

Using IMAGE Model to De-Center Stereotypes in EFL Colombian Eighth Graders

Aplicación del Modelo IMAGE para Erradicar Estereotipos en la Enseñanza del Inglés en Colombia con Estudiantes de Octavo Grado

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Abstract

This article informs the results of a study conducted at a public secondary school in Colombia whose purpose was to explore how eighth-grade students dispel judgment and stereotypes concerning cultural differences through authentic materials inserted in the IMAGE model. The research design involved a qualitative research method and the application of the action research cycle. The qualitative data were analyzed using deductive coding considering students' three preconceived stereotypes. The

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Received: September 30th, 2023. Accepted: December 12th, 2024.

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results reveal that students could move from generalizing and having prejudices to being more mindful of cultural differences concerning the English language. Likewise, this study shows that the target language, grammar, culture, and content could be integrated into a single English class.

Keywords: authentic materials, culture, English as a foreign language, image model, stereotype

Resumen

Este artículo informa sobre los resultados de un estudio realizado en una escuela secundaria pública de Colombia cuyo propósito era explorar cómo los estudiantes de grado octavo se desprenden de estereotipos sobre las diferencias culturales a través de material auténtico insertado en el modelo IMAGE. La metodología empleada fue la investigación cualitativa y la aplicación del ciclo de investigación-acción. Los datos cualitativos se analizaron mediante codificación deductiva teniendo en cuenta tres estereotipos preconcebidos. Los resultados revelan que los estudiantes fueron capaces de pasar de hacer generalizaciones a ser más conscientes de las diferencias culturales en relación con el idioma inglés. Del mismo modo, este estudio demostró que la lengua meta, la gramática, la cultura y el contenido pueden integrarse en una clase de inglés.

Palabras clave: cultura, estereotipo, materiales auténticos, modelo IMAGE, inglés como lengua extranjera

Introduction

Teaching and learning foreign languages involve not only language but also culture. All communicative events and classroom interactions are context and culture-dependent. Therefore, language acquisition and teaching should go beyond grammar and vocabulary activities and emphasize cultural awareness, understanding, and interpretation. Aware of this reality, the teaching of culture has gained significant attention in English as a foreign language (EFL) in the last two decades. Diverse frameworks, methodologies, and approaches have emerged to explain, suggest, and present the intricate relationship between language and culture (Barnes-Karol & Broner, 2010; Byram, 1997; Liddicoat, 2009;). Drawing from these authors' approaches to culture and interculturality, significant research has shown how students approach culture and interculturality, gaining cultural knowledge, awareness, interpretation, and critical understanding of intercultural events worldwide, including South American countries.

Campbell (2011) examined the affordances and challenges of an exchange abroad buddy project in the United Kingdom in which learners were paired up with a foreign student to accompany the international experience. Results indicated that students could challenge existing stereotypes and gain new perspectives about the foreign culture. Porto (2019) reported how students from Argentina and Australia broadened their perspectives on global environmental problems after a telecollaborative experience. In South America, Vega (2020) integrated the IMAGE model and authentic materials to help undergraduate students at a

public university decenter from existing stereotypes about local and foreign cultural practices and perspectives. Wagner and Alvarez (2022) showed how students from two different countries gained intercultural awareness and citizenship after following Byram's model of interculturality and being part of a telecollaborative experience.

Even though existing research has shown how students have broadened their cultural and intercultural awareness, results indicate that learners are still prone to stereotyping. That is, presenting an overgeneralization of culture by misinterpreting people, places, customs, and traditions (Beeghly, 2015). Smith and Hung (2008) mentioned that nowadays it is common to find stereotypes regarding race and gender that are not easy to eliminate, such as the idea that women are not as capable as men within the fields of math and science. Likewise, Barrera and Cantor (2007) agreed that stereotypes are still part of people's way of thinking; as a result, society unintentionally creates and perpetuates stereotypes that in many cases are detrimental. An in-depth observation process in a public school in a rural area in Córdoba shows that students usually present misconceptions about foreign nations (e.g., the United States, Canada, and England) concerning race, color, and accent that can be categorized as stereotypes. Even though students have regular English classes, they have few opportunities to dispel such stereotypes given the grammar-oriented syllabus students follow in the institution and the scarce immersion in communicative exchanges.

This study resorts to the four-stage IMAGE model (Glisan & Donato, 2017) using authentic materials to help students broaden their cultural perspectives and decenter from existing stereotypes. The IMAGE model is a method teachers might implement in their language classes to teach language and culture and make students aware of the world around them through images, extra information, and fact/thought questions. By using the model, learners are expected to move beyond the specific cultural content of the images/texts to reflect on the cultural perspectives (Barnes-Karol & Broner, 2010) embedded in existing cultural products and practices. The model also "provides students with an opportunity to look at both their native culture and the target culture through new critical lenses" (Johnson & English, 2023).

Authentic materials refer to resources not created for pedagogical purposes (e.g., photographs, TikTok videos, posts on social media, and texts from no academic webpage) (Richards, 2001). This material helps students have close contact with people and countries from their own and other cultures since they show realities students might understand (Alfonso Vargas & Romero Molina, 2023; Bernal, 2020). Scholarship (Bernal, 2020; Castillo et al., 2017; Codina, 2020; Palacio & Pulido, 2015; Touhami & Sebbat, 2020) have analyzed how authentic materials develop cultural awareness in the EFL learners after the process and the exposure of those resources. However, to our knowledge, few studies (Vega, 2020) have integrated authentic materials and the IMAGE model to develop students' cultural awareness concerning stereotyping in rural areas.

This study aims to help eighth-grade rural school students de-center from judgment and stereotypes regarding cultural differences studied in the EFL class through authentic materials using the IMAGE model method. The eighth graders in the study come from a secondary public school in a rural area of Córdoba, Colombia. At the time of the study, these learners had an A- English language proficiency level and came from low to middle socio-economic backgrounds. They had two hours of English instruction per week, primarily guided by a textbook called *Way to Go*, provided by the Colombian Ministry of National Education.

Given the little exposure, students have to cultural insights, the IMAGE model aims at expanding respective knowledge, developing cultural awareness, and consequently preventing them from growing up with wrong perceptions regarding people, places, situations, attitudes, behavior, or likes. This research is anchored in one question: How might authentic materials and the IMAGE model help secondary school students to de-center from judgment and stereotypes regarding cultural differences?

Theoretical Framework

Culture

Culture refers to the diverse norms, customs, beliefs, and traditions that characterize a group of people, be it a region, a nation, a religious group, or a research team (Holliday, 2020). Such norms are not static, but flexible and are prone to changes as individuals interact with people from diverse backgrounds or subgroups. Therefore, the concept of culture should not be reduced to the homogenization of nations. Instead, culture refers to a dynamic system of opinions, values, behaviors, and mindsets that emerge and are shaped by the shared social practices, products, and perspectives of different small or big communities (Fandiño, 2014; Glisan & Donato, 2017).

When addressing culture in the foreign language classroom, it is significant to familiarize students with the diverse products (e.g., most common non-alcoholic beverages) and common practices of a group or subgroup (e.g., having coffee and doing work at a cafe). More importantly, students should be aware of the diverse perspectives (e.g., viewing cafes as the place to meet friends or do work) embedded in such products and practices. That is, the diverse meanings embedded in existing products and practices and how they change the minute interacting with media, people, and all sorts of literacies.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes represent strong ideas that guide one's thoughts and are not easily changed or moved in one's mind since they save individuals time when learning about others and other

cultures, making the environment less complex to understand (Sibley & Osborne, 2015) Stereotyping usually involves cultural misinterpretations (Glotov, 2023) that simplify cultures and reduce them to a few characteristics, attributing one single trait to a whole community full of diversity. Since they denote general claims, such generalizations lead to prejudices towards a person or group of people (Beeghly, 2015). As commented by Glotov (2023), Benanni (2023), and Vásquez-Guarnizo et al. (2020), these stereotypes are usually reinforced by social media, the internet, and textbooks when they overshadow minority cultures and give prominence to the cultures of dominant communities. In this study, stereotypes constitute all preconceptions and misjudgments students have about other regions and nations.

IMAGE Model

Drawing from Barnes-Karol and Broner's (2010) and Johnson and English's (2003) orientation to use images and texts for the exploration of culture, The IMAGE model is a pedagogical procedure in which teachers can teach culture through a set of images and questions to help students infer meanings beyond what they can observe. IMAGE lessons address a cultural aspect through images described and analyzed by responding to two types of questions: *fact* questions and *thought* questions. *Fact* questions enable students to describe the image presented in a literal way. *Thought* questions allow students to go beyond what they see and require analysis, opinions, hypotheses, and ideas about the images (Glisan & Donato, 2017).

The IMAGE model suggests four main steps. In the first step, *Images and Making Observations*, the teacher presents one or more images to their students about a cultural practice or product to start interaction with them. Then, three or five *fact* questions (e.g., what, where, when, and who) are asked to make detailed observations. In the second step, *Analyzing Additional Information*, the teacher provides extra, important, and concise data or information about the cultural practice or product that complements the image presented in the previous step. Articles, short texts, graphs, and charts constitute significant sources that foster students to have another perspective from the described image.

The third step, *Generating Hypotheses about Cultural Perspectives*, consists of students' analysis of the image(s) and the extra information provided. Teachers can ask students to analyze, reflect, and hypothesize. After that, the teacher shows another image(s) to continue the lesson and keep students focused, provoking further reflection. In this step, the teacher should elaborate on the *fact* questions (three or five will be enough) for students to give a significant analysis of the information presented in steps 1 and 2. In the fourth step, *Exploring perspectives and reflection further*, students can think about other reflections, ideas, and questions that were not covered during the lesson or any aspect they would like to add to expand the topic. Students are required to dig into the perspectives of a cultural practice or product.

The Use of the IMAGE Model When Teaching Languages

The IMAGE model contributes to teaching languages allowing students to learn the language as they familiarize themselves with local and foreign cultural products, practices, and perspectives. When implementing the model, students move from a general and literal perspective about cultural products to a more solid, widened, and imaginative perspective about cultural traits. Barnes-Karol and Broner (2010) illustrated this transition through a Spanish as a foreign language lesson aimed at exploring *La Canasta Familiar* (the cost of living) in Latin American countries. To this end, they propose a four-step model that starts by showing students two content-rich images that portray a market basket of two different families to have them brainstorm the content of the basket (all sorts of food) and its perspectives concerning *la canasta familiar* in Latin America (e.g., what do Latin Americans eat?).

As a second step, students are shown more content-rich pictures portraying other market baskets that broaden students' perspectives about the Latin American *Canasta Familiar*. As a third step, statistics illustrating estimates are presented about eating habits in Latin America, and a reading text describing families eating routines. This new input explores the reasons behind eating habits in Latin America and certain provoking topics such as obesity, malnutrition, and state food regulations.

In a nutshell, using well-selected images and multimodal texts helps students (1) understand vocabulary, concepts, and cultural traits; (2) voice observations about the images; and (3) make insightful comparisons among them. In this example, students studying a familiar topic like food makes them gain insights about *la canasta familiar* in Latin America.

While Gomez (2019), Glisan and Donato (2017), and Vega (2020) have implemented the IMAGE model for EFL learning exploring topics such as currency variation, graduation practices, food practices, and perspectives, little is known about the implementation of the model in low beginning levels where students struggle to understand English lessons. Therefore, this study illustrates how the IMAGE model is realized in an EFL lesson in a rural area.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach to have close contact with the students and comprehend their perspectives and insights. This study also followed the action research cycle described by Baskerville and Pries-Heje (1999) which follows five steps: (1) *diagnosing* the problem, situation, or fault; (2) *action planning* according to the problem; (3) *taking action*, based on the selected plan; (4) *evaluating* the actions or plan to know the consequences; and (5) *specifying learnings* to identify findings. In this study, a teacher candidate (first author of this paper) realized that eighth graders had stereotypes about foreign countries concerning race, gender, and accent. Second, she reviewed the literature to identify a method that helps students de-center from stereotypes. Third, she planned and implemented the IMAGE

model for a month and evaluated the results. Finally, the three authors described the main affordances of the implementation process.

Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a public secondary school in a rural area of Lorica, Córdoba, Colombia. Participants were 36 students belonging to an eighth grade with basic English language proficiency skills and a teacher candidate completing her teaching practicum by the time of the study.

Implementation of the IMAGE Model

The student teacher designed a unit with all the stages of the IMAGE model suggested by Glisan and Donato (2017). The unit consisted of four lessons. Each lesson responded to the steps of the IMAGE model. In the first lesson, students watched various images about English speakers to identify their differences and similarities. In the second lesson, they analyzed extra information (text and audio) about English speakers including characteristics of countries where English is spoken. In lesson three, they shared their perceptions regarding the images previously presented. In lesson four, they shared extra information and conclusions about English-speaking countries. Table 1 provides further details about the implementation process.

Table 1. *IMAGE Model Steps*

Image Model	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Goal	Lesson 1: To allow students to understand clearly the product/practice, which is the English language.	Lesson 2: To make students aware of the countries where English is spoken and its accent variety.	Lesson 3: To promote new perspectives about culture to students.	Lesson 4: To expand students' knowledge and promote critical thinking.
Description	Students were asked to observe two images of English speakers projected in a Microsoft PowerPoint file. Then, students answered fact questions concerning the images. Finally, learners filled out a chart with the similarities and differences they found relating to the set of images.	Divided into groups, students analyzed a blog that contained countries where English is spoken to socialize the information they gathered with the rest of the class. Then, they listened to different English accents and answered questions about the topic.	Students watched a new image of English speakers from different parts of the world for the purpose of answering thought questions.	Students were asked to investigate for more information concerning three aspects not covered during the lessons. They shared the information, commented, and reflected on that.

Source: Own work.

Instruments for Data Collection

Data sources included participant observations and written tasks. Participant observation allowed the teacher candidate to interact with the students in their context or setting and provide information regarding their behavior, perceptions, and attitudes with the day-to-day immersion (Berthelsen et al., 2016). Written tasks (i.e., a chart about similarities and differences concerning a set of images showing native English speakers) allowed students to capture their progress concerning decentering their existing beliefs.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of qualitative research, data were analyzed through coding. This procedure is a qualitative research analysis that helps to identify the most important parts of the data; it can be a word, an item, a phrase, or a single sentence to classify them into codes and categories (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Furthermore, coding was followed using a deductive approach, seeing that codes or categories were established, and the analysis was focused on existing codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

As the main purpose of this work was to identify students' stereotypes and changes in their awareness using the IMAGE model, the analysis related to the preconceived stereotypes students had about English-speaking countries (*English is only spoken in the United States or England, with the same accent, and physical characteristics*). First, the three authors became familiar with the data, associating the pre-existing categories with the transcripts and tasks. In a second round of analysis, we searched for changes in students' identified stereotypes, including their awareness of different countries where the language was spoken, variety of accents, and peoples' physical appearance. Third, we discussed the evidence as a group to ensure the reliability of the data. Finally, we analyzed and selected the changes that responded to the decentering of the stereotypes.

Findings

This chapter shows the findings concerning the question of this study after implementing the IMAGE model using authentic materials. The data collection sources showed that students could de-center from stereotypes and judgments regarding cultural differences. For instance, students realized that English does not come just from countries such as the United States or England. Besides, they became aware of the different accents surrounding this language. Learners also understood that fair-skinned people live in such countries and speak English. These three main stereotypes from which students were de-centered will be described below in detail showing how authentic materials such as images, audios, and texts helped students build different

perspectives from the ones they previously had. The following table summarizes the main categories found in the study:

Table 2. *Main Stereotypes Dispelled*

Research Question	Main Stereotypes Dispelled
<i>How might authentic materials and the IMAGE model help secondary school students to de-center from judgment and stereotypes regarding cultural differences?</i>	The English language comes from the United States or England.
	English speakers have the same accent.
	Skin color determines one's place of origin.

The English language Comes from the United States or England

When teaching Lesson 2, students showed limited knowledge regarding places where the English language is officially spoken. For example, when asked about places where English is used, most of them showed existing stereotypes as seen below:

Transcript 1: Students' perceptions about where English is spoken.
<p>T: ¿De dónde creen ustedes que viene el idioma inglés? (<i>Where do you think the English language comes from?</i>)</p> <p>Ss: (XXX)</p> <p>S1: Viene de Estados Unidos. (<i>It comes from the United States.</i>)</p> <p>S2: De Estados Unidos. (<i>From The United States.</i>)</p> <p>S3: De Inglaterra. (<i>From England.</i>)</p> <p>S4: De Estados Unidos. (<i>From The United States.</i>)</p> <p>S5: De Francia, señor. (<i>From France, teacher.</i>)</p>

As seen in the transcript above, most students agreed that English comes from the United States. Others said that it comes from countries such as England and even France. Such responses show that students had a pre-established conception of English and a limited understanding of the other places where the language is spoken.

In the first step of the IMAGE model, Images and Making Observations, students slightly changed their existing stereotypes. In that lesson, students watched two images about English speakers and responded to some questions. During the image analysis, students started to change their minds by comparing the images and drawing conclusions about them. The following transcription showed the initial changes in students' viewpoints concerning English speakers.

Transcript 2: Initial awareness.

T: Chicos, ahora, ustedes dijeron que ella podría ser de Suiza, ella de India y ella de Estados Unidos. (*Guys, now, you said that she can be from Switzerland, she is from India, and she is from the United States. (Pointing at each woman in the image, respectively).*)

T: (*Getting closer to the students*) Ustedes mencionaron tres países diferentes. Tres países diferentes. ¿Y en qué idioma están hablando? (*Looking at the board*). (*You mentioned three different countries. What language are they speaking?*)

S?: En inglés. (*In English*)

T: ¿En inglés? ¿Y por qué se da esa situación? (*In English? And why does it happen?*)

S2: (*Raising his hand*) Porque las tres son de los Estados Unidos. (*Because the three of them are from the United States.*)

T: Porque las tres son de Estados Unidos. ¡Ok! ¿Qué más? (*Because they are from the United States (Ok, what else?)*)

S?: Porque las tres hablan inglés (*because the three of them speak in English.*)

T: Ok!

S3: Porque en los países o ciudades en donde ellas viven se habla inglés. O ellas lo aprendieron. (*Because in the countries and cities where they are from, English is spoken, or they learned it.*)

T: Very good!

In this transcription, some participants mentioned that people in the images are from The United States because they speak English. However, other students expressed that the women in the images were from different countries (Switzerland, India, and The United States), but spoke the same language (English). When students were asked about why this situation occurred (being from different countries and speaking the same language), students answered that the people in the images were from The United States. Interestingly, S3 responded differently (because in the countries and cities where these people live, English is spoken), which shows an emerging view of the places where English is spoken.

After that, they established differences and similarities between the two images of English speakers by analyzing them and characterizing the people. Then, students wrote down the differences and similarities in a chart (See Appendix A). The most notorious similarity students wrote down in the chart was that people in the images use the same language to communicate: (*They speak the same language, speak English, The language*). However, the most common difference they noticed was that people in the images come from different countries. In this task, it was also evident that students started to be aware of the different countries where people speak English.

When analyzing additional information, the students showed a new understanding while analyzing extra information regarding the different countries where English is spoken.

The next transcript showed that students' knowledge of English was not limited to a single country such as The United States. Instead, they recognized that this language is spoken in other places.

Transcript 3: Students' new understanding.

T: Entonces, ¿el inglés solo se habla en los Estados Unidos?
(*So, Is English only spoken in the United States?*)
Ss: ¡No!
T: ¿Están seguros? (*Are you sure?*)
S4: Si hay 67 es porque hay un poco, señor. (*If there are 67 countries, it is because there are a lot of them, teacher.*)

In this interaction, while students analyzed the information in the Berlitz blog concerning the 67 English-speaking countries (See Appendix B), students were asked if English is just spoken in The United States. Most of the students provided a negative response to this question. For instance, students answered that *if there are 67 countries, it is because there are a lot of them*, meaning that if there are 67 countries where English is spoken, there are more English native speakers in other countries worldwide after all. Thus, this student did not limit himself to thinking about American or British; on the contrary, he showed a more open view of culture and the use of English.

When generating Hypotheses about Cultural Perspectives, students answered questions about people in the places where English is spoken. They were conscious of the fact that English is spoken in many countries. Therefore, their responses included the names of different countries all over the world as shown below.

Transcript 4: Students are aware of the different countries where English is spoken.

T: Si ellas están hablando en inglés, ¿quiere decir que son de Estados Unidos o Inglaterra? (*If they are speaking in English, so they are from the United States or England?*)
Ss: ¡No!
S6: ((*Moving her head from side to side indicating a negative response*))
T: ¿De dónde más pueden ser entonces? (*Where else can they be from?*)
S5: De otro continente o país. (*From another continent or country.*)
T: ¿Cómo cuál? (*Which one?*)
S5: Suiza. (*Switzerland.*)
S?: Africa. (*Africa.*)
S5: Canada. (*Canada.*)
T: Very good!
S?: Irlanda. (*Ireland.*)
T: Perfect!
S5: Nueva Zelanda. (*New Zealand.*)

After students watched an image with a group of women, from different nationalities, talking in English about environmental matters, students' answers varied. Considering such answers, at that point of the unit, they were aware that English expands beyond the United States and England. It means that, from then on, they were more likely to associate English with other countries in America, Africa, Oceania, and Europe. It also indicates that they have become more open-minded and have achieved the purpose of the unit and research: to de-center students from the stereotypes or preconceptions regarding this language.

English Speakers Have the Same Accent

At the beginning of the unit, the students were not aware of the different accents surrounding English. However, as the lessons progressed, especially after listening to the audio of native English speakers worldwide, they understood that English can have different accents, and so does Spanish. Students' first understanding of the accent variation is presented below.

In this interaction, it can be seen how the students started to recognize the accents as specific to each person, community, city, or country after listening to the audio in which each English speaker spoke with a different accent. For instance, when S7 said that “they speak English but not with the same tone”, with the word *tone*, she meant an accent.

When answering questions regarding the last image of the model in Step 3, Generating Hypotheses about Cultural Perspectives, students showed the new understanding they acquired about this concern. In the following transcription, it is seen that students not only became aware of the English accents but also recognized that it does not have to be the same for everyone since each person has their own way of speaking a language.

Students started answering the questions concerning the image presented in which a group of women was gathered. They expressed that although they spoke in English, their accent was different. This means that some students expanded their knowledge by referring to how people talk to one another even when they use the same language. Now, they think accents could vary from person to person.

Skin Color Determines One's Place of Origin

At the beginning of implementing the IMAGE model, students only associated fair-skinned people with an American background. Then, they realized that dark-skinned people can also be American or Swiss and native speakers of English. When they watched a set of images showing fair-skinned and dark-skinned people, they labeled them as coming from Switzerland and the United States, and Africa and Chocó (Colombia) respectively, as shown below.

Transcript 1: Students' initial awareness.

T: ¿Ustedes creen que en todos los continentes que ustedes dijeron, en todos los países en donde se habla el inglés, todas esas personas tienen el mismo acento, hablan igual? (*Do you think that, in all the continents that you mentioned, in all the countries where English is spoken, all those people have the same accent? Do they speak with the same accent?*)
Ss: ¡No!
T: Yes or no?
Ss: Noo!
T: ¿Las personas en África hablan el inglés igual? (*Do people in Africa speak English the same way?*)
S?: No!
S?: No!
T: ¿Las personas en América hablan el inglés igual? (*Do people in America speak English the same way?*)
Ss: ¡Noo!
T: ¿Las personas de Canadá con las personas de Australia hablan el mismo inglés? Yes or no? (*Do people from Canada and people from Australia have the same accent? Yes, or no?*)
S?: Yes!
S?: No!
T: ¿Por qué? (*Why?*)
S7: ((XXX))
T: S7 dice que ellos hablan inglés, pero no con el mismo tono. (*S7 says that they speak English but not with the same accent*). Pero más que con el mismo tono, es con el mismo acento. (*But rather than the same tone, it is with the same accent.*)

Transcript 2: Students' awareness of the different accents surrounding English.

T: Chicos, ¿ustedes creen que tiene que haber el mismo inglés para todo el mundo? (*Do you think people must speak with the same English accent?*)
Ss: ¡No!
T: ¿Por qué? (*Why?*)
Ss: ((XXX))
T: Porque tienen la misma lengua, ¿pero el acento es qué? (*Because they speak the same language, but what is the accent about?*)
Ss: Diferente. (*Different.*)

When the first image was presented to the students in the first step of the model, S1 indicated that one of the two women was from the United States because she was pretty and fair-skinned while other students either agreed or disagreed with the response. After showing the second image, the first reaction came from S2, who at first glance indicated that one of them was “Chocoana” (from Chocó-Colombia) because of her dark skin color; others mentioned that she was from “Africa”. Regarding the woman in the image, some learners agreed that she was from “Switzerland” because of her physical appearance, especially her blue eyes. As seen in the transcript, S2 changed his mind and said the dark-skinned woman was American. Considering this answer, S6 disagreed since he said, “The United States does not

accept skinned color people". In other words, he said that dark-skinned people are discriminated against in the United States. This information points out the general stereotype they have when assuming that if a person is fair-skinned and has blue eyes, it is because they are from countries such as the United States or Switzerland and dark-skinned people are from Africa or Chocó, Colombia. It was evident how students attributed one characteristic to an entire continent or region without carefully considering people's diversity.

In Step 3 of the IMAGE model, Generating Hypotheses about Cultural Perspectives, students realized how diverse a country can be regarding people's skin color. They also understood that in the United States, dark-skinned people live as well as fair-skinned people in Africa, as described in the transcript below.

At this point, students could recognize that pretty and fair-skinned women are from the United States and other regions. Students also realized that all dark-skinned people are not only from Africa. This showed that they became conscious that a country such as the United States is rich in ethnic and cultural diversity.

At the end of the unit, in Step 4, Exploring Perspectives and Reflecting Further, students were asked to look for more information regarding three aspects not covered during the lessons to expand their knowledge. First, students investigated the country in Latin America where English is its official language and the reason why this occurs. To this end, students found that, in Guyana, English is the official language because British people colonized this territory. Second, students were asked to search for an English accent different from the ones studied in class. Some mentioned the Scottish and Irish accents and added that they are hard to understand.

Another student mentioned the *Posh* accent, common among the upper class in England. Third, participants searched for reasons English is not the official language in the United States. They found that this country considered that a language should not be imposed on its citizens, but each state was free to choose it. Students agreed with this since they think that the United States is a country full of diversity, visited by people worldwide.

Discussion

This research showed that students could move from generalizing and having prejudices to being mindful of cultural differences concerning English, in terms of accent, language variety, and speakers' background. The findings revealed that the IMAGE model and authentic materials helped bring about these changes in the students. Most gained a broader understanding of the countries where English is spoken or is an official language. They also realized that all people who use this language daily do not have the same accent since it might vary even from person to person.

Transcript 1: Students categorize people by their physical appearance.

T: ((Pointing to a student)) ¿Por qué piensas que es de Estados Unidos? (*Why do you think he is from the United States?*)
S1: Porque es blanquita y bonita. (*Because she is light-skinned and beautiful.*)
T: ¿Las únicas personas bonitas son de Estados Unidos? (*Asking the whole class*) (*Most beautiful people are only from the United States?*)
S?: ¡Sí! (*Yes.*)
S?: ¡No!
T: ((Showing another image))
S2: ((Pointing to one of the three women in the image)) Aquella es chochoana. (*She is from Chocó.*)
T: Vamos a empezar con esta. Ella es... ((Pointing to the students)) (*Let's start with this one, she is ...*)
S3: Suiza. (*Swiss.*)
S4: Suiza. (*Swiss.*)
T: ¿Por qué? (*Why?*)
S3: Por la forma de sus ojos, de sus ojos y de su cara. (*Because of the shape of their eyes and face.*)
S4: Por sus características, señor. (*Because of their physical features, teacher.*)
S3: Por las características. (*Because of their physical features.*)
T: ¿Cuáles características? ¿Físicas? (*Which features? Physical?*)
S3: ¡Ajá! ((Nodding her head)) (*Yes*)
T: ¿De dónde es ella? (*Where is she from?*) ((Pointing to one of the women in the image))
S2: De Estados Unidos. (*From The United States.*)
S5: De África. (*From Africa.*)
S?: África, África. (*Africa.*)
S6: De Estados Unidos no es, porque allá no aceptan a los morenos. (*They are not from the United States because they do not accept dark-skinned people.*)
T: ¿Tú piensas que los discriminan? (*Do you think that they discriminate against them?*)
S6: ((Nodding his head))

Transcript 2: Students are aware that dark-skinned people can be from the United States, too.

T: ¿Ustedes piensan que todas las mujeres que son blancas y bonitas son de Estados Unidos? (*Do you think that all light-skinned and pretty women are from the United States?*)
Ss: ¡Noo!
T: ¿En Estados Unidos hay personas de color moreno? (*Are there dark-skinned people in the United States?*)
Ss: ¡Síii! (*Yes.*)
T: ¿Pueden mencionar a una persona de color moreno que sea de Estados Unidos? Algún famoso que conozcan. (*Can you mention a dark-skinned person who is from the United States? Some famous people that you know?*)
S?: Will Smith.
T: Excellent.
T: Chicos, ¿todas las personas morenas son de África? (*Are all dark-skinned people from Africa?*)
Ss: ¡No!

Additionally, the findings showed that students developed their cultural awareness when they realized that a single physical feature does not define an entire society. In this case, it denotes that both light-colored and dark-colored people can belong to the same region and be native English speakers as well. Such findings suggest that students started to gain some insights about culture and intercultural communication, having more open-mindedness about how diverse a culture could be.

This study also revealed that rural school students commonly face stereotypes due to social and cultural narratives that oversimplify or misrepresent their experiences, behaviors, and abilities. Their lack of exposure to authentic materials and cultural practices worldwide fosters stereotypes often leading to generalizations and discriminatory practices (Roberts & Guenther, 2021). These results are worthy of supporting teachers strategically in recognizing and combating biases that enact discriminatory practices in rural schools. As shown in this study, students became more open-minded, and their cultural repertoire increased as they saw images and analyzed them acutely.

Furthermore, the findings of this study resonate with Touhami and Sebbat's (2020) and Vega's (2020) research in that raising students' awareness regarding cultural differences allows them to change their attitudes and perspectives toward cultural aspects and gain their understanding of English-speaking countries. Likewise, this research also supports previous studies (Bernal, 2020; Castillo et al., 2017; Codina, 2020; Touhami & Sebbat, 2020) saying that authentic materials play an important role in the development of cultural awareness since they encourage students to think critically, reflect and express their opinion concerning cultural topics. In this same line of thought, the current study shares the view of Palacio and Pulido (2015) when they highlight that authentic images and short texts help students connect with real aspects of the target culture such as social, economic, geographic, and cultural aspects. This study also showed that, as in Vega's (2020) case, the IMAGE model approach is appropriate for organizing a cultural lesson given that its structure is divided into four steps easy to follow and help students dispel their existing stereotypes and judgments.

One important learning in this study is that the IMAGE model could be a significant approach to teaching culture even when students have a low English language proficiency level given that images make meaning and facilitate the understanding of the language. Furthermore, the IMAGE model with authentic materials allowed beginning learners to have cultural and intercultural gains that could not have been obtained otherwise given their limitations to interact with people from foreign cultural backgrounds and grammar-syllabus in their schools. A common goal can be that students' initial cultural awareness becomes a springboard for dispelling upcoming stereotypes and understanding new cultural and intercultural aspects.

Another important learning is that the IMAGE model is a potential tool to contextualize (Glisan & Donato, 2021) an English unit by integrating grammar, vocabulary, culture, and content. As presented in the findings, students were part of diverse communicative events in which they (1) identified the diverse countries where English is spoken while they learned vocabulary and dispelled a rooted stereotype; (2) recognized the diverse accents embedded into English at the time they got familiar with significant geographical and lexico-grammatical aspects; (3) associated people's physical features with their geographical backgrounds while they studied adjectives and de-centered their initial views about English speakers' physical appearance.

A third significant implication of the study is that apart from familiarizing students with conventional cultural products and practices such as the so-called four Fs (food, festivals, folks, and fairy tales), learners explored the possible perspectives embedded in the cultural aspects studied in class. This approach made students aware of cultural topics usually underplayed in foreign language classes. We expect that further research can expand the exploration of the IMAGE model, pointing to other stereotypes and prejudices that may go unnoticed in foreign language courses. Likewise, further research should explore ways to integrate culture and language at beginning levels integrating more L2 interactions in the lessons. As evidenced in the findings, most classroom interactions in the study were mediated by the students' L1.

Conclusions

The current research showed that integrating cultural lessons through the IMAGE model approach and authentic materials helped secondary school students change existing misinterpretations about culture. At the beginning of the project, students showed confidence when sharing their ideas regarding some aspects of the foreign culture, which denoted stereotypes. They had “rigid representations” (Kurylo, 2012, p. 337) that progressively changed throughout classroom interactions, allowing them to dismantle stereotypes associated with nationality, language, and physical appearance. Exploring these rigid representations showed students a widened view of culture that yielded the exploration of diversities (i.e., accents, language variations, multiple physical appearance traits, and heterogeneous features) in the world around them (Dervin, 2016). We expect that exploring and understanding these diversities will help students be more open-minded when exposed to other stereotypical scenarios, thus, being less judgmental and discriminatory.

The present study informs how the target language, grammar, vocabulary, culture, and content could be integrated into a single English class. In this sense, this study shows how a lesson could be contextualized creating a situated and connected lesson with the context “...

by establishing clearly defined reasons and purposes for communication in cultural context” (Glisan & Donato 2017, p. 11).

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Appendix A

Chart of similarities and differences filled by students.

Similarities	Differences
hablan el mismo idioma	son de parte diferente

Similarities	Differences
± idioma	lugar
ropa	personas
	ropa
	color de piel
	no

Similarities	Differences
hablan el mismo idioma	son de parte diferente

Similarities	Differences
hablan el mismo lenguaje	visten diferente
	son de parte diferente
	son de diferentes piel
	en uno no hacen entrecis

Appendix B

Information taken from Berlitz's blog by students.

