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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT IN CONDITIONING  
STUDENTS' IDEAS ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A LOW SOCIAL  
STATUS SCHOOL IN SANTIAGO DE CALI COLOMBIA

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MASTER'S REPORT

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## **ABSTRACT**

The following research takes place in the Colegio Comfandi Calipso, a low socioeconomic status high school located in Santiago de Cali, Colombia. This paper reflects on the influence of the wider social context such as family, school and personal relationships in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning taking into consideration those aspects which are not directly related to education but socio-economic context, including beliefs, thoughts, family background and influence of school in students' life.

**Keywords:** Influence of social context, second language learning, low socioeconomic school, family, social factors, personal relationships, importance of second language learning.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Beyond the conception that second language learning only deals with the academic; talking about the influence and the importance of social context in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning it is important to determine what aspects of these contexts directly affect the learning process. For instance, if school as a social context goes beyond the academic and provide students with opportunities to construct personal relationships such as friends, relatives, classmates and acquaintances; students would probably consider the second language learning is influenced by personal relationships and how they are established through the second language use. In addition, analyzing how other social contexts such school and family condition this idea of second language learning on students.

In Colombia, Government works on different projects to help the population to become "bilingual" such as: Go Cali, Colombia Bilingüe, among others. For instance, "Go Cali" looks for a change in the curriculum on different schools, in addition, this project provides teacher training supported by different universities and language institutes to help teachers to be more competent when teaching the second language. However, projects like this do not always take into consideration the social contexts of students and how these influence students' idea about second language learning.

Within low socioeconomic status communities, it is important to take social contexts as key factors to find out about how these condition students' ideas about second language learning because these contexts have different characteristics such as: population, social issues, economic situation and perception of education among others. In addition, these social characteristics which are part of the different social contexts help students to be aware of the importance of education, second language learning and those aspects which condition their life.

## 2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

During the 2014-2015 academic year, I worked as a tenth grade English teacher at a low socio-economic level high school called Colegio Comfandi Calipso in Cali's Aguablanca district. In my time there, I spoke to the students and I noticed that they consider learning a second language a process which deals mostly with the academic and some moments of their day because they have some sort of approaching to the second language through different activities and media, mentioning their hobbies and family. Therefore, I started wondering how different social contexts condition student's perception about second language learning.

In addition, as an English teacher, a master's student in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and as a product of the Colombian public school system I have always had this feeling that sometimes teachers do not perceive the relevance of non- educative factors which affect the language learning process within the classrooms. For instance, how school, family and personal relationships provide students with different perspectives about second language learning.

According to Gholami "the significance of the social context is usually underestimated in many countries" (2012) therefore, this research expects to analyze and explain how the different social contexts condition Comfandi Calipso students' ideas about second language learning.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTION**

How do the wider social contexts condition students' ideas about second language learning in the tenth grade students of the Colegio Comfandi Calipso during the 2014-2015 school year in Santiago de Cali?

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

- To present the analysis about how the wider social context influence ideas about second language learning in tenth grade students of the Colegio Comfandi Calipso during the 2014-2015 school year in Santiago de Cali.

### **4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To analyze how wider social context that influence students' ideas about second language learning of tenth grade students of the Colegio Comfandi Calipso during the 2014-2015 school year in Santiago de Cali.

## 5. JUSTIFICATION

As a result of Colombian public education system, the process of second language learning is basically graded on how the students perform in their classes and the results of a variety of exams which intend to define if students “do well” by memorizing a certain pattern of grammar rules. This learning process does not always consider the importance of the wider social context in conditioning students’ ideas about second language learning beyond the use of the context for categorizing a certain population. For example; you might hear that low socio economic population is not good for languages learning but high socio economic population is. Therefore, social contexts simply become a part of the ethnographic description about a population of study. Nevertheless, within this research contexts are considered as key factors when analyzing the student’s idea about second language learning. In addition, according to the Common European framework of reference for languages, second language learning takes place when “learners act in required ways using their abilities”. These abilities help the learners to respond to a variety of situations using skills such as: listening, writing, reading and speaking; however, this definition of second language learning does not take social contexts into account either.

While social context has little importance within the aforementioned systems, authors such Gholami (2011) and Pishghadam (2011) point out the importance of taking social context into account for successful second language learning. Gholami Claims that “the social context is believed to have an influence on students’ attitude and motivation by providing learning opportunities that will enhance learners’ outcomes” (2011, p. 85) Also, “the social context is directly involved in setting positive or negative conditions for Second Language learning” (Pishghadam, 2011, p. 85) therefore, social context do influence on second language learning process; however, the current research is looking for the ideas to explain how these contexts influence student’s idea of second language learning.

To conclude, the second language learning process goes beyond the individual process of language being influenced by the different social context which condition the perception of students about second language learning. These ideas are important to be analyzed because they might help the second language teachers to understand how students perceive their environment in relation to the second language learning process; therefore, construct better strategies to teach the second language to them and help students to engage with the real language in real communicative situations based on how the social factors condition student's idea of second language learning.

## 6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned by Firth and Wagner “The second language learning literature has been dominated by individual cognitive issues” (1997, p.12). Therefore, it is important to start raising questions about the importance and the influence of social context in second language learning. The following section explores this idea of influence of social context in second language learning by analyzing different theories and different perspectives through it.

According to Spolsky’s Linguistic Outcome Condition, “someone knows a second language if one or more conditions are met, among these conditions, the social opportunities to practice are mentioned as the most important for people who intend to learn a second language” (1989, p. 23). Therefore, analyzing what conditions within the social context provide those moments to learn is important because that is the way to explore if social contexts influence second language learning.

In addition to the aforementioned ideas about the importance of context in second language learning, Firth and Wagner (1997) called for more attention to “the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use”. They claimed “the Second language learning literature has been dominated by individual cognitive issues, disregarding second language learners’ sociocultural and historical contexts” (p. 285). Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003) present a similar idea with stating “the rise of sociolinguistic and contextual approaches in second language research over the past decade reflects a growing recognition that learning language is a more complex process than merely acquiring linguistic structures, and that language learning and use are shaped by socio-political processes” (p.155)

Family is the first social context that condition students’ ideas about second language learning because it is the first moment where students come into contact

with the first language getting ideas, adopting beliefs and making decisions about the importance of second language learning. When it comes to the relationship between parents and first language learning, Holt (2000) studied childhood literacy experiences in African-American families stating “the frequent use of literacy in the home by family members, exposure to positive attitudes concerning school and academic success, and supposed access to reading materials in one's childhood home can be sound predictors of earning a college degree and achieving professional status plus influence of the family on children's literacy development” (p. 135). In addition, Wingfield (2006) identified four influential parental factors in students' lives: (1) parental, familial and neighborhood characteristics; (2) parents' general beliefs and behaviors; (3) parents 'child-specific beliefs; and (4) parent-specific behaviors. Wingfield claims “the parents' child-specific beliefs refer to the parents' beliefs about their children's abilities and expectations for their success” (p. 117) Therefore, students might consider themselves able to learn if parents show a positive sense of achievement towards second language learning.

Some authors do not separate distinct social contexts but speak about the relationship between them. For instance, Goldenberg et al, claims that “In educative contexts the parent-specific behaviors which influence students are the amount of time spent with the child, teaching strategies, career guidance, encouragement to participate in various activities, and so forth” (2008, p. 200) therefore, if parents guide students throughout the second language learning process, creating an environment where the child can be exposed to academic-oriented vocabulary, parents will be able to affect students' perceptions of school as an educative context within the process of second language learning. In addition, within school, students learn, reflect and come into contact with the language through practice. In addition, students construct personal relationships and judgments about different things including learning the second language, its importance and applications for their life. According to Kozol, “knowledge is acquired through literacy skills, which in return shapes the kind of person one is” (1985, p. 2). In addition, Bove claims that “people learn more through reading and

writing than we learn through other media, with the exception of social interaction” (2006, p. 2). Therefore, reading and writing are presented as the most important skills for people who intend to learn according to both Kozol and Bove; however, in his statement, Bove also mentions social interaction; hence, it is important to explore if social contexts provide these kinds of moments where the person can relate all these skills together to learn the second language.

On the other hand, Cummins (1984) differentiated between social and academic language learning and identified different timelines for each:

*“Under ideal conditions, it takes the average English Learner (EL) two years to acquire Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). BICS involves the context– embedded, everyday language that occurs between conversational partners. Therefore, students must be exposed to rich learning environments with regular opportunities to practice language and literacy skills in the new language” (p. 75)*

Thus, according to Cummins, it will take students many years to learn the second language under ideal conditions; so, the environment must be the most adequate in order for the students to learn. Besides, as mentioned by Cummins, the exposure to these adequate environments would help students to engage with the second language learning through practice. However, the Colegio Comfandi Calipso does not provide this kind of context because 90% of the classes are being taught in Spanish, therefore, second language learning becomes a side process.

Coolier (1992) claims that “research on schools or language-minority students has found that schools have a strong bilingual/bicultural and academics context for instruction lessen or eliminate the influence of family in a formal level or parents lack of schooling” (p.100). This statement explains how the various contexts can overcome other context issues; for instance, how a strong school

context can help students compensate for things which happen within their family context.

In spite of their obvious importance, school and family are not the only contexts which condition students' ideas about learning the second language. "Several lines of research into the nature of the language learning process have suggested that social and interactional factors might play a major role in influencing the course and speed of language learning" (Snow, 1979, p. 157) therefore, according to Snow, social relationships are presented as factors which condition second language learning; factors such as friends, relatives, and acquaintances condition students' idea of second language learning through direct experiences using the second language.

In addition, considering the influence of friends and acquaintances as another social context which influences second language learning, "The communication accommodation theory" proposed by Giles (1973) states that "a large percentage of human communication is carried out with the purpose of maintaining social interaction and not the information transmission", hence, students would think about the reasons to learn the second language in relation to their goals, personal relationships and professional future.

Furthermore, Turner's "social identity theory" proposes that "members of a group strive for positive social identities by engaging in social comparison on valued dimensions, and this process may lead them to search or create dimensions on which they will compare favorably with the out-group" (1981, p. 5) hence, the influence of the group on a person's attitude is related to the dimensions where the person uses the language in relation with other people. This statement explains how the kind of relationships the person has established with different people who belong to the same context directly condition the idea of second language learning, for instance, the parents influence on students' ideas of

second language learning will not be the same as the friends' influence at school or in their neighborhood due to the nature of both relationships.

To conclude, the above theorists try to explain how social contexts influence the idea of second language learning by explaining the existence of factors which affect student's idea in second language learning such as personal relationships, school and family contexts. Therefore, the current research explores how these contexts influence the ideas of students of Colegio Comfandi Calipso about second language learning based on the information collected from different authors on this issue of the influence of social context in second language learning.

## 6.1. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Several research projects carried out in Colombia have addressed the influence of social contexts on student's idea of second language learning. Recent researches done by Pérez (2012), Montoya (2013) and Jaramillo (2013) they all address the influence of social contexts in conditioning student's idea of second language learning by exploring how this perception is affected by certain aspects of the students' backgrounds. In addition, it is important to mention that these studies addressed low and medium high socioeconomic populations; hence, the presented data has many things in common with the current research.

To analyze the importance of the wider social context in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning, it is important to identify which aspects of these contexts directly affect this conditioning. According to Kozol, "Children learn best in a socially integrated environment where social interaction can be modeled. It is in this environment that students will be challenged to rise to a higher level of expectation. However, basic needs must be satisfied before we can expect children to be receptive to that which we would have them to learn" (1967, p 3; quoted in Bove, C. (2006) p 4). Therefore, the students need to have a strong background in order to achieve the goal of second language learning; all these aspects which influence and condition the idea of second language learning might be connected to the different kinds of relationships students have established through the years within the different dimensions they belong to.

Pérez, (2012) analyzes many different aspects of education in low socioeconomic areas in her study. First, she analyzes the reasons why parents choose one school above another; it seems this decision is influenced by parents' beliefs about education, economic condition and ease of transportation of the students within the city. For parents, these aspects seem to be more important than the quality of the school and what the school offers to students. According to

Kozol, “knowledge is learned by demonstrating the ability to apply what has been learned. People are shaped by their environment and culture”. (1991, p, 4) therefore, providing instructions and opportunities to practice will positively condition the students’ ideas about second language learning. Therefore, Perez research supports the current study because it provides different perspectives on how family context, more specifically on parents’ decisions directly influence students’ ideas of second language learning, thus affecting students’ attitudes towards this process of learning a second language.

Pérez research took place in two different middle class public schools; one in Candelaria and the other in Engativa; both neighborhoods in the city of Bogota. The Colegio José Manuel Restrepo in Engativa was chosen due to the implementation of a curriculum completely translated into English, in addition, the school added hours for English teaching to the regular schedule to increase the use of the second language. Pérez interviewed students from the Colegio José Manuel Restrepo to understand how the social contexts affect their process. Students who answered the interview attend one of two different schedules, either in the morning or the afternoon. In addition, these students have two different teachers; this aspect seems to affect their perception about learning the second language because of the kind of relationship they have established with the teacher.

The school in Candelaria, Colegio Bilingüe de la Universidad Del Bosque was chosen because the school does not have a curriculum for English classes; according to Pérez, this aspect makes students apathetic when learning the second language. In addition, she concluded that it is important for students to feel their classes are well planned. Furthermore, students want to feel that school provides different spaces for them to use what they are learning to make it meaningful. In relation to the current research, Pérez shows how the school as a social context helps students to feel secure and motivated through the right

conditions which condition student's attitudes towards the second language learning.

Within her paper, Montoya explains "there are contexts where the language works as a constructor of the reality; the school, home and outside" (Montoya, 2013, p.100). Her research shows that students feel more comfortable at school than home because of the relationship students have with teachers. In relation to the current research, it is important to explore whether or not the relationships with teachers also condition the process of second language learning of the students in the Colegio Comfandi Calipso. In addition, within Montoya's paper, students explain the real importance for them to have spaces and opportunities to engage with the language, to really practice using what they learned and what they need to improve. Therefore, social context where the language can be used is perceived for students as a key factor which conditions their desire to learn the second language; meaning that proper spaces to deal with the language encourage students to practice and acquire a more solid base for future experiences with the language.

Montoya quotes Schumann's Acculturation Model (1986) in her research. "is possible to say that the social factors between the learner and the target languages play an important role in determining the level of second language learning" (p. 25). In relation to the current research, it is important to find out how the contexts affect students' interests, attitudes, but also if age, economic limitations and linguistic base condition the process of learning the second language. In addition, students claim that media have always supported the idea of second language learning through movies, books, magazines, awards and fashion among others. On the other hand, students also explain how they consider second language learning necessary in order to access advantages at work. In spite of these reasons presented in the results of Montoya's research, students also mention that being aware of the importance of second language learning is not enough for some of them to try to learn.

In her research, Jaramillo (2013) explores how students feel about second language learning. This research explains that students consider English language to be a way to help people gain an economic advantage. In addition, Jaramillo found that students reflect on the importance of speaking two languages, especially when it is related to being successful. Therefore, learning the second language seems to be closely related to students' aims; besides, students think speaking the second language will be an advantage for them to do so.

On the other hand, Jaramillo found that students claim that their education in relation to the second language learning is related more to the academic than a contextual issue, meaning students do not see the connection between what they are trying to learn and what is really going on within the different communities they belong to. Meaning that students are looking for real opportunities to try to communicate in the target language to engage with the real practice in context; considering communication a matter of being aware of the use of the language more than repeating a set of given sentences.

Students of the Colegio Cundinamarca also consider their background a very important part of second language learning; they explain how the different opinions of their families sometimes motivate them to learn, but in other cases make them think about the real importance of this, meaning their family have gone through some experiences facing the second language learning creating some judgments about what second language learning is. In addition, students say that their friends in other schools they do not even have enough hours of English class, therefore students feel they are running out of opportunities to practice the second language. However, within her research, Jaramillo found out that the curricula of the classes was created to fulfill a series of tasks more than learning the second language. In addition, Jaramillo concluded that it would be more interesting to work with more than one school a time; maybe putting together a group of students from four different schools in the same neighborhood to compare results and then have the possibility of making a wider reflection on the importance of context in condition second language learning.

To conclude, the aforementioned studies were done in Bogotá, which means that the current paper will be the first of this type undertaken in Cali, and specifically in the Agua Blanca District. However, the fact that they all present similar information about how social contexts influence students' idea about second language learning such parents' influence or relatives' influence based on the importance of second language learning in relation to their current jobs, among others. The collected information will make the analysis easier to do and find out about the influence of social context on student's idea about second language learning.

## **7. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL**

The chosen method for the current research is a mix between Participant observation, interviews and questionnaires because these involves the researcher in a variety of activities over a period of time that enable to observe the members of the research in their daily lives and participate in their activities to facilitate a better understanding of their behavior and activities. Therefore, the process of conducting this type of field work involves entry into the community, selecting key informants and participating in as many different activities as possible, clarifying that the information will be collected by formal interviews, and informal conversations, may be recorded or not, depending on the necessity.

In addition, Dewalt & Dewalt (2002) claims that “participant observation enables researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides”, in this way; the participant observation also helps the researcher to have a more concrete idea about the kind of questions to make for collecting the data.

Furthermore, Schensul and Le Compte (1999) define participant observation as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting"; therefore, participant observation is the correct method for the current research because it allows the researcher to be part of the context, to analyze situations beyond the classrooms and interact with the group to get data which may not be presented when collecting the information formally.

## 7.1. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The city of Santiago de Cali has many different sectors; Agua Blanca is a sector that represents over the 30% of the population of the city. According to El Pais (2002) in this population, “the economic situation is more difficult for people due to the lack of work opportunities; besides, violence affects constantly their daily life”. However, within the community there has been lots of social work in order to help families to overcome difficult times; also Carvajal Company helps through an educative project by giving notebooks, books, pen, pencils, eraser among other tools for children to go to school.

According to El Pais (2002) Agua Blanca’s neighborhood started when some unofficial constructors visited some of the poorest neighborhoods in Cali also known as “invasiones”, these constructors offered very cheap plots to people in other sectors of the city. People did not know about the absence of public transportation service, electricity, water or gas service in this sector and they decided to buy these plots. That is how the first settlement started on Marroquin’s neighborhood.

During the 1980’s people was trying to settle in Agua Blanca’s neighborhood.

According to El Pais (2002) “people were desperate because they had found that the plots they bought belonged to three different families at the same time, also because of the absence of the person who sold the plots” So, that is how on December 1981, Agua Blanca neighborhood started to be settle, becoming the biggest “invasion” in

Colombia”. In addition, El Pais (2002) claims that in Agua Blanca’s community “the economy has grown a lot due to the meaningful help of different companies, besides the pressure put on the government to increase the live conditions”, in addition, “many people have come from other parts such Buenaventura, Cauca, Pasto, etc., especially homeless people with no formal jobs. Thus, the social

conditions have changed a lot but it seems like the factor of the violence still goes on”

According to El Pais (2002) “Cali is the first „black” city in Colombia. 37.2 % of Cali’s families are Afro-Colombian, and 31, 6% of the population in Cali is Afro-Colombians, and more than 60% of that population lives in Agua Blanca”.

I worked in the Colegio Comfandi Calipso for 1 year. During this time I saw people who live in this neighborhood talking about education as a very important aspect for young people. The community of Calipso is strongly recognized as an important part for the neighborhood because in the school, students work on social projects like helping homeless people, collecting plastic lids for a campaign to help children with cancer and also students help homeless animals to be adopted. Therefore, belonging to this community helped me to understand how the school, family and personal relationships are important for students because these help them to work together to have social changes through honesty, hard work and awareness of the issues which affect their environment.

## **7.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION OF STUDY**

The tenth grade in the Colegio Comfandi Calipso is a mixed group of 22 girls and 22 boys between 15 and 16 years old. Some students do not live in the same neighborhood of Calipso but the same socio economic level. Students have two different schedules during the week; they have to study from 6:30 to 12:50 from Monday to Friday but on Tuesday and Wednesday they must stay in the school because they study also with the Servicio Nacional De Aprendizaje (SENA) in a project called “articulacion” where students learn how to create their own business.

This population of students is constantly in contact with English, either they like to listen to music or they like to read books. Students like to listen Rock music, Electronic music and also Rap; these kind of music help them to be in contact with the language by practice. In addition, some students read books which are written in English because they find the stories interesting but also they spend a lot of time surfing in different social networks which represent a very significant part of their life.

Students also express interest for the English class; they mention the importance of having a very qualified teacher who guides them when learning English. In addition, students are aware of the flaws they have when it comes to the second language learning but also they know these flaws can be overcome through practice and real working with the language.

Students are very concerned about the social issues presented in their environment. During the year that I worked in the Colegio Comfandi Calipso, I noticed how students are aware of violence and poorness problems which affect their community. Besides, students know the importance of social projects to overcome these issues and help their community. To conclude, the population of

the tenth grade of the Colegio Comfandi Calipso is perfect for this research due to the socio economic level and the different context they belong to, besides, the fact they were my students.

### **7.3 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The interview and the surveys are the methods chosen to collect information from individuals about their own practices, beliefs, or opinions. In addition, these methods can be used to gather information from groups not only about current practices but on past events within different contexts as well.

The questions of the interview and surveys are presented full in the appendix of the current research and they were designed based on their relationship with the objective of this research which is to find out about the importance of the wider social context in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning. The question for the interview takes into consideration the importance of education for students; their feelings towards the second language learning and what aspects of their community influence directly their learning process.

First, the questions for the surveys and the interviews were designed by thinking on the different context and situations observed during the participant observation, also, by the different topics the students talk about during the break, school time, classes, among others. These questions were made because of the way students face problems but also how they reflect on their own social issues. The population of study was taken to be explained about the methodology for collecting the data. However, it is important to mention that in spite the whole group is conformed by 22 boys and 22 girls just the half group will be taken into consideration because they were working with the researcher. The final group for collecting the data is conformed by 12 girls and 10 boys.

The final step before analyzing the collected data; the group of 22 students was divided in two groups. The first group answered the interview in a debate; all together in the same room at the same time in order to confront their ideas, to reflect on their previous answers and come up with new ideas to support the

research. Students seemed very participative during this exercise telling more reasons and supporting their ideas with their knowledge, experiences and feelings towards the questions.

The other part of the group answered the questions in a personal interview with the researcher; during this exercise the students seemed to be very shy and very redundant at the moment to answer the questions; meaning their answers were almost the same that they had when the interview was written. It might be the factor that I was their English teacher; hence, student's answers might be conditioned by this situation and they seemed to give answers they consider the researcher is looking for more than expressing their own ideas.

## 8. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results of the interviews and the surveys show a variety of opinions about the importance of the wider social context in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning.

First, students of Colegio Comfandi Calipso think that education is important because they consider it the first step to start a professional path. In addition, students think education helps them to achieve their objectives during life. It means the school is a context which students consider important to reflect about the importance of education in their life and community.

Second, the student's community is presented as another context which condition student's idea of second language learning. Within their community, students express their lack of time to practice English because they are busy doing other things at home. However, students claim that in spite of this; they try to practice English by listening to music and playing games using their cellphones and laptops. In addition, students mention the importance of movies to practice English as well. Furthermore, students mention they have friends in countries like the United States, Canada, and Italy, among others; so, students practice their written English with them as much as possible.

Something extremely surprising when analyzing the results is that students do consider their family a context which condition their ideas of second language learning because they comment that family motivates them to learn the second language for having a better job, to travel to another country, to achieve their goals and to be more competitive when they apply for a new job. However, some students mention their relatives do not talk about the importance of learning the second language because they do not consider it a necessity. Furthermore, 60% of the students commented that they have relatives who live abroad, mostly in the United States and Canada. In some cases, these relatives left Colombia a long

time ago and after living many years in those countries they speak English correctly according to the students' opinion. Besides, students think their relatives became bilingual because they must speak the second language to face all the situations in the foreign country they moved to. Nevertheless, 30% of the students mentioned the hard work their relatives had to do when they decided to learn the second language here in Colombia before living abroad and face those situations which demand from them a certain level of proficiency using the language.

According to the interviews, social context such family, school and personal relationships not only condition student's ideas about learning the second language but also their plans. The results show that parents think it is important for students to go to the university and get a degree, however, while some students have no idea what they will be doing after graduating, a significant part of the group mention the importance of learning English to achieve this. In addition, students mention that sharing their plans with their classmates has helped them to put those dreams they have, such traveling, getting a degree and learning another language besides English, into a more real context.

The results also show that some students comment their interest to start their professional path by studying a career to be engineers, police officers, architects, managers, doctors, etc. Furthermore, students mention their first intention to go to the university is to become wealthy to help their families by having a well-pay job. The data collected indicate that students who wants to get a degree are aware of the importance of learning the second language because they mentioned that if they do, they will have better opportunities to have a better-paid job.

In relation with the second language learning and its importance, the tenth grade students in Colegio Comfandi Calipso consider learning English important because they have the idea to study a career abroad. In addition, 100% of the

students consider the second language learning not an option but a requirement to be successful.

Finally, the collected data also shows that students consider second language learning an opportunity to learn about other cultures, especially when people who speak English visit Colombia. However, students have no idea if there are spaces to practice English with people who also speak the language in their city. Students also seem to be interested in these activities to share them with their friends because they mention the importance of feeling comfortable when speaking a second language. Therefore, social contexts condition students' idea about second language learning due to the influence in their life and personal relationships through experiences of others and moments for sharing through the use of the language with people they have a good relationship with.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the one hand, as mentioned at the beginning of the presentations of results, students of the Colegio Comfandi Calipso mention that social context condition their ideas about second language learning through different factors. Among these factors, students mention how important is handling two languages at the same time in Colombia. In addition, Students mention the influence of relatives in this idea of second language learning mentioning English and Spanish as their first options, however, French, Italian and Japanese are presented as interesting languages to be learned as well.

Secondly, students also explain their point of view about handling two languages at the same time in Colombia. First, students consider that living in a country like Colombia where Spanish is the first language make the practice of the language more important because they express that living in a country like United States of America, Canada or Australia where English is considered the first language the practice is mandatory because people must talk; however, in Colombia even if you are learning the second language but you do not practice enough; the learning will not be as meaningful as people expected to be. Therefore, students think that social context influence the second language learning due to the opportunities to engage knowledge with real speaking opportunities which seems to be a key factor when learning the second language for students meaning students are looking for a situation which triggers the knowledge they are learning during classes.

On the other hand, students consider the second language learning a way to change their social environment. Students are aware of the difficulties presented in their communities and they consider the lack of work opportunities and the low economic conditions the biggest issues for people to consider the second language learning an important part of their life. Besides, students mention how people do illegal things as a way to have all they want no matter what they do. In

spite of these situations, students consider learning a second language an opportunity to find a better job in a national enterprise and help their family; economically speaking. Therefore, the conditions presented in the different social contexts influence directly the student's idea about second language learning due to the kind of situations students live in their daily life.

Surprisingly, students of Colegio Comfandi Calipso talk about the huge importance of personal relationships context when conditioning the idea of second language learning. Students explain how their relatives who live in foreign countries share their experiences and these help students to reflect how the second language learning is an essential requirement for their professional future. In addition, these relationships help students to use English like a tool to share experiences, to practice in a meaningful way, also to learn about different cultures and a way to approach activities, for instance, listening to music, reading articles, researching, work out routines, sports statistics about their favorite teams among others.

Students like Valentina Correa tells personal experiences which have changed their opinions about different topics in relation to the second language learning. For example, Valentina claims that “Mi tía vive en Washington y ella habla muy bien de las leyes, de la limpieza en las calles y de cómo las personas que como ella han llegado a esta ciudad han aprendido el idioma y esto les ha facilitado conseguir un trabajo y asimismo, acceder a la educación” so, Valentina considers all the aspects which are not related to the formal second language learning process but the influence of social context in her relative's life. In addition, Valentina has considered to study abroad, so she started by making a stronger effort when practicing English during classes.

Laura Narvaez is another student in this class. Her answers reflect how important is the influence of relatives when condition the second language learning. Alejandra Narvaez has lived in London for the last 7 years, she made it

through a scholarship to learn English. Laura Claims “Mi prima es diseñadora de modas, aplico a una beca para aprender inglés y la conseguí, ella comenta que la vida es muy diferente, adora el clima y ve la educación desde otra perspectiva; Alejandra ahora ve a la educación como un derecho y no un privilegio” so Laura, have started to reflect on their educative process and the importance of learning the second language.

Felipe Palacios claims the next: “mi hermano vive en Bogota, aprendio inglés aqqi en Colombia y la empresa para la cual trabaja lo manda a Estados unidos a hacer unas revisiones en las sucursales de alla, me dice que aprendiendo inglés su jefe lo tomo en cuenta para esos negocios internacionales; el ama Colombia pero siempre ha querido establecerse en Europa” So, Andres reflect on the importance of second language learning and how this process has a positive impact in his brother’s profesional life.

As presented within this section, relatives strongly condition student’s ideas about second language learning through their experiences which are positive for students, these histories help students to change the way students perceive the second language not only conditioning their ideas about work or traveling but also about their social environment which was presented in the beginning as one of the factors which affect this idea.

As mentioned by Valentina, Laura and Felipe. Many other students have changed their view about the influence of context by sharing experiences with their relatives who lives in other countries like United States of America and Canada. These experiences have condition students’ ideas about second language learning positively, then, students of Colegio Comfandi Calipso find extremely important to learn the second language; in this case, personal relationships condition the decision to learn due to the nature and the characteristics of their relatives who share positive experiences with them.

According to the tenth graders of Comfandi Calipso, the lack of caring and the poorness also affect their social context perception about second language learning because students feel that people in their community are not interested in learning the second language. According to the results of the interviews and the surveys, students believe this because in their community the people is more interested in gossiping, but also students express the community consider the second language is not useful within their routines.

For Comfandi Calipso students there is another important reason to learn the second language. They explain how they see the second language learning a necessity to look for an improvement of their family life conditions. In addition, as members of the community of Barrio Calipso in Agua Blanca, students have such big plans for their lives considering all the factors that might affect those aims. So, second language learning for students in Comfandi Calipso is basically perceived as the first chance they have to achieve their aims and accomplish a real change in their community.

To conclude, the importance of the wider social context in conditioning students' ideas about second language learning is presented in relation with student's aims and the issues (poorness, violence and the lack of culture) that affect their community. Students seem to be very positive when learning the second language in spite of these social issues because they claim that they have seen how learning the second language makes a difference because they have listened their relatives commenting about how the decision of learning the second language have affected positively their lifestyle. Therefore, students consider language would help them to be in touch with people, to break down boundaries and be more prepared to face the different challenges in their life.

In addition, students perceive the media influence their process of learning the second language due to the opportunities to practice and the contact with the second language; for instance, students mention the social networks allow them to

share, to learn, to experience different aspects with the second language. Therefore, we might say that social context condition the student's ideas about second language learning by presenting different scenarios where learning the second language is an advantage in order to achieve their personal aims based on what they listen from their personal relationships with their relatives abroad.

## 11. APPENDICES

### ENCUESTA

#### NOMBRE GRADO BARRIO

#### PREGUNTAS ENCUESTA

1. ¿QUE SENTIDO TIENE LA EDUCACION PARA TI?
2. ¿QUE PIENSAS TU DE LA EDUCACION QUE RECIBES ACTUALMENTE?
3. ¿PARA TI QUE ES SER BILINGÜE?
4. ¿CONOCES A ALGUIEN QUE SEA BILINGÜE? ¿COMO LLEGO A SERLO ESTA PERSONA?
5. ¿DONDE TE HA RESULTADO MAS FACIL EL APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLES? ¿TIENES ALGUN MOMENTO APARTE DEL COLEGIO DONDE UTILICES EL INGLES?
6. ¿HAY ALGUNAS OPORTUNIDADES EN SU BARRIO O COMUNIDAD PARA USAR O PRACTICAR EL INGLES? ¿CUALES SON?
7. ¿CREES QUE TU BARRIO O COMUNIDAD PUEDE LLEGAR A SER BILINGÜE?
8. ¿TIENES FAMILIARES O AMIGOS CERCANOS QUE SEAN BILINGUES?  
¿QUE PIENSAN ELLOS DE QUE TU APRENDAS INGLES?
9. ¿QUE PLANES TIENES PARA EL FUTURO?
10. ¿CONSIDERAS TÚ QUE SER BILINGUE AYUDA PARA ESOS PLANES? ¿POR QUE?
11. ¿ES COLOMBIA UN PAIS BILINGÜE? ¿PIENSAS TU QUE ES IMPORTANTE QUE LO SEA?

12. ¿CONOCES DE ESPACIOS PARA QUE PERSONAS BILINGUES EN TU CIUDAD SE REUNAN? ¿TE INTERESARIA PARTICIPAR DE ESTOS ESPACIOS?

## **PREGUNTAS ENTREVISTA**

13. ¿TE GUSTA EL INGLÉS? ¿POR QUÉ?
14. ¿TE GUSTA APRENDER INGLÉS? ¿POR QUÉ?
15. ¿QUÉ ES SER BILINGÜE?
16. ¿CÓMO INFLUYE EL COLEGIO EN TU APRENDIZAJE DE INGLÉS? ¿QUE OTRAS AYUDAS TIENES CUANDO APRENDES INGLÉS?
17. ¿HAY ALGUNAS OPORTUNIDADES EN TU BARRIO O COMUNIDAD PARA USAR O PRACTICAR EL INGLÉS? ¿CUÁLES SON?
18. ¿CREES TÚ QUE LA COMUNIDAD PUEDE SER BILINGÜE?
19. ¿TIENES FAMILIARES QUE SEAN BILINGÜES? ¿QUE PIENSAN ELLOS DE QUE APRENDES INGLÉS?
20. ¿CUÁLES SON TUS INTERESES? ¿QUE ACTIVIDADES REALIZAS EN TU TIEMPO LIBRE DONDE USAS EL INGLÉS? ¿HAS APRENDIDO ALGO DE INGLÉS HACIENDO DICHAS ACTIVIDADES?
21. ¿QUE PLANES TIENES TÚ PARA EL FUTURO?
22. ¿CONSIDERAS TÚ QUE EL APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS AYUDA PARA ESOS PLANES? ¿POR QUÉ?
23. ¿ES COLOMBIA UN PAÍS BILINGÜE? ¿PIENSAS TÚ QUE ES IMPORTANTE QUE LO SEA, POR QUÉ?

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