

<https://doi.org/10.63636/rciid.v5i1.67>

The Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning to Promote Intercultural Awareness and English Language Fluency in Sixth-Grade Students at La Trinidad de Moravia School, First Quarter 2026

La efectividad del aprendizaje basado en proyectos para promover la conciencia intercultural y la fluidez en inglés en estudiantes de sexto grado de la Escuela La Trinidad de Moravia, primer cuatrimestre 2026

Natalia Kristina Castillo Jiménez

ncastilloj@hotmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6654-0245>

Universidad Hispanoamericana
Costa Rica

Artículo recibido: 10 marzo 2026-Aceptado para publicación: 23 abril 2026
Conflictos de intereses: Ninguno que declarar

ABSTRACT

In most public schools in Costa Rica, students do not have enough opportunities to practice English in meaningful contexts. At La Trinidad School in Moravia, sixth-grade students show limitations in expressing themselves confidently in English, and this is exacerbated by the high cultural diversity of the classrooms. The main purpose of this research is to determine the Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning to Promote Intercultural Awareness and English Language Fluency in Sixth-Grade Students at La Trinidad de Moravia School, First Quarter 2026. This research employs a mixed-methods design involving 32 sixth-grade students. Data was collected using diagnostic questionnaires, observation checklists, reflective instruments, and pre- and post-tests, before and after the implementation of intercultural PBL activities. During the implementation of the project, the students worked collaboratively on projects that promote interculturality and in which they were able to explore traditions, cultural themes and personal experiences while using the English language to communicate. The results are intended to reflect the students' progress in improving their confidence when speaking English, being able to communicate with fewer pauses, and interacting respectfully and empathetically with classmates from different cultural backgrounds. The study concludes that PBL is a powerful tool for transforming English lessons into meaningful learning experiences that strengthen fluency and foster intercultural awareness and respect for others.

Keywords: PBL, intercultural awareness, fluency

RESUMEN

En la mayoría de las escuelas públicas de Costa Rica, los estudiantes no tienen suficientes oportunidades para practicar inglés en contextos significativos. En la Escuela La Trinidad de Moravia, los alumnos de sexto grado muestran dificultades para expresarse con confianza en inglés, situación que se agrava por la alta diversidad cultural de las aulas. El objetivo principal de esta investigación es determinar la efectividad del aprendizaje basado en proyectos para promover la conciencia intercultural y la fluidez en inglés en los alumnos de sexto grado de la Escuela La Trinidad de Moravia, durante el primer trimestre de 2026. Esta investigación emplea un diseño de métodos mixtos con la participación de 32 alumnos de sexto grado. Los datos se recopilaban mediante cuestionarios diagnósticos, listas de observación, instrumentos de reflexión y pruebas previas y posteriores a la implementación de las actividades de aprendizaje basado en proyectos interculturales. Durante la implementación del proyecto, los alumnos trabajaron en colaboración en proyectos que promueven la interculturalidad y en los que pudieron explorar tradiciones, temas culturales y experiencias personales utilizando el inglés para comunicarse. Los resultados pretenden reflejar el progreso de los estudiantes en la mejora de su confianza al hablar inglés, su capacidad para comunicarse con menos pausas y su interacción respetuosa y empática con compañeros de diferentes orígenes culturales. El estudio concluye que el ABP es una herramienta poderosa para transformar las clases de inglés en experiencias de aprendizaje significativas que fortalecen la fluidez y fomentan la conciencia intercultural y el respeto por los demás.

Palabras clave: ABP, conciencia intercultural, fluidez

Correspondencia: ncastilloj@hotmail.com

Conflictos de Interés: Ninguna que declarar

Todo el contenido de I+D Internacional - Revista Científica y Académica, publicados en este sitio están disponibles bajo

Licencia Creative Commons



INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people are more connected than ever all over the world. As an example, a message sent in San José, Costa Rica can be read in Tokyo within seconds, or a child in Nicaragua can listen to the same music as someone in London or Missouri. And yet, in the classroom, many children still struggle to find their voice, especially when it comes to speaking English as a second language. At La Trinidad de Moravia School, this reality is alive and visible every single day. Sixth-grade students, full of energy and curiosity, face the challenge of expressing themselves in English, and sometimes even in Spanish, which is their mother tongue, with confidence. Some remain quiet not because they don't want to participate, but because they are afraid of being ashamed for their accent, their mistakes, or simply because their culture is different.

This research project, *The Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning to Promote Intercultural Awareness and English Language Fluency in Sixth-Grade Students at La Trinidad de Moravia School, First Quarter 2026*, was born from that need: to give these students a voice, to make them participate and let them express their ideas sharing also their valuable cultural background. It aims to use Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a bridge between cultures, languages, and, most importantly, between students themselves. The hope is that English stops being just another subject and instead becomes a living tool, to help children connect, create, and understand both themselves and others.

The importance of this project is the ability to combine language and culture to benefit students from different cultures. In Costa Rica, English lessons in public schools are not enough to make students bilingual. Sometimes, teachers just focus on memorizing grammar rules, practicing isolated vocabulary lists, or repeating short dialogues that are given in the planning. But the richness of culture, values, stories, are not included. As Byram (1997) said, you can't really separate language from culture, because one gives meaning to the other.

Intercultural awareness is now a basic skill for life. Deardorff (2006) explains that intercultural competence means having the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities to engage respectfully with people from different backgrounds. At La Trinidad de Moravia is common to see in a classroom a child that comes from Nicaragua, another from Venezuela, and another from Costa Rica, it would be very enriching to take advantage of this cultural variety that exists where these students can also share their traditions. If their diversity is ignored, this can become a source of insecurity, isolation, and limited classroom interaction while learning English. But if it is embraced, it turns into an opportunity for learning to listen, to value, and to collaborate with others.

Previous research has shown that PBL helps students go beyond memorization. Thomas (2000) described it as an approach that gives students real-world tasks, where they solve problems, ask questions, and create together. Beckett and Slater (2020) showed that in language classrooms, this kind of work turns English into a living language, students use it because they need it. Araya Rodríguez (2017) found that creative, cooperative approaches helped sixth graders in Costa Rica improve their oral

communication. Vesterås (2021), working in Norway, showed that teachers who integrated intercultural competence into their English lessons helped students develop tolerance and respect. And Rakovskaya (2019) observed how cultural diversity, when used as a resource in schools, fostered openness and empathy among children. All of these studies indicate a consistent outcome: when culture and language come together in an educational setting, the learning experience becomes more impactful.

At La Trinidad de Moravia School, English is taught only three lessons a week. Sometimes even less because schedules change or special activities take priority. This makes English feel like a fragmented subject. This school also has many immigrants or children of immigrant families, accents vary and traditions are different. Some students feel ashamed or afraid to speak, and this prevents them from practicing. But considering this an advantage, they are living examples of cultural diversity that enrich every lesson.

This study focuses on building mental and emotional habits that students will continue to need throughout their lives. If a group of sixth graders learn to express their culture in English and to value diversity instead of rejecting it, imagine the impact this could have later in high school, college, or even in the workplace. Definitely this are powerful life lessons that shape confident, empathetic, and open-minded individuals. As Deardorff (2006) argues, intercultural competence is a lifelong journey, one that prepares people to grow, adapt, and thrive in diverse environments. All students should be proud of who they are, and where they come from.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in promoting intercultural awareness and English language fluency among sixth-grade students. The quantitative component allowed for the measurement of students' progress, while the qualitative component provided deeper insight into their experiences, perceptions, and interactions.

In terms of its purpose, this research is classified as applied, as it seeks to address a real educational problem within a specific classroom context and propose a practical pedagogical solution. Regarding its scope, the study is descriptive, since it aims to analyze and describe the effects of the implementation of PBL on students' fluency and intercultural awareness.

The research design is non-experimental and observational, as the variables were not manipulated but observed within their natural educational environment. Additionally, the study follows a transversal (cross-sectional) design, since the data were collected during a specific period of time, namely the first academic quarter of 2026. The study also incorporates a constructivist perspective, as learning is understood as an active process in which students construct knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and meaningful experiences.

The population of the study consisted of students from La Trinidad de Moravia School, located in Moravia, San José, Costa Rica. The sample was composed of 32 sixth-grade students, aged between 11 and 12 years old.

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was used, as the participants were selected based on their accessibility and their enrollment in the researcher's classroom. This group was characterized by a culturally diverse composition, including students from different national backgrounds such as Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Panama, as well as varying levels of English proficiency.

In order to obtain valid, dependable, and comprehensive data, this research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The use of multiple instruments allowed for triangulation of data, which strengthens the credibility of the findings and provides a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in promoting intercultural awareness and English language fluency (Creswell, 2014; Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). All instruments were designed in direct alignment with the main objective and the specific objectives of the study and were applied before, during, and after the implementation of the PBL intervention.

Observation was used as a qualitative technique to examine students' English language fluency in authentic classroom contexts. According to Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), observation allows researchers to systematically record behaviors and interactions as they naturally occur, making it especially suitable for educational settings. In this study, two observation checklists were designed and applied by the researcher: one prior to the PBL implementation and one after the intervention.

The observation checklists focused on three key dimensions of English language fluency: confidence when speaking, being understood without excessive effort, and speaking with few pauses using the language naturally. These dimensions are consistent with communicative approaches to language learning, which emphasize natural interaction over mechanical accuracy (Richards, 2006). Each checklist included specific indicators marked as "Observed" or "Not Observed," ensuring consistency and objectivity in data collection. An additional comments section was included to record relevant qualitative observations that supported interpretation of results.

Questionnaires were used as a quantitative technique to measure students' perceptions and attitudes regarding intercultural awareness and the effectiveness of PBL. Creswell (2014) states that questionnaires are useful for collecting standardized data from multiple participants and for identifying patterns that can be statistically analyzed.

Two closed-ended questionnaires were administered as a pre-test and post-test to assess students' intercultural awareness. These instruments evaluated students' ability to understand cultural differences, respect others, and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The questionnaires used a Likert-scale format, which facilitated comparison of results before and after the intervention and allowed for measurement of attitudinal change over time (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014).

Additionally, a Likert-scale questionnaire was applied at the end of the project to evaluate students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning as a teaching strategy. This instrument assessed three areas: PBL

and intercultural awareness, PBL and English language fluency, and PBL as a learning strategy. Likert scales are widely used in educational research to measure attitudes, perceptions, and levels of agreement in a structured and quantifiable manner (Creswell, 2014).

To complement quantitative findings, reflective instruments were used to collect qualitative data related to students' learning experiences. A KWL (Know–Want to Learn–Learned) chart was implemented to promote metacognitive reflection and to capture students' perceptions of intercultural awareness before, during, and after the project. According to Ogle (1986), KWL charts encourage learners to activate prior knowledge, set learning goals, and reflect on new understanding, making them particularly effective in educational research.

The combination of observation, questionnaires, and reflective instruments ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the research variables. By applying these techniques at different stages of the study, it was possible to measure changes in students' intercultural awareness and English language fluency, as well as to analyze students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning as an effective instructional approach in a culturally diverse sixth-grade classroom at La Trinidad de Moravia School.

All the instruments underwent a validation process in which five teachers evaluated their relevance and clarity. Among their recommendations, they noted the following: it is important not to include student's name in order to keep their information confidential and guarantee the anonymity of the participants. The instruments were approved and considered excellent. They agreed that the instruments used will show both strengths and deficiencies among students which will help to obtain better results while teaching. Statements are clear, simple, and culturally relevant for 11–12-year-olds, using accessible language, reinforcing the impact of classroom projects by measuring progress in respect for and appreciation of diversity, relevant to Costa Rican multicultural environments. They contain observable and concrete criteria with a binary format that reduces evaluator subjectivity. They also promote metacognitive reflection in a visual and flexible way, with guided examples that help students with low reading/writing fluency. The K-W-L structure captures progress (prior knowledge, curiosity, learning), integrating qualitative data. These instruments form a robust triangulated (quantitative, qualitative, observational) set for this study.

The research was conducted over an 8-week period during the first quarter of 2026. The procedure followed four main phases:

1. **Diagnostic Phase:** Application of the pre-test questionnaire and initial observation checklist to determine students' baseline levels of fluency and intercultural awareness.
2. **Intervention Phase:** Implementation of Project-Based Learning activities focused on intercultural themes. Students worked collaboratively on projects involving cultural exploration, presentations, and peer interaction using English as the main communication tool.
3. **Monitoring Phase:** Continuous observation and data collection throughout the intervention, including the use of reflective instruments such as KWL charts.

4. **Evaluation Phase:** Application of post-test instruments and final observation checklist to measure progress and compare results with initial data.

This study followed fundamental ethical principles in educational research. Participation was voluntary, and students' confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the process. Data were used exclusively for academic purposes. Additionally, the research respected students' cultural backgrounds, promoting an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

One of the main limitations of this study was the limited number of English lessons per week (three lessons), which reduced the exposure time to the intervention. Additionally, occasional interruptions due to school activities affected the continuity of the implementation. Another limitation was the variability in students' motivation and participation levels, which may have influenced the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings derived from the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities aimed at promoting intercultural awareness and English language fluency among sixth-grade students. The results are organized according to the research variables and instruments applied, maintaining a logical sequence that allows for a clear interpretation and discussion of the outcomes.

Improvement in English Language Fluency

The analysis of the observation checklists (pre-and post-intervention) revealed a notable improvement in students' oral fluency. At the beginning of the study, most students demonstrated hesitation when speaking, frequent pauses, and low confidence in expressing their ideas in English. Participation was limited, and several students avoided speaking during class activities.

After the implementation of PBL activities, a significant increase in oral participation and confidence was observed. Students were more willing to engage in conversations, express opinions, and present their ideas in front of their peers. The frequency of pauses decreased, and their speech became more fluid and natural. Additionally, students showed greater ability to communicate meaning even when making grammatical errors, prioritizing communication over accuracy.

These findings align with Jack C. Richards (2006), who emphasizes that fluency involves the ability to produce language smoothly and with fewer interruptions. Similarly, John W. Thomas (2000) argues that meaningful, real-world tasks encourage authentic language use, which enhances fluency development. The results suggest that PBL created a safe and engaging environment where students felt comfortable experimenting with the language, reducing anxiety and fostering confidence.

Development of Intercultural Awareness

The results obtained from the pre- and post-questionnaires, as well as the KWL charts, indicate a positive development in students' intercultural awareness. Initially, students showed limited knowledge about cultural diversity and, in some cases, demonstrated neutral or indifferent attitudes toward cultural differences.

Following the intervention, students exhibited a greater understanding of different cultures, including traditions, customs, and perspectives from their classmates' countries of origin. More importantly, there was a noticeable shift in attitudes, with students demonstrating increased respect, curiosity, and empathy toward cultural diversity.

Students were able to compare their own cultural experiences with those of others, identify similarities and differences, and reflect on the importance of respecting diverse backgrounds. These changes were particularly evident during collaborative activities, where students actively listened to their peers and engaged in meaningful discussions.

These findings are consistent with the Intercultural Competence Model proposed by Darla K. Deardorff (2006), which highlights attitudes such as openness, respect, and curiosity as essential components of intercultural development. Likewise, Michael Byram (1997) emphasizes that language learning must include cultural understanding to achieve effective communication.

Impact of Project-Based Learning on Student Engagement

The Likert-scale survey results revealed that students perceived PBL activities as highly engaging and motivating. Most students reported that they enjoyed working on projects, collaborating with classmates, and learning about different cultures while using English.

Students expressed that PBL activities made learning more interesting and meaningful, helped them feel more confident when speaking, allowed them to express their ideas freely, and encouraged teamwork and collaboration.

The interactive nature of PBL contributed to increased participation, as students were not limited to passive roles but instead became active participants in their own learning process. This supports the findings of Beckett and Slater (2020), who argue that PBL enhances motivation by connecting learning with real-life experiences and personal relevance.

Integration of Language and Culture as a Learning Strategy

One of the most significant findings of this study is the effectiveness of integrating language learning with cultural exploration. The results demonstrate that when students used English as a tool to share their cultural identities and learn about others, their communication became more authentic and meaningful.

Students who initially felt insecure about their accents or backgrounds began to participate more actively when their cultural identity was valued as part of the learning process. This integration helped reduce feelings of anxiety and promoted a sense of belonging within the classroom.

The findings support the theoretical perspective of Michael Byram (1997), who states that language and culture are inseparable, and that meaningful communication requires both linguistic and cultural competence. Additionally, the results reinforce the idea that culturally responsive teaching practices can enhance both academic and social outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are consistent with previous research in the field of language education and intercultural learning. For instance, the findings align with Araya Rodríguez (2017), who demonstrated that cooperative and interactive methodologies improve students' oral communication skills and confidence.

Similarly, the results coincide with Vesterås (2021), who found that integrating intercultural competence into English teaching promotes respect and openness among students. The present study further supports these findings by showing that intercultural awareness can be effectively developed through structured PBL activities.

In addition, the outcomes are consistent with Rakovskaya (2019), who identified cultural diversity as a valuable resource that fosters empathy and social development when properly integrated into the learning environment.

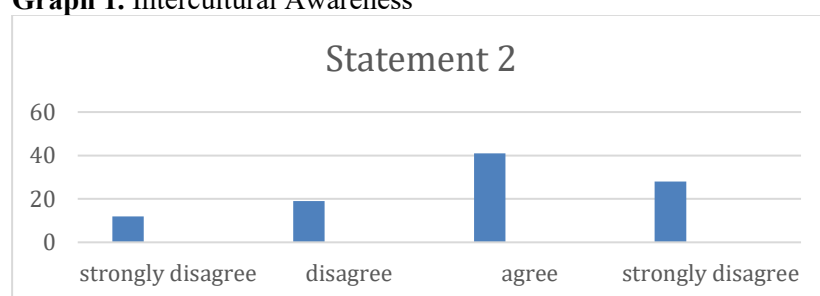
Scientific Contribution and Practical Implications

This study contributes to the field of English language teaching by providing evidence that Project-Based Learning is an effective strategy for addressing both linguistic and intercultural challenges in multicultural classrooms. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that PBL can transform traditional English lessons into meaningful learning experiences. Cultural diversity should be used as a resource rather than a barrier since students benefit from opportunities to engage in authentic communication. Intercultural awareness and language fluency can be developed simultaneously.

Furthermore, this study offers a replicable model that can be applied in other public schools with similar characteristics, particularly those with limited instructional time and culturally diverse student populations.

Illustrations, Tables, Figures

Graph 1. Intercultural Awareness

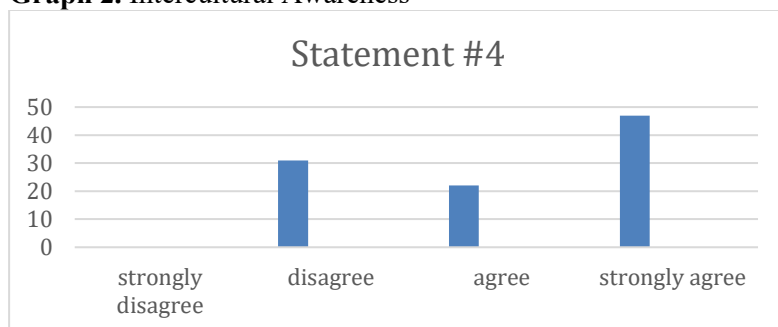


Statement #3: I believe that cultural differences make people interesting and valuable
Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 1 presents the students' responses regarding their perceptions of cultural diversity and the value of cultural differences. The results indicate that 41% of the participants agree and 28% strongly agree with the statement. This means that 69% of the students show a positive attitude, recognizing that cultural differences can enrich relationships and make people more interesting and valuable. However, the graph also shows that 19% selected the option disagree, and 12% strongly disagree, representing a

31% who may not yet fully recognize the way cultural differences complement them, usually related to feelings of insecurity when discussing cultural identity. The results suggest that there is still a need in this topic, and that is why it is necessary to implement PBL encouraging students to explore cultural traditions, share experiences, and develop empathy and respect for diversity, while practicing English in meaningful communicative context.

Graph 2. Intercultural Awareness

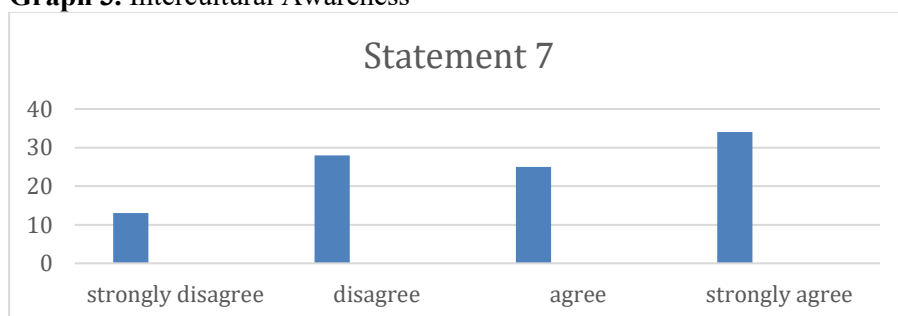


Statement #3: I feel comfortable listening to opinions from classmates with different cultural backgrounds

Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 2 presents the students' responses regarding their comfort level when listening to classmates who come from different cultural backgrounds. The results show that 47% of the students strongly agree, and 22% agree with the statement. In total, 69% of the participants feel comfortable interacting and listening to others. However, the graph also indicates that 31% of the students selected the option disagree, while no students selected strongly disagree. It means that a considerable group of students may still feel uncertain when engaging in conversations about cultural differences due to fear of expressing opinions in front of classmates. Overall, the results show that although most students demonstrate openness toward listening to diverse perspectives, there is still a requirement to promote dialogue and empathy in the classroom. This is why PBL activities focused on intercultural themes can help create safe spaces where students feel encouraged, sharing respectfully with others in meaningful interactions with peers.

Graph 3. Intercultural Awareness



Statement #3: I respect different accents or ways of speaking

Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 3 presents students' responses regarding their attitudes toward different accents and ways of speaking, which is an important aspect of intercultural awareness and respect for cultural diversity. The results show that 34% of the students strongly agree and 25% agree with the statement. In total, 59% of

the participants show a positive attitude toward respecting different accents and forms of expression and linguistic diversity.

However, the graph also shows that 28% of the students selected the option disagree, while 13% strongly disagree. This 41% is a considerable number of students that have difficulty accepting and understanding linguistic differences among their classmates. This may be related to social perceptions about accents or feelings of insecurity when speaking in front of others, especially in a classroom where students come from different countries.

Overall, the results reveal that there is a big need to strengthen intercultural understanding and empathy in the classroom. PBL applied in the class may help to develop greater respect for linguistic diversity while improving their confidence and communication skills in English.

Table 1. KWL Chart

K	W	L
• Gallo Pinto • Baile del diablito • Flags • Food • Parties • Clothing" • Skin color" • People from other countries • I don't know	• Food from other countries • Languages • Celebrations • How people live • Traditions • Famous people • Other countries • Cultural Dances	• All cultures deserve respect • Don't judge others by their country • Differences make people unique • We are all valuable • We can be great no matter where we come from • Not all people have the same rights

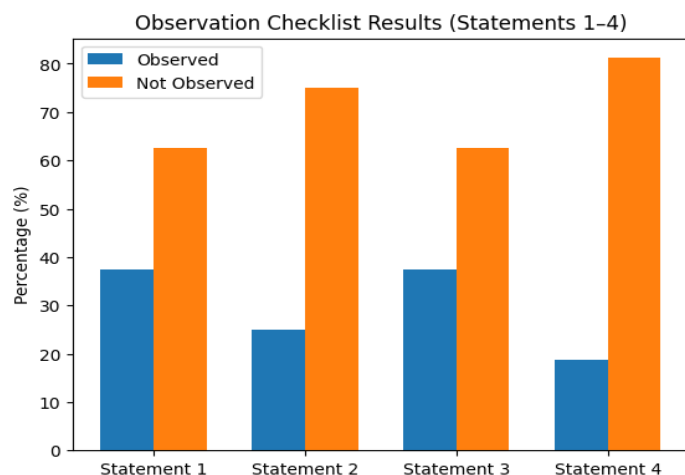
Starting with the 'K' column, most responses showed a basic understanding of culture, mainly related to food, traditions, and celebrations. Many of these ideas were superficial and not fully connected to the concept of intercultural awareness. Students initially associated culture with visible and familiar elements such as food, traditions, clothing, and national symbols. Some students expressed "I don't know", which highlights the need for further development in this area.

In the 'W' column, there was a strong interest in exploring other cultures, especially aspects such as food, traditions, and lifestyles. Students showed curiosity about how people live in different countries, which indicates motivation and openness toward learning. This demonstrates motivation to expand their understanding beyond their immediate context.

Finally, in the 'L' column there is clear evidence of meaningful learning; it shows a significant transformation. Students moved from concrete ideas to deeper reflections, expressing values. They

recognized that all cultures are valuable, that differences make people unique, and that no one should be judged based on their origin. This progression illustrates how PBL transformed a basic understanding of culture to a more reflective intercultural awareness, which was one of the main goals of this project

Graph 4. English Language Fluency (Initial)



Statement #1: Shows confidence when speaking English

Statement #2: Participates orally without fear of making mistakes

Statement #3: Is understood by peers without frequent clarification

Statement #4: Uses appropriate pronunciation and intonation

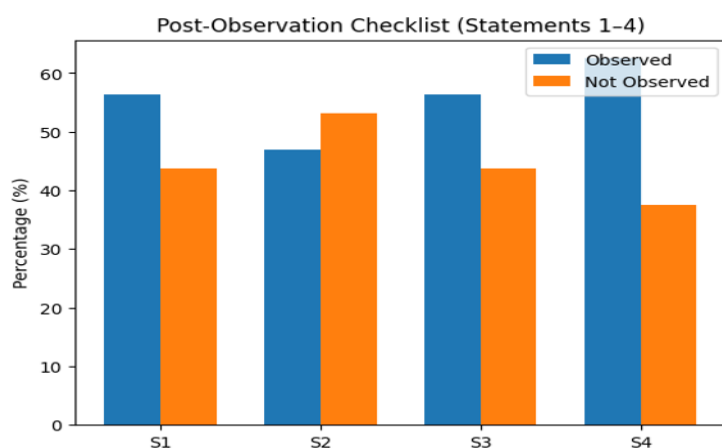
Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 4 presents the results obtained from the first four statements of the observation checklist applied to evaluate students' English fluency before the implementation of PBL. The data collected shows that a considerable percentage of the expected behaviors related to fluency, were not frequently observed during the initial observation stage. For instance, in Statement 1 only 37,5 % of the students demonstrated the observed behavior, while 62,5% did not show it consistently during classroom interactions. It is similar in Statement 2, where 25% of students demonstrated the behavior, while 75% did not. This shows that many students still struggle with participating confidently when speaking English.

In Statement 3, 37,5% of students demonstrated the expected behavior, while 62,5% did not, indicating that several students experienced difficulty expressing themselves naturally when communicating in the classroom. Statement 4 shows the lowest percentage of observed behavior, where only 18,8% of the students demonstrated the behavior, while 81,2% did not. The results show that many students had difficulty maintaining fluency when speaking English, often showing hesitation and limited participation during the activities.

From the researcher's perspective, these results reflect the classroom dynamics observed at La Trinidad Primary School, students often show interest in participating but may feel insecure when speaking English especially when speaking in front of their classmates. These findings confirm the need to implement strategies such as PBL to encourage students to use English more confidently and naturally in the classroom.

Graph 5. English Language Fluency (Post Observation)



Statement #1: Speaks English with increased confidence

Statement #2: Expresses ideas clearly with little effort

Statement #3: Is understood easily by classmates

Statement #4: Uses English with fewer pauses

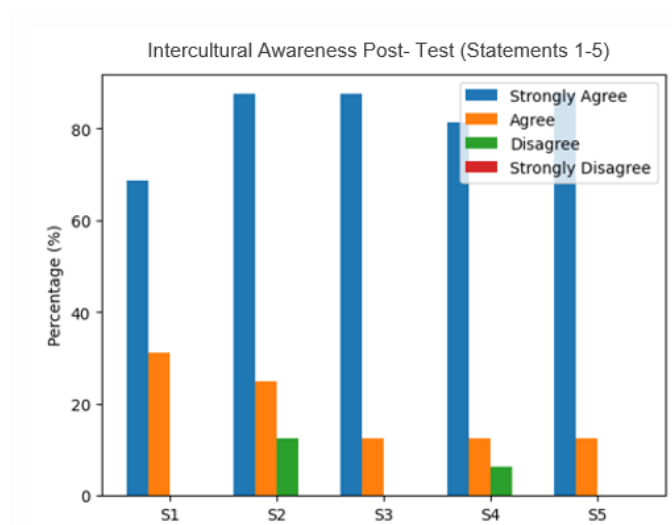
Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 5 shows the results after the implementation of Project-Based Learning activities. The results indicate a clear improvement compared to the initial observation. In statement 1, 56.25 % of the students were observed speaking with increased confidence, while 43.75 % still showed some difficulty. This suggests that more than half of the group became more comfortable using English in the classroom.

In statement 2, 46.9 % of the students expressed their ideas clearly with little effort, while 53.1 % still faced some challenges, indicating that although progress was made, this is an area that requires further reinforcement. Statement 3 shows that 56.25 % of students were understood easily by their classmates, and statement 4 62.5 % of students were able to use English with fewer pauses. Reflecting noticeable progress in fluency and communication.

From the researcher's perspective, the results show that sixth graders from La Trinidad de Moravia School responded positively to the PBL activities. During the project, students seemed more willing to participate and gradually became more confident when speaking English, especially when working in group and discussing meaningful topics. Students demonstrated interest and were motivated to participate and interact with peers.

Graph 6. Intercultural Awareness (Post Test)



Statement #1: I understand that people from different cultures may think or act differently from me.

Statement #2: I believe that cultural differences make people interesting and valuable.

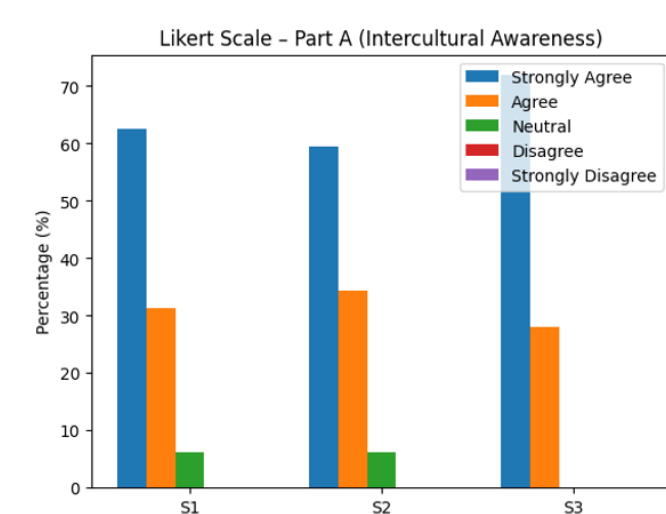
Statement #3: I respect classmates even if their traditions or customs are different from mine.

Statement #4: I feel comfortable listening to opinions from classmates with different cultural backgrounds.

Statement #5: I try to understand why people behave differently instead of judging them.

Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 7. A. PBL and Intercultural Awareness



Statement #1: The project helped me understand classmates' opinions different from mine.

Statement #2: The activities helped me appreciate cultural diversity in my classroom.

Statement #3: I interact respectfully with others when working on projects with others.

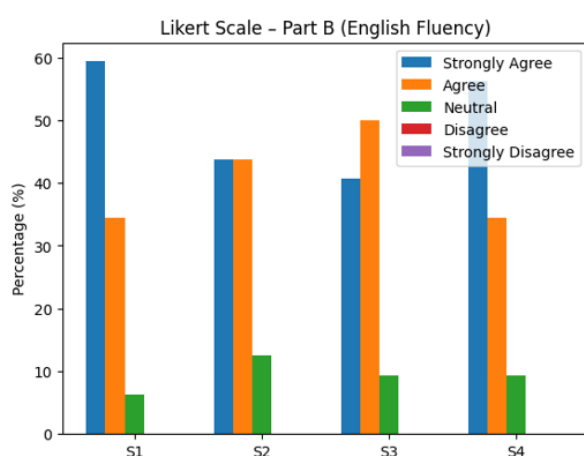
Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

The results obtained from Part A of the Likert Scale show a very positive perception of the PBL activities in relation to intercultural awareness. In statement 1, 62.5 % strongly agree and 31.25 % agree. This means that most students expressed that the project helped them understand their classmates' opinions in a better way. Only 6.25 % selected neutral, meaning that almost all students perceived a benefit in this area.

In statement 2, 59.37 % strongly agree and 34.38 % agree, indicating that the activities helped them appreciate cultural diversity in the classroom. Only 6.25 % selected neutral, but there were no negative responses, reflecting a positive attitude toward diversity. In statement 3, the results are even stronger, 71.87 % strongly agree and 28.13 % agree, meaning that students interacted respectfully with others during the project. The absence of negative responses suggests that students understood and showed respect while doing the project.

From the researcher's perspective, the results show that PBL activities created a positive and inclusive classroom environment where students were able to understand, appreciate, and interact respectfully with peers. It proves that intercultural awareness was discussed and actively experienced during the project, making learning more meaningful for the students.

Graph 8. B. PBL and English Language Fluency



Statement #1: I felt more confident speaking English during the project.

Statement #2: I used English naturally while working with my group.

Statement #3: I spoke English with fewer pauses than before.

Statement #4: I was able to express my ideas in English.

Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

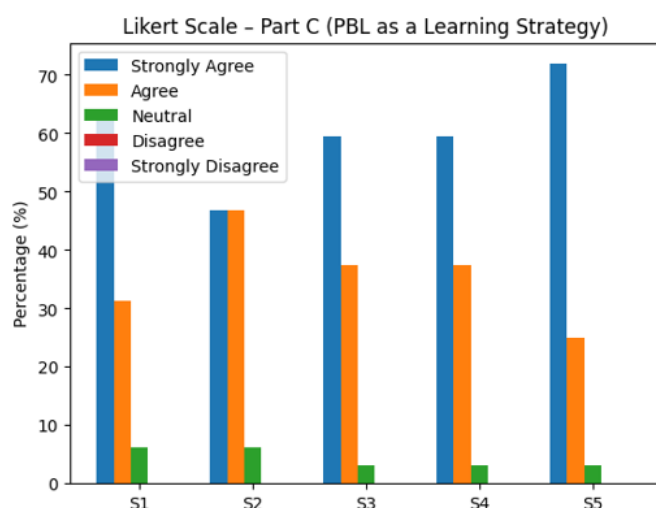
Graph 8 shows the results from Part B of the Likert Scale. Students perceived improvement in their English language fluency after participating in the project. In statement 1, 59.37 % strongly agree and 34.38 % agree, expressing that they felt more confident speaking English during the project. Only 6.25 % were neutral, but the majority experienced increased confidence when communicating. In statement 2, responses are more balanced. Both 43.75 % strongly agree and 43.75% agree indicating that they used English naturally while working in groups. Also 12.5 % selected, showing that some students are still in the process of developing more natural communication.

In statement 3, 40.62 % strongly agree and 50% agree that they spoke English with fewer pauses. A 9.38 % selected neutral. This suggests that students noticed improvement in their fluency, but not all of them felt completely confident yet, which is an area of improvement. Finally, in statement 4, 56.25 % strongly agree and 34.37% agree that they were able to express their ideas in English. Also 9.38%

selected neutral. This means that fluency development is still a gradual process and activities like PBL become essential to strengthen these skills.

From the researcher's perspective could improve English fluency, particularly in their confidence and willingness to communicate. It was noticeable during the project that students became more active and less afraid of making mistakes, especially when working in groups. Some of them need more time and practice to feel completely comfortable using English. PBL helps students develop consistent exposure and meaningful interaction.

Graph 9. C. PBL as a Learning Strategy



Statement #1: I enjoyed learning English through projects.

Statement #2: Projects helped me learn better than traditional lessons.

Statement #3: I felt motivated to participate during the project activities.

Statement #4: Working in groups helped me learn from others.

Statement #5: I would like to learn English using projects again.

Source: Developed by Natalia Castillo Jiménez (2026)

Graph 9 shows the results from Part C of the Likert Scale related to PBL as a learning strategy. In statement 1, most students expressed that they enjoyed learning English through projects, 62.5% strongly agree and 31.25% agree. Only 6.25 % selected neutral. This suggests that the majority of students found the activities engaging and meaningful. In statement 2, the responses are balanced, 46.87 % strongly agree and 46.87 agree, indicating that students recognized the value of learning through projects, even if some are still adjusting to this type of methodology.

In statement 3, as in statement 4, responses show the same results, 59.37 % strongly agree and 37.5 % agree; only 3.13 % disagree showing that students felt motivated to participate and recognized the importance of working in groups. Most students had a positive experience collaborating with others. To conclude, statement 5, shows that 71.87% strongly agree, and 25% agree that students would like to learn English using projects again. This clearly reflects students' preference for this type of learning approach.

From the researcher's perspective, these results show that Project-Based learning was well received by the students and contributed to a more dynamic and motivating classroom environment. Students enjoyed the activities and recognized their value for learning. Overall, PBL proved to be a very effective and meaningful strategy for promoting learning and participation in the classroom.

This project demonstrates that meaningful learning happens when students feel safe, valued, and motivated to participate. When students find their voice, they don't just learn a language, they learn to belong to respect, and to connect with the world around them.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the main objective of this research, which aimed to determine the effectiveness of PBL to promote intercultural awareness and English language fluency in sixth-grade students at La Trinidad de Moravia School, it can be concluded that the implementation of PBL had a significant and positive impact on students' learning. The results obtained through the different instruments demonstrate that students really improved their ability to communicate in English and also developed a deeper understanding and respect for cultural diversity. This confirms what Thomas (2000) states about PBL as an approach that promotes meaningful learning through real-life contexts, allowing students to use language in authentic and purposeful ways.

Regarding the first specific objective, which focused on implementing PBL activities based on intercultural themes, it was evident that students showed high levels of motivation and interest throughout the project. The activities allowed them to connect learning with their own experiences, making the process more engaging. Students worked in an organized environment where collaboration was essential, supporting each other and sharing ideas. This aligns with Beckett and Slater (2020), who highlight that PBL fosters motivation by giving students a sense of ownership and relevance in their learning process.

In relation to the second specific objective, which intended to analyze the development of intercultural awareness, the findings show that students became more respectful, empathetic, and open-minded toward their classmates' cultural backgrounds. They demonstrated the ability to understand differences, value diversity, and interact positively with others. These results are consistent with Byram's (1997) concept of intercultural communicative competence and Deardorff's (2006) model, which emphasize respect, curiosity, and empathy as key elements for effective interaction in multicultural environments. The project helped students see cultural diversity as an opportunity to learn from one another.

In relation to the third specific objective, focused on improving English language fluency, students showed noticeable progress in their confidence when speaking even though they are not bilingual, their ability to be understood, and to be less afraid of speaking English. They also improved their capacity to communicate with fewer pauses. The classroom became a space where English was used naturally, rather than through memorization. As Richards (2006) explains, fluency involves the ability to communicate smoothly and confidently, even if mistakes are present. Through PBL, students used

English as a real communication tool, which contributed to their oral development in a more dynamic and meaningful way.

Additionally, it is important to mention that students felt genuinely motivated and interested in the project. They supported and guided each other during the activities, creating a positive and collaborative learning environment.

The researcher also played an important role in bringing the topic “down to earth,” presenting it as something natural, close to students’ realities, and easy to relate to. This helped reduce fear and increased participation, especially in a culturally diverse classroom where some foreign students initially felt shy or insecure.

REFERENCES

- Araya Rodríguez, A. (2017). *The impact of cooperative learning techniques in the oral participation of sixth graders of a public school in Costa Rica* [Licenciatura thesis, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica]. Repositorio Institucional UNA. <https://repositorio.una.ac.cr>
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. (2019). *Introduction to research in education* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (Eds.). (2020). *Global perspectives on project-based language learning, teaching, and assessment: Key approaches, technology tools, and frameworks*. Routledge.
- Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2020). *Project-based learning in second language acquisition: Building communities of practice in higher education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beckett, G., & Slater, T. (2020). *Project-based learning in second language acquisition: Theory, research, and practice*. Routledge.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1643–1647). Pergamon Press.
- Brookhart, S. M. (2018). *How to create and use rubrics for formative assessment and grading*. ASCD.
- Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2010). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
https://spada.uns.ac.id/pluginfile.php/253332/mod_resource/content/1/ICC%20Byram.pdf
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10 (3), 241–266.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (3rd ed.). Basic Books.
- Hernández Sampieri, R., Fernández Collado, C., & Baptista Lucio, P. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Hymes, D. (1972). *On communicative competence*. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Penguin Books.

- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Researcher*, 38(5), 365–379. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09339057>
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2014). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2024). *Programa de Estudios de Inglés: Educación General Básica y Diversificada*. Dirección de Desarrollo Curricular.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- OECD. (2023). *Education GPS – Costa Rica: Country profile*. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=CRI&topic=PI&treshold=10>
- OECD & United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Interrelations between public policies, migration and development in Costa Rica*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/interrelations-between-public-policies-migration-and-development-in-costa-rica_9789264274785-en
- Oxford, R. L. (2016). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Self-regulation in context* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Oxford, R. L. (2017). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Piaget, J. (1972). *The psychology of the child*. Basic Books.
- Rakovskaya, M. (2019). *How cultural diversity is addressed in the EFL classroom in Norwegian elementary schools* [Master's thesis, University of Oslo]. DUO Research Archive. <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/69004>
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2015). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A review of research on project-based learning*. Autodesk Foundation.
- UNESCO. (2001). *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127162>
- UNESCO. (2013). *Intercultural competence: Conceptual and operational framework*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235863>

- Vesterås, S. (2021). *Teachers' approaches to developing intercultural competence in English language teaching: A qualitative study of Norwegian lower secondary school teachers* [Master's thesis, University of Oslo]. DUO Research Archive. <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/86136>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wallace, M. (2021). Project-based learning. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Cambridge dictionary of education* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.