second language. From the perspective of authors such as (Byram, 1998; Vanek, 1986) through which it is possible to know how and in which way cultural interaction influences as a tool, due to the socio cultural, intercultural competence is defined in the use of the language as:

The capacity that a person has to use determinate language in certain frames of knowledge or the ability of that has a student of a second language or a foreign language to function properly and successfully in situations of intercultural communication that occur frequently in today's society (López, Peña, Mejía, Fonseca and Guzmán, 2001, p. 4).

It can be pointed out that it is unquestionable that interculturality is the most efficient means to understand the aspects that make up the learning process of a second language and that in turn provides valuable elements that facilitate and positively promote the performance of students in the development of the communicative skills, such as speaking.

Although interculturality is identified as a clearly positive factor in the academic performance of students who are learning English who are in an Anglo-Saxon context, it is important not to try to change their real value, due to interculturality must be projected to be a tool to learn, understand the world, and enhance skills. Or seen from another perspective, it can be understood that:

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Language teaching may tend to be limited to functional goals (communicating in order to do) and hence to play down the importance of such goals as “communicating in order to learn” or “communicating in order to understand (the world)”. In concrete terms, it seems that language teaching tends to put cultural/intercultural education in the service of language learning (Beacco, 2011, p. 1).

Related to how interculturality may be to the service of language learning, it is found that the interaction and cultural education are closely linked by the same educational purposes, given their vehemence to be functional and effective tools for students who have problems in the communicative skills during the educational process in learning a new language, as in this case the English language. All this is explained in the interactional theory, to show that its sole purpose is aimed for the students of a second language to undertake the personal construction of motivational and academic support in order to obtain an educational and social progress that benefits the educational and social processes.

The interactional view: It sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. Language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations. Areas of inquiry being drawn on in the development of interactional approaches to language teaching include interaction analysis, conversation analysis, and ethno methodology. Interactional Theories focus on the patterns of moves, acts, negotiation, and interaction found in conversational exchanges. Language teaching content, according to this view, may be left unspecified, to be shaped by the inclinations of learners as interactions (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 21).

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Thereby, intercultural interaction proves to be a tool to improve the oral expression of students who are learning the English language, in view of that it can help notoriously to overcome any type of emotional and personal obstacle, such as fear, anxiety or shame, allowing in turn, students to undertake a social development, to foster interpersonal relations as interactions based on respect and mutual enrichment. Where interculturality is associated with motivational factors this can act to enrich in the students who are learning English language a successful academic process. All of this can aid students in admitting the possibility to know new lifestyles and new perspectives about the world, while encouraging safety, mental agility, spontaneity, and creativity.

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**General objective.**

- Contrasting theory and practice of the intercultural interaction as a medium generator of tools to enhance the oral expression of students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia in immersion contexts.

**Specific objectives.**

- Reviewing the interculturality factors that the immersion program of "language and culture Language" of the English language Institute at Missouri State University offers in order to enhance the oral expression of students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia.
- Identifying those factors that enhance the oral expression of students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia who participated in the immersion program, "language and culture 2013", of the English language institute at Missouri State University.

**Research methodology**

*Focus of the research.* The interculturality as a tool, to enhance the oral expression of students who are Learning English in Anglophone countries, adopts a qualitative research approach that in order to start a reflection from the study of the social world which takes place around an immersion program as “Language and Culture Program 2013” at Missouri State University. There is an evidence that the union between people from different parts of the world and which do not speak the same language, make the use of English become a necessity. Therefore, to achieve communication of an idea or to develop a specific academic task it is absolutely necessary to speak English properly and try to improve the way of saying things so that others can understand. This means that students must undertake a process to develop oral expression in a meaningful way, so that the students achieve more confidence to express their ideas.

During the development of the research another important factor arose and that is the cultural pattern that exists in the immersion programs. As the diversity components and inclusion that manifests in the learning context of a second language and which generates certain states of comfort in students who are enhancing their communicative level of English.

This process is carried out from the particular to the general. The first phase begins when studying the course of immersion “Language and Culture Program 2013” as a facilitator of learning a second language, that is to say, a tool to enhance English learning. At the moment in which a student is already immersed in the American culture and is part of the immersion program, it is possible to recognize the second phase. This is where the student interacts in the search of a useful tool to improve oral skills. There, it is taken into account how the participant

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develops oral expression during the immersion program and which are the cultural factors that contribute in this process, such as, the context, the classmates, or the classroom. All the information that is obtained from the study focused on the immersion program “Language and Culture Program 2013”, are obtained from the information produced during the course. These include lesson plans, activities, or results of the course. In this way, from the sample collection and information analysis, it is obtained directly from the situations that have already been observed and the opinions that participants have about their experiences.

The research registration and information manipulation for the construction of the reflexive article is focused on the contributions of (2) two students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia and (2) two professors of the English Language Institute (ELI) who attended the immersion program “Language and Culture 2013”. Through open interviews, academic evidence, and personal experiences it is shown that in effect, the fact of participating in an immersion program results in the meaningful improvement of English language students’ oral expression.

***Sampling methods.*** Information was gathered to develop research related with interculturality as a tool to improve the oral expression of the students who participate in immersion programs. In order to improve the communicative level of the second language, students were immersed in the diversity of the North American educational system, obtaining all the sources of samples that were available in the context in which it was developed “Language and Culture Program” at the Missouri State University, tending to find and publicize the main factors that contributed in the positive development of communicative competence of students who were in contact with this type of contexts. The methods for collecting the research samples were focused on the sample of volunteer participants or self-selected.

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The first one (sample of volunteer participants or self-selected) is related with two students of B.A in English program that were part of the immersion program offered by the Universidad La Gran Colombia in 2013 and two professors of the English Language Institute (ELI) that were part of the program during summer in the same year. Through their experiences and visions regarding participation in the course, it is known if in fact, this kind of situations promote the development of oral expression and how some cultural patterns that are interconnected with the English context exert some force about particular situations for students to achieve their language learning/skills building goals.

The sample of cases is focused on activities that were performed in the culture and speaking classes, because in this part of the research it was possible to find key aspects that involved the intercultural interaction and the way in which this context encourages the development of the oral expression in those who are learning English. In those classes the main elements of work were to prepare expositions or oral presentations where students should express their ideas and positions about particular topics, along with the classmates that did not come from the same country and did not speak the same language. This last part proved to be a necessity for developing security, in order to achieve effective communication.

The homogeneous samples mixed the previous research resources of the article, highlighting personal experiences of each of the participants in the native context where it was found that the interculturality was a factor of diversity and inclusion, and one that achieves that the oral expression of students who seek to enhance their oral skills through an immersion program, as in this case “Language and Culture Program” at Missouri State University, can be improved.

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*Data gathering and analysis.* Data gathering was focused on the content and development of the classes of “listening and culture” by professor Crystal Young; the Language English institute at Missouri State University as a source of intercultural processes; the professor Paula Moore, ELI special programs director at the Institute of English at the State University of Missouri as a mediator of the language immersion processes; and two students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia as participants of the immersion programs.

Data obtained from the analysis of culture classes are typified by the cultural factors that create control moods and security through the hypothesis that interculturality can facilitate, for the students who are learning English, the development of oral skills. Through the lived experiences of two students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia that participated in the immersion course “Language and Culture 2013”, the main idea is comes through how these kind of activities helped these students achieve to generate changes in the academic life of students that are not born and do not reside in Anglo-Saxon countries, but are exposed to the immersion context and the culture.

The qualitative observations made during July 5th to August 3rd, 2013, the dates in which the immersion course took place and subsequent months was focused in a social and human environment, from processes of immersion. It was necessary to assess all the contextual and cultural situations that the state of Missouri offers in order to obtain details of the interactions that were significant in the academic process of the students at Universidad La Gran Colombia to achieve better oral proficiency in the English language and a favorable development in oral expression.

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The data organization obtained through qualitative observations of social and human interactions was projected to analyze classes, what was studied, the methodological development, and the evidences of the practical development. To analyze the management and personal perspective of the professors of ELI, a semi-structured interview was used, in which it was essential to know what was their opinion related with these interactional processes and which were the main objectives in which the academic centers promoted the learning of a second language through intercultural processes. Finally, to know the perspective of two students at Universidad La Gran Colombia another semi-structured interview was employed in the same way in order to learn how this immersion influenced the educational background of the people who were part of the experience.

For the analysis of the research and the method of data gathering presented, the methodological design used is called case study research. This was selected in order to examine the topic of how intercultural interaction can be a positive tool in the development of oral expression of students who are learning English through immersion contexts. The main characteristic that is adapted to the research is supported through the student's learning experiences, because this design has a direct observation of the facts, which are studied through a strategic methodology that employs collection techniques that allow to know the contextual reality of the academic processes of students (Nielsen, 2015). Thereby, students who are learning English constitute, transform, and improve the knowledge through participation they had in the immersion program “Language and culture 2013” to become as active agents of research. As they observed and acquired relevant experiences that contribute to the reflexive analysis of this document.

**Information analysis**

All interview responses are reported verbatim.

*Professors*

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #5: What is your opinion about the processes of cultural interaction?</b>
<b>1. Professor 1.</b>	<i>I think that the intercultural interaction is developed between people from different countries, but that these kind of interaction can face a lot of difficult in the way, if we do not open our mind about the culture of the another one. The idea is try to understand and respect the culture of the person that we met, in order to get new knowledge and exchanging ideas successfully.</i>
<b>2. Professor 2.</b>	<i>I think that the processes of cultural interaction can be related with the interaction between people of different cultures that share certain information through different communicative strategies that provided changes and positive outcomes.</i>

**Data analysis and relation with theory**

The interviewees are in agreement that intercultural interaction processes are developed from the interaction of people who come from different cultures and have the same purpose; interact in order to know certain information, create knowledge, understand cultural aspects previously unknown, and use a style of teaching - learning. Also, it is an important mark in this process that individuals must understand and respect the culture, thoughts, and opinions of the other.

The concept that the professors of Missouri State University have about intercultural interaction processes are suitable because, in fact, interculturality is a communication process between people with different cultural identities, where respect is fostered and the enrichment and integration between cultures is sought, “So much so that in the teaching of second languages and foreign languages is paid increasing attention to the cultural component” (Méndez, 2012, p.101).

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #6: What are the main objectives of the immersion program in the English language institute at Missouri state university?</b>
<b>1. Professor 1.</b>	<i>I think that the main objectives of the language and culture program are to develop global citizens through the culture competence and the excellent linguistic. The English students need try to providing security, comfort and of course the possibility to interact with other people just in English through the culture that it can find in the different people that study at ELI and come from around</i>

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	<i>the world.</i>
<b>2. Professor 2.</b>	<i>I know that the principal objectives are provide to the student, success through the context of American classroom, good instructors, good behaviors and culture, that is definitely, one of the most important aspect in the ELI.</i>
<b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b>	
<p>The interviewees disclose that the main objectives of the immersion program are based on preparing scholars for global citizenship by enhancing cultural competence, increasing linguistic excellence, and the communicative skills of the students.</p> <p>It seeks to get success in the academic education of students in the English language, taking full advantage of benefits of the North American context.</p> <p>The set objectives in the immersion courses at Missouri State University respond to the academic needs that a student of English language seeks to satisfy by participating in an immersion process. The bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Programs of United States of America shows that an immersion student: " Learn new skills as an exchange participant you will develop communicative skills, leadership skills, self-confidence, and a greater understanding of the complexities of the world around you."</p> <p>(Exchange Program.U.S.A. 2009, par. 5).</p>	
<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #7: What are the academic strategies that the English language institute at Missouri state university manages in the immersion programs?</b>
<b>1. Professor 1.</b>	<i>I think that they want to develop in the program, the</i>

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	<p><i>academic skills of the students. Get higher levels of teaching in English through research in the American context and also in others context. It is also important to improve the abilities of reading, listening, writing and definitely speaking.</i></p>
<p><b>2. Professor 2.</b></p>	<p><i>Well, some strategies are directing to get high standards with the students. In order to this, they use tools as flash cards, self quiz, new vocabulary or something like that. Also use tools more technological as a Google docs or Microsoft Word. But in conclusion, the principal objective is try to develop the student's skill in the English language and encourage participants of different courses to work much more after the immersion.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b></p> <p>The interviewees thought that some of the academic strategies that are used in the immersion program of the English language institute at Missouri State University are focused in using different tools such as the research of contexts, culture, or the interaction to enhance the four communicative skills of an English student. It also encourages the idea of objectively performing activities or dynamic proposals in the course, to improve academic skills during and after the immersion program.</p> <p>According to the academic strategies that are set forth in the immersion program at Missouri State University, it is possible to say that largely it is related with the pedagogical implications that Turizo and Gómez (2006) mentioned. To achieve a</p>	

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<p>successful process in an immersion program, it is necessary for the student to ponder about the culture of destination and origin, understand the preconceptions along the process, adopt a full linguistic identity and become communicative in the English Language, and have a capacity of flexible adaptability and predisposition for any activity or dynamic.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewed</b></p>	<p><b>Question #8: How can a student who is learning English and participating in an immersion program enhance communication skills in the language in the English language institute at Missouri State University?</b></p>
<p><b>1. Professor 1.</b></p>	<p><i>I think that the program as such, it helps to improve communication skills of students through different classes that offer during the course. But also largely it influences the context in which students are immersed because they can find a great variety of opportunities to interact with native speakers and improve their proficiency in the English language.</i></p>
<p><b>2. Professor 2.</b></p>	<p><i>Well, the student can find lot opportunities, not just in the inside of the classroom, but also outside of the classroom. They have a lot of other opportunities that are free, proper and fun in which the student can interact and increasingly improve their communicative skills because there are a lot opportunities to help the</i></p>

	<i>speaking.</i>
<b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b>	
<p>The interviewees disclose that the students who participated in the immersion courses and are learning the English language can improve their communicative skills in a meaningful way due to the context in which they are immersed, since there are a variety of possibilities to interact because the process of learning and the practice of skills does not happen just in the classroom, but also outside it. The fact of being in an American context, forcing them to use English all the time in academic and personal aspects, has a great effect in the academic process.</p> <p>The theory agrees that a student participating in an immersion program has the ability to improve their communicative skills, since the fact of constructing a learning process and cooperative interaction highlights positive aspects in the language practice, because the cultural factors offered by the American context through the classroom, the professors and the learning tasks forces the student to significantly enhance the use of English language, which can be found in the program “language and culture” of the English Language Institute at Missouri State University (ELI, 2006).</p>	
<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #9: Do you think the fact of using intercultural interaction as a tool for enhancing oral skills in the English language is good? Why?</b>
<b>1. Professor 1.</b>	<i>I think that it is absolutely necessary for the students be part of the class activities where they have to interact with people from other cultures and in contexts where the culture is focus. All this becomes a real opportunity</i>

	<i>for students to interact, practice and improve their oral skills significantly.</i>
<b>2. Professor 2.</b>	<i>I think that definitely yes, because in the ELI they have student that come from of different cultures; offer the opportunity to interact a lot of just in English and share ideas, knowledge and thoughts about different aspects.  And in that moment the students be able to use and improve in the language with the help of the intercultural interaction.</i>
<p><b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b></p> <p>The interviewees are in agreement that, given the context in which immersion programs develop, students are faced with the necessity to use English language all the time, so, when they interact with people from other countries and share cultural context or thoughts about certain aspects, they can achieve meaningful improvements on their oral skills.</p> <p>The reality of the immersion program of the English language institute at Missouri State University is related with the interactional view proposed by Richards and Rodgers (2001), insofar as that the language is seen as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations, through which is generated outstanding tools for improving the oral expression of students.</p>	
<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #10: From your perspective, what are the main aspects that a student participating in an immersion program can acquire to improve their</b>

	<b>English.</b>
<b>1. Professor 1.</b>	<i>Well, I said that in that moment is really important understand that every place in where the student is, can learn and improve its four skills because during the course of the program find every opportunities. The important thing is to be open to learn from every situation that offers immersion context, the culture, the country, the city, the school, everything.</i>
<b>2. Professor 2.</b>	<i>I think that the key is to commit to speak English only, to use the English language only. Students should try not to interact with the people of its same country, so is really important enjoy every opportunity, in order to achieve a significant experience with the infinity of possibilities offered by the immersion program. In this way and through the interaction only in English, students can markedly improve their oral skills.</i>
<b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b>	
<p>The interviewees are in agreement in recognizing that it is important that students who choose to access an immersion course must be conscious of the importance of using the second language as the only option of communication. Clarifying this, it is possible to recognize that the students who participate in a immersion programs have a lot of opportunities to meaningfully improve their level of proficiency in the English language,</p>	

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owing to, the contextual options that can be found, such as, the country, the city, the culture, the education center, the professors, among others.

The principal aspects that help a student to positively improve their level of proficiency in the English language are related with the theory of meaningful learning, in which it is stated that although there is a learning process in the use of language, it is possible to achieve anchoring new material, in order to develop in the student a conceptual system more inclusive, acquiring markedly enhanced English language (Brown, 2000).

*Students*

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #3: How was your personal experience as a participant in the immersion program "Language and Culture Program 2013"?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>Well, from my experience this type of program is useful and appropriate to improve the academic, professional and personal lives with the correctly use of the English language, owing to the context and the people that is there, and with which it is possible to interact.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>So, this experience was really productive and important, because he achieved to learn a lot about the target language.</i>
<b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b>	

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<p>The interviewees expressed that participating in the immersion program of the English Language Institute at Missouri State University was an enriching experience and productive for achieving high standards of academic and personal excellence in the use of the English language. The theory is related with the fact of considering that being immersed in a new country, in which it is possible every day to find a lot of contextual and cultural opportunities with which to practice and improve, it becomes a motivational factor of great importance in the process of student learning. "The modern research in methodology emphasizes the positive aspects of cooperative learning and oral interaction is the most natural way to put into practice" (Ramírez, 2002, p. 168).</p>	
<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #4: Did you meet people from other countries who were improving their English language and what kind of academic aspects did they improve?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>Of course, in fact we met people from around the world, which went to Springfield - Missouri in order to improve their skills in general. But, by the interactive process that was possible find, the oral skills were relevant in the course.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>Yes, of course I met people that went to the program have just one reason, learn and improve the English language. And I think that this was the conclusion of the course for everybody; improve the language through the culture and the interaction with others.</i>
<b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b>	

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The interviewees said that all students with whom they shared in the immersion course, sought to enhance in general the use of the English language, but through the diversity of cultures and possibilities of interaction it was possible to develop specifically with more easiness the oral skill of the students.

This part is related with the holistic approach of the communication development, due to, through the use of the same, the student is able to relate affective, intercultural, and cultural aspects to enhance communicative skills in the new language (Méndez, 2012).

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #5: Do you think the English language institute at Missouri State University promotes intercultural interaction processes? Why?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>Yes, I think that MSU gave the opportunity to the student to interact and participate in a process of intercultural interaction inside and outside of the classroom, where they can shared experiences and managed a good communication with many kind of people with different cultures.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>Of course, I think the English language institute at MSU handles intercultural interaction processes because that course attendance people from around the world with which it is possible interact, learn about different things positively, such as culture and construct an mutual learning process.</i>

### **Data analysis and relation with theory**

The interviewees thought that in effect, the English Language Institute at Missouri State University, handles process of intercultural interaction, due to its work is mediated by the interaction between people that come from different countries and cultures that share experiences and knowledge, in order to create a mutual learning process, which enhances significantly the use of English language.

The theory is related with the concept of intercultural interaction in general, due to this concept is known as the interaction between people of different cultures working for the same objective, which in this case is the enhancement of academic knowledge. It is also possible to analyze "this is a potentially powerful factor in human learning. We can make things meaningful if necessary and if we are strongly motivated to do so " (Smith, 1975, p. 162).

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #6: Do you think that attending classes with people from different countries, who didn't know your language, helped you to improve your English language level?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>Of course, this course was useful to improve her English language level, because all the time was mandatory speak and interact in English. For me the interaction was a very good tool, which gave us facilities to learn</i>

	<i>English language and also we always hear each other, no matter the countries where we were from.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>I think that the only way to communicate with the people that participated in the English program was in English, because they didn't know his native language, for this reason, he found that in fact, it was a good way to practice and establish a positive interaction to improve the level of English.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b></p> <p>The interviewees thought that in fact, it was possible to improve the level of use of English language, because through intercultural relations, developed within and outside the classroom, it was necessary to use English all the time as the only option of communication. Therefore, English was practiced constantly and, the students forgot many insecurities and strengthened their knowledge.</p> <p>According to the ideas of Jorge Turizo and Pablo Gómez (2006) related with the pedagogical implications to be in touch with an intercultural context, it is possible to know that just as the students who participated in the immersion course of the English Language institute at Missouri State University say; the fact of having to use the English language all the time when a student is immersed, develops in students the ability to significantly improve communicative skills in the language.</p>	

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #7: At the end of the course in the English Language Institute at Missouri State University, what did you improve?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>During all the course I could improve her four skills, owing to the different activities that they did together with the American context, the different people that went too, and every facility that the immersion program offers.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>I think that was notable, the progress that He obtained to improve confidence and of course, the use of English language skills. Although He improved greatly in the four skills. There was a noticeable progress in speaking and listening skills. With the last one, He said that the fact to communicate with American people and people who live in Springfield, He had to speak only in English and of course improve more and more every day.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Data analysis and relation with theory</b></p> <p>They expressed that they improved considerably in the four skills, but there was more relevance in the development of oral skills, owing to, the fact of being in the necessity to speak English all the time. This allowed them to have more confidence, more listening comprehension, and outstanding managing of the oral expression.</p> <p>This is related to the formulation component and articulation that developed the oral expression of language learners. Here it is argued that the interaction with people who do not share the same native language, helps to enhance confidence of students to aptly</p>	

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develop particular ideas, which increases the communicative capacity, the communicative skills and the oral expression, in general, which is linked to meaningful learning, This “may be described as a process of relating and anchoring new material to relevant established entities in cognitive structure” (Brown, 2000, p.84).

<b>Interviewed</b>	<b>Question #8: Do you think that your oral skill is better after participating in the immersion program in the English Language Institute at Missouri State University?</b>
<b>1. Student 1.</b>	<i>I think that I could improve my oral skills, thank to the interaction that was possible do in the intercultural interaction context. All the time that I had to communicate with others in English in every single place that I was.</i>
<b>2. Students 2.</b>	<i>Yes, I do. I think that my oral skills after the immersion program were getting better thanks largely to the kind of context provided by immersion program. For example the mandatory use of the target language in every moment with the interaction in the classes or outside the classes.</i>

**Data analysis and relation with theory**

The interviewees thought that their oral skills in the use of the English Language improved considerably after participating in the immersion program, due to the context in which the course was developed and the intercultural factors that manages the English Language Institute.

This part is related with the conception of what the bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Programs of United States of America has about an immersion student.

Owing to, the principal skills that a student developed as an immersion participant, it focuses in the communicative skills, leadership skills, self-confidence, and a greater understanding of the complexities of the world around you (Exchange Program.U.S.A., 2009).

**Research results**

In order to know the intercultural facilities that Missouri State University, through the English Language Institute, offers to the students who seek to enhance their communicative skills through the immersion programs.

It can be considered that the "Language and Culture program" which is offered in different seasons of the year, places an emphasis in trying to facilitate the processes of intercultural interaction between students who enroll in the program for the purpose of enhancing oral skills, by means of different activities ranging from knowing the city and talking about some issues of global concern. The institute always points to the cultural interaction and the context of culture of the English language as relevant elements of the formative process of students who want to learn or improve the English language.

In addition, interculturality as a tool to improve oral expression: perspective of American professors applied to Latino students, had as a analysis axis, the opinions and experiences of two professors of the English Language Institute (ELI). It was also possible to take into account the perceptions, knowledge, and experiences of two students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia, as participants of the immersion course "ELI: Language and Culture 2013".

Using a qualitative research approach and open interviews, it was possible to analyze that the theoretical considerations concerning the learning of a second language, as the formulation component and the articulation of oral expression, the social skills approach and the holistic approach that were taken into account in the beginning of the reflexive article, are in agreement with the personal and academic experiences of people who have been part of process of

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immersion and intercultural interaction, as well as, the professors and students that have been immersed in these programs. Factors such as learning a second language, oral expression, intercultural interaction, and the pedagogical implications that a immersion student has along the experience, promotes greatly the development of the proficiency level in the oral skill of a student who is learning English. Because the cultural context in which is framed such pedagogical options offers spaces and tools of intercultural interaction with people who come from different parts of the world and give a lot of cultural options, where it is established the necessity to create academic relations with people who come from different parts of the world and do not have the same native language, in this process it is necessary to use the English language as the only communication option.

The social context and the cultural context which are intrinsic in an immersion environment are the main factors of progress in the academic processes of students, due to, the interculturality as a tool that promotes understanding and communication between people who do not speak the same language, thereby, students to be in constant practice with the second language, improved better every day the way in which they expressed ideas or thoughts, enhancing thus, their oral skills. In the analysis it was taken into account the apprehension levels in the process of learning a second language, such as the monocultural level oriented to the observation of a foreign culture, the intercultural level focused in the intermediate position that a student who is learning English takes between its own culture and the foreign, and finally, the transcultural level headed to how a second language student achieves the proper distance related to the cultures in contact to develop a mediating function (Méndez, 2012, p.102).

Thereby, students that participated strengthen the oral expression, the researcher could observe that they obtained more confidence to share certain ideas or thoughts, related with

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different topics, were more motivated by certain aspects that surround them in order to meet new people and cultures through which it was possible to acquire relevant knowledge regarding the second language, as in this case the English language.

### **Conclusions**

As a result of the research embodied in this reflexive article, it is possible to conclude that when the theory and the practice of intercultural interaction are contrasted, as a medium generator of tools, to enhance the oral skills of students of B.A in English program at Universidad La Gran Colombia in immersion contexts, it was found that by reviewing the intercultural factors provided at the English Language institute (ELI), that are experienced inside and outside the classroom, together with the contextual factors of the immersion program, as the country and the cities in which are immersed, the classroom, professors, motivators agents, English language institute or classmates, students benefited from the experience, due to the context allowed the study of the English language in the whole day and the practice was steady.

It is actually possible to ensure that this educational option provides appropriate and effective tools to enhance the communicative skills of students who want to overcome certain weaknesses in the proficiency level of English language, especially in the use of the oral expression.

With reference to a research process directed to verify how the interculturality can be a tool to enhance the oral expression of students who are learning English, it is possible to find that the origin of the investigation is the immersion program “Language and Culture Program 2013” at Missouri State University, because the first reflection which is necessary to review, is

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intrinsic with the experience, the academic effects, and the cultural possibilities that students can find being immersed in the context of a second language as the English language.

Associated with the factors that may be affecting the proper development of the oral expression of students who are learning English, some methods of interaction and cultural development have been proposed in order to optimize the learning process, however, it is important to note as reflecting about each of the situations discussed in this document, it could be argued that the most effective method for improving oral skills and the development of oral expression, is located in the intercultural interaction in immersion contexts because in this process of academic formation, it is relevant to interact with people that use perfect English and do not speak Spanish. In fact, the interaction with other students who are immersed in the second language is very important in so far as that, through the enrichment of the vocabulary in English language, it will be possible to acquire and experience more security and confidence when speaking, because in conclusion “oral expression is the basis of communication and interaction” (Ramírez, 2002, p. 168).

To summarize, it is possible to say that Missouri State University together with the Universidad la Gran Colombia, achieve to create an effective academic agreement to enhance especially the proficiency level of oral expression of students' of B.A in English program who participated in the immersion program. From the first moment in which students arrived to the city of Springfield, located in Greene County in the state of Missouri, it was unquestionable that the English Institute was a pedagogical center with vast management in the use of cultural tools that foster the study of the English language, and although at first it was difficult to give a opinion and identify what kind of methodology was used at the institute, today, after analyzing many theories and reviewing some concepts, it is possible to say that the language and culture

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program provides the opportunity to develop the communicative skills through the use of intercultural interaction and interculturalism.

The fact that a Colombian student has the possibility of sharing a classroom with a person that comes from another continent that grew up in an eccentric culture and each day teaches many quirks and interesting aspects about its country, becomes a motivating agent. To understand that the idea of interacting with someone who does not speak Spanish is not something bad, it is something good because it can be a meaningful experience in the process of academic formation, where interaction is encouraged in a framework of respect and mutual enrichment of knowledge.

Furthermore, it is a positive and motivational factor in the processes of intercultural interaction that a Colombian student can experiment with a foreign culture, focused on the idea of learning new and interesting things about cultures, as yet unknown, for instance lifestyles, ways of learning, personal preferences, or many others. The benefits of this type of learning are the first step for students who are learning English and have difficulties in the use of oral skills, may decide to participate in the immersion programs, which obviously can provide for practicing the language and finding enriching aspects that stimulate the formative processes of the second language in the students. This may act to the student achieving putting aside the stress that comes from expressing certain ideas and acquiring more confidence to speak.

Finally, through the language, culture, and the contextual environments in which students can interact with other people together with the academic support that the professors of ELI provide through the culture and speaking classes, or maybe through walks in which it was possible to strike up conversations with North American people, also, tangible elements of great

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value are acquired that greatly help the formative process in aspects such as listening comprehension and oral skills. Therefore, after carefully studying each one of the culture aspects, the interculturality, the learning of a second language, the meaningful processes, or the interactional view, it is possible to say that the intercultural interaction is a proper tool for enhancing the oral expression of the students who are learning a second language in a immersion context.

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## APPENDIX



UNIVERSIDAD  
**La Gran Colombia**  
Facultad Ciencias de la Educación

***Interview format: Professors***

1. What is your full name?
2. Where are you from?
3. What do you do?
4. What do you do in the English language institute at Missouri state university?
5. What is your opinion about the processes of cultural interaction?
6. What are the main objectives of the immersion program in the English language institute at Missouri state university?
7. What are the academic strategies that the English language institute at Missouri state university manages in the immersion programs?
8. How can a student who is learning English and participating in an immersion program enhance communication skills in the language in the English language institute at Missouri State University?
9. Do you think the fact of using intercultural interaction as a tool for enhancing oral skills in the English language is good? Why:
10. From your perspective, what are the main aspects that a student participating in an immersion program can acquire to improve their English.



UNIVERSIDAD  
La Gran Colombia  
Facultad Ciencias de la Educación

***Interview format: Students***

1. What is your full name?
2. Where are you from?
3. How was your personal experience as a participant in the immersion program "Language and Culture Program 2013"?
4. Did you meet people from other countries who were improving their English language and what kind of academic aspects did they improve?
5. Do you think the English language institute at Missouri State University promotes intercultural interaction processes? Why?
6. Do you think that attending classes with people from different countries, who didn't know your language, helped you to improve your English language level?
7. At the end of the course in the English Language Institute at Missouri State University, what did you improve?
8. Do you think that your oral skill is better after participating in the immersion program in the English Language Institute at Missouri State University?

