

# **Fostering Intercultural Competency in EFL Classroom through Skype and folk tales**

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## **Title: Fostering Intercultural Competency in the EFL Class through Skype and Folk tales**

### **Abstract**

English language learning has been perceived for a long time as the achievement of a native-speaker model, even if textbooks tend to overlook the essential information for a successful target-language practice. An intercultural classroom would offer students not only instrumental aims of the language such as grammar or pragmatic skills but also the necessary tools for establishing an intercultural understanding. Therefore, communicative competence in an intercultural environment for learning in which learners become culturally aware would prepare students for a globalized world. Particularly, ICC awareness can be raised through folk tales that reflect the values and consciousness of students. Recently, videocalls have been used as a way of fostering collaborative tasks between language classrooms across the world, which is the case of Mystery Classroom. This study intends to shed light on how Skype engages learners to establish a dialogue with other learners and speakers not only to improve their communicative skills but also their intercultural knowledge and motivation.

Key words: intercultural classroom, English learning, videocalls, online education, communicative competence.

## **Título: Fomentar la competencia intercultural en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera a través de Skype y fábulas**

### **Resumen**

El aprendizaje del inglés ha sido percibido durante mucho tiempo como el logro del modelo del hablante nativo, aunque los manuales acostumbran a pasar por alto la información esencial para la práctica exitosa de la lengua meta. Una clase intercultural ofrecería a los estudiantes no solo los objetivos instrumentales del lenguaje como la gramática y las habilidades pragmáticas pero también las herramientas necesarias para establecer un entendimiento intercultural. Así pues, la competencia comunicativa en un ambiente intercultural para el aprendizaje de la consciencia intercultural prepararía a los alumnos para un mundo globalizado. Particularmente, esta consciencia se puede despertar a través de fábulas que reflejen los valores y el conocimiento de los alumnos. Recientemente, las vídeo llamadas se han usado para fomentar las tareas colaborativas entre clases de lengua a través del mundo, como es el caso de la Mystery Classroom. Este estudio pretende iluminar cómo Skype involucra a los alumnos a establecer un diálogo con otros estudiantes y hablantes, a mejorar sus habilidades comunicativas pero también a mejorar su conocimiento intercultural y motivación.

Palabras clave: Clase intercultural, aprendizaje del inglés, vídeo llamadas, educación online, competencia comunicativa.

## **1. Introduction and purpose**

Times change and so does education with them. We are living in a time where technology has changed and revolutionized the way we experience our lives. This has filtered into our classrooms and has offered teachers many resources through which they can bring to students an experience that resembles life and involves them learning actively. Resources such as Skype, as presented in this proposal, attempt that students have the chance of having a real English speaking environment. Despite technology has had a great impact in most of today's classrooms, one of the issues that have been long forgotten in the EFL classroom is culture. Therefore, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is going to spark life into the attitudes, behaviours and understandings that our students need to acquire to become proficient and conscious of the context speakers in a real world. Even if culture has been dealt with in class, text books tend to include stereotypical views of the English speaking world, especially focusing on England, the USA or Australia. This perception of culture relies on a superficial view and does not induce students to think thoroughly on issues that matter too. Moreover, in this proposal, it is going to be broadened the perception in which a student can practice English. The world in which the student can talk English, in a real situation, is much broad than the one of English-speaking countries. Therefore, it is essential too to consider countries in which language is learnt as a second language because English is also the means with which one can communicate with people from around the globe.

This proposal, analyses the way in which ICC can be implemented through an ICT tool. In particular, it is proposed that culture is first dealt with a Mystery Classroom session, in which students have to discover where another class is found in the world. In this part, students are going to get a superficial and mostly geographical approach to the country. In this case, Germany. This country is going to be embodied as the central point from which the study of culture is going to propel. However, this study drives away from the typical German culture to focus on the most vulnerable part of its population: Syrian Refugees. The topic is going to be approached from German literature, particularly from the folk tale "The Shoemaker and the Elves" by the Grimm brothers. Folk tales offer readers morale behind the story which makes the reader reflect upon a certain topic. This being the reason why, students are going to have to rewrite the folk tale story into a story which includes the issue of Syrian refugees. With this, students are going to approach the topic from their own perspective and from their own feelings regarding the issue of refugees, having had a reflection upon it with real material. Finally, students are going to retake the communicative part of the proposal through a revision of the writings through Skype with a German classmate from the Mystery Classroom in Germany. Despite this a shared project with the German class, in this proposal it is not contemplated how and what the German class is going to deal with regarding Spanish culture.

The main aims of this proposal are fostering ICC in ESO students as a means of complementing the view of culture textbooks offer. On the other hand, it is intended

that learners are given the necessary tools to learners to become speakers in the real world as well as helping them gain confidence and motivation in their oral communicative performance. Thirdly, this proposal introduces ICT in the classroom, in particular Skype, in order to open doors for students who do not have the chance to travel and practice English in a real environment. I would also like to foster collaboration in the classroom through Mystery Classroom and the peer review of the rewriting of the short story. Finally, the proposal weaves a framework to work also with short pieces of literature such as folk tales to both foster ICC in the classroom as well as to giving power to students to convey their perspective, thoughts and imagination.

To analyse how Intercultural Communicative Competence, it is going to be presented present an examination of different perspectives on both topics. First of all, it is going to be taken into account Ho's study which analyses Liddicoat and Kramsch studies in relation to the definition of interculturality. It is especially relevant Liddicoat's pathway for developing ICC. Furthermore, within Ho's study, it is going to be highlighted Weaver's cultural iceberg. Secondly, from Chen's study, it is going to be useful for my proposal Bryam's framework for the ICC qualities learners and teachers need to have. On the other hand, Alptekin's concept of "enculturation" of the learner is going to be relevant to understand his/her development. In his study, he also presents the stereotypical perception of English-speaking cultures and how textbooks present culture. One important reflection he makes in his study is the notion of the native speaker, which he considers an abstract and unreal concept. Other authors such as Kachru and Nguyen have considered this notion of the native speaker since the English-speaking world is considered a non-homogeneous group. As a consequence, studies like Irún's et al., have investigated the importance of the use of L1 in the classroom.

Regarding ICT in the classroom, Sutherland considers the different influences that technology has in the classroom such as the government. When it comes to motivation, Samra argues that ICT raises motivation but it also depends on how the content is delivered. The study also argues that the teacher needs to have enough resources to cover technical problems that can appear in the sessions. On the other hand, Wu and Marek, argue that ICT enhances the self one wants to become, also as a speaker. This is connected to Harvey's perception of "ethical-self formation" in which one becomes as it relates to the world. Finally, Romaña highlights that Skype as a classroom tool does not solely offer classroom interaction but that it allows students to go beyond the four walls that form it. In the same line, Morgan argues that Skype offers student a balance with the real world, giving students the chance of a real experience as English-learners even if they do not have the chance of traveling abroad. Moreover, XTEC explains the steps and characteristics of Mystery Classroom.

The organization of the arguments is going to revolve around two main blocks: the rationale and the development of the proposal. Firstly, in the rationale part, I define Intercultural Communicative competence, to explain how introduce it in the classroom, to outline how technology has changed our classrooms and which role Skype can play in them. Secondly, in the description part, I contextualize where this proposal has been

thought to be implemented. Then I develop a step-by-step preparation of the materials for the Mystery Classroom, the folk tale story and refugees and, finally, for the peer revision of the writing through Skype. I illustrate how to assemble the classroom for a Mystery Classroom session as well as to analyse its results. I describe also how to implement ICC through folk tales and the steps to a peer revision with Skype. Finally, I explain how the students would be assessed in this proposal.

## **2. Rationale**

### **2.1. Why is it (theoretically) interesting?**

This proposal puts forward a merging of technological resources such as Skype and literature in order to combine them together to create a framework that develops both communicative skills in the learner as well as social skills. Because of the importance of culture in this proposal, culture is worked on deeply separately from the Mystery Classroom since this educational proposal does not allow yet for a thorough chance of thinking critically upon the issue of refugees despite being a hands-on experience. The interest of this proposal relies on how ICC and ICT are merged into one. Therefore, the innovation of this project is conveyed through the use of a tool such as Skype in different ways and rewriting folklore literature to approach a cultural issue.

### **2.2. Description of the methodology**

#### **2.2.1. Defining Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Learners are found in a world in which English is spreading as the main tool for communicating with speakers from around the globe. This triggers an undeniable understanding between people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For apprehending this connection, it is important to consider how Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scariano and Kholer (2003) define culture as “a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create” (as cited in Ho, 2009, p. 64).

Therefore, culture and language are intrinsically intertwined. English classrooms, however, focus linguistic competencies (i.e. grammar or vocabulary) detached from cultural knowledge, except for native English speaking countries such as the UK. Putting forward a pedagogical model based on intercultural language learning is essential because it “is a stance on language teaching and learning that emphasizes the interdependence of language and culture and the importance of intercultural understanding as the goal of language education” (Ho, 2009, p. 63). Hence, intercultural communication competence is one of the standpoints from which to understand education. According to Trujillo (2002), there are three main reasons for which interculturality must hold a relevant position in the classroom: “stimulate a reconsideration of the cultural variable [...]”, “interculturality is one of the forms of ‘attention to diversity’ one of the fundamental concepts in Spanish educational law” and “interculturality is part of a wider debate around globalization, its impact on society and

on interpersonal relations in a world of increasing mobility” (p. 104). Dealing with interculturality in the classroom is going to create a new space, through the negotiation of meaning is going to be represented by constructing a “third place” (Kramsch, as cited in Ho, 2009, p.67).

Consequently, learners are going to undergo a process of “enculturation” through which they can acquire a new perspective of the cultural framework (Alepkina, 2002, 57). In other words, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) implies that speakers are going to have a deeper insight of their own culture as well as foreign cultures (Ho, 2009, p. 64). Many studies have considered which are the final skills that the intercultural learner has to have. In the present study, we are going to follow Bryam’s frame since it places cultural awareness on the central point of Intercultural Communicative Competence:

	<b>Interpreting and relating skills</b> Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to one’s own culture.	
<b>Knowledge</b> Knowledge of one’s own culture, that of one’s interlocutor, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction	<b>Critical cultural awareness</b> Ability to evaluate, both critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, the perspectives, practices, and products of one’s own culture and those of other cultures and countries.	<b>Intercultural attitudes</b> Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend preconceptions about other cultures and one’s own.
	<b>Discovery and interaction skills</b> Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to implement knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction	

Figure 1. Bryam’s model of intercultural communicative competence (Bryam as cited in Chen, 2014, 59).

This model places teaching far from a superficial model of culture. Likewise, Trujillo affirms that (2002), “[t]he elements included under formal and deep culture, those great achievements and life-styles, are material realizations of an even deeper level of culture, which is the one we aim at in our search for a definition of culture and interculturality” (p. 106). This being the reason why in the proposed model in the present study, it is putting forward a framework in which through a literary cultural element, such as folk tales, students are going to talk about how Syrian refugees are living in exile in Germany. In the same line, culture is presented in a dynamic nature, which wants to “engage in culture learning, rather than only learn about cultural information of the target culture in a passive way” (Ho, 2009, p. 65). Learners, as it has been previously mentioned, are going to shape their cultural behaviours inside the ICC classroom. Nevertheless, Weaver’s (as cited in Ho, 2009) cultural iceberg explores how



most part of our cultural knowledge remains invisible and subconscious in our everyday practice, which highlights the need for establishing ICC in the classroom:

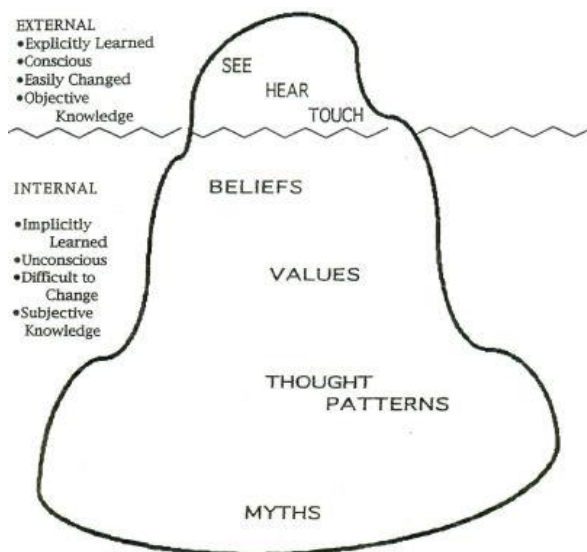


Figure 2: The cultural iceberg by Weave (as cited in Ho, 2009, p.66)

Moreover, breaking culture to its deep constructs in the language classroom is supported by the fact that “[m]odern English language learners use English to communicate with native speakers and, increasingly, non-native speakers” (Chen & Yang., 2014, p. 57). The bare need of communication and understanding cannot solely be fostered by grammar rules in the classroom but also through cultural awareness, empathy and pragmatics among non-native speakers of English which can lead to breaking stereotypes and beliefs regarding other countries. The necessary tools for a successful linguistic exchange can be provided by including ICC in the classroom.

Intercultural Communicative Competence needs to engage learners in a reflection around their culture and the one they are discovering. This process needs to be developed through a path that leads students. In this case, it is going to be taken into account Liddicoat’s model for “developing intercultural competence as a model of learner’s internal processes of noticings, reflections and language production” (Ho, 2009, 67). These internal changes in the mind-set of the student are going to be developed progressively and they are going to be embedded in the following circular pathway through which they are going to construct their new cultural framework:

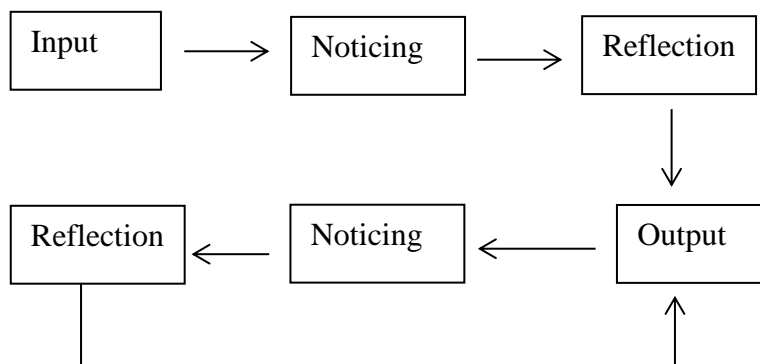


Figure 3: A pathway for developing intercultural competence (Liddicoat as cited in Ho, 2009, p.67)

### **2.2.2. Communicative skills inside an intercultural EFL classroom and materials**

When it comes to Communicative Competence, according to Alptekin (2002), the prevalent model in EFL is Canale's and Swain framework (as cited in Alptekin, 2002, 57). The model presents four main competencies: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic. Despite the most outstanding feature of the model has been grammar, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competencies are the ones that are going to aid students into adapting and being competent in intercultural communication. Consequently, "[l]earners are not only expected to acquire accurate forms of the target language, but also learn how to use these forms in given social situations in the target language setting to convey appropriate coherent and strategically effective meanings for the native speaker" (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58).

Going back to the linguistic competence, it targets to a repetition of the supposedly native speaker model. However, later studies show that "the ideal native speaker-listener was considered a non-existent abstraction" and it emphasises that linguistic competence has to be perceived through real use (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58). This conveys that the English linguistic system is the reference that learners adopt in terms of interpretation and language use according to the information that they can access. According to Alptekin, this is a "monolithic perception of language and culture that has made the current native speaker-based model of communicative competence utopian in character" (2002, p. 59). Languages are dynamic, evolutionary and rich. Thus, "while raising learners' awareness of NS socio-cultural norms is crucial, this is not a simple task when it comes to English language where the NS [native-speaking] community is certainly not a homogeneous group" (Kachru as cited in Nguyen, 2011, p. 18).

Despite that the learner is expected to talk in English in the EFL classroom, it is important to consider which role L1 can have in an intercultural communicative classroom. According to Irún and Baiget, most ELT handbooks establish that English is the only focus and source for expression and reflection in the classroom, both being the "goal" and the "vehicle" (2006, p. 136). However, they consider that L1 can be used in particular occasions in order to meet the communication and reflection goals. For example, L1 can be used as a facilitator in group work, to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere for students who feel anxious, easing the reflection into difficult topics or for monitoring their own learning (Baiget, Cots, Irún & Llorca as cited in Irún et al., 2006, p. 136). In a way, the use of the L1 is going to aid students to go through the Zone of Proximal Development and, therefore, scaffold students' learning. Furthermore, the use of L1 can lead to fostering students' capacity for raising awareness of the similarities and differences that are presented among cultures because "this competence can only be achieved by a pedagogy that advocates for cultural and linguistic diversity and that respects learner individuality and [a] system of beliefs and values" (Nguyen,

2011, p. 18). In a way, a classroom which balances learning a language and learning about a language should aim to a bilingual or multilingual speaker “since only this is what a language learner can be or become. This represents a shift from previous language teaching approaches which have tended to see erroneously the *native speaker* as the norm to aim for” (Lo Bianco & Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999, p. 121).

In terms of speech acts and intercultural competence, it is necessary to consider how textbooks and materials have depicted ELT. Textbooks have largely taken into account the interpretation of the norm of the native speaker “instead of making use of authentic speech samples” (Boxer & Pickering as cited in Nguyen, 2011, 19). This author, for example, presents that textbooks lack on the information about when and with which goal speech acts have to be employed as well as which expressions would be more adequate in each situation. Moreover, this gap is not filled with teacher’s manuals since they do not offer extra information in this regard (2011, p. 19). Despite the notion of the bilingual learner, such as Alptekin (2002) exemplifies, many ELT materials put forward a stereotypical view of Britain or the United States targeting to a single model of native speaker model since they revolve around the considerations of use of the learner rather than the real use itself (p. 60). However, he proposes that:

Only by producing instructional materials that emphasize diversity both within and across cultures can one perhaps avoid presenting English meanings in fragmented and trivialized ways, where communicative functions are conceived as simple speech acts realized through specific structures, and where situational content generally portrays an idealized image of the English-speaking culture. (Alptekin, 2002, p. 60)

### **2.2.3. Digital age and ICC: Technology in the classroom and motivation**

In the last twenty years, society has undergone a rapid change regarding technology which has affected all aspects of our lives. The way of educating has had to adapt to the changes that have affected society. Education has had to jump onto the technological revolution not only because it is a trend but also because it is how kids and teenagers nowadays establish part of their everyday life. Consequently, ICT has played an increasing role inside the classrooms. According to Sutherland et al., there are two different influences that act upon the ICT classroom in this case (2004, p. 415). On the one hand, there are normative influences such as the Government curriculum, the school or the subject culture. On the other hand, there are informal matters such as youth cultures or the learners’ learning history. Therefore, the ICT classroom is going to find equilibrium between the role the law or the school wants it to hold and the students’ own interests and life.

Technology in the classroom can be of great aid to the teacher in terms of assessing diversity and offering different kinds of input (visual or musical) and even encourage students’ participation in the classroom. Nevertheless, “[t]his ability should be considered paramount in raising student motivation which leads to a more efficient teaching/learning environment” (Samra, 2013, p. 610). However, the same author

affirms that “[k]eeping the students motivated through interaction and cooperative learning, no matter what medium is used, should be the main objective of the teacher.” (2013, p. 611). Consequently, for all kinds of schools, either if they have poor technological resources or really powerful ones, what is going to change the students’ engagement in the classroom are the means by which information is presented.

Despite the many advantages that embracing technology in the classroom has, we must bear in mind that there are several disadvantages that we must bear in mind, which mostly revolve around the figure of the teacher. Firstly, technology can become a frustrating tool because “[t]echnical problems, such as a burnt out bulb on an LCD projector and computer freezing during a PowerPoint presentation to name a few, are too frequent to ignore.” (Samra, 2013, p. 610). Therefore, teachers need to plan beforehand a backup plan in case technology fails. Furthermore, educational institutions nowadays encourage the use of ICT in the classroom but still do not offer the necessary resources or material to assure a good practise. To cover the insufficiencies that schools have towards technological infrastructures and resources, according to Samra, both teachers and students have to become technology literate since despite being surrounded by technology in our everyday life, does not always imply to use it correctly (2013, p. 610).

On the other hand, in the EFL classroom, one of the main aims is to establish communication. Due to different levels or environment, this is not always possible and computers can offer a great support in this issue. Vasilachi agrees with this statement but it finds indeed that they are a “useful supplement” and not a tool that has to be used at all times (2017, p.26). Hence, the balanced use of more traditional methodologies and ICT in the classroom should be fostered. However, many teachers “may have been persuaded by the hype that it is attached to the use of ICT in the school that ICT itself ‘causes’ learning. But as one of the project teachers said “It’s just another tool – and it’s what you can do with it that counts and not the tool itself”” (Sutherland et al., 2004, p. 422). Additionally, Sutherland et al., defend that the key to the development of a well-balanced ICT classroom is going to revolve around individual and team work (2004, p. 417). Therefore, when constructing a unit that wants to incorporate ICT in its body, we must be aware that the learner cannot work by himself/herself only but he/she needs the support of a mate to be successful on the process of learning but also to feel engaged. In the same manner, we must keep a balance between ICT and traditional methods.

As it has been mentioned previously, culture has been presented in EFL textbooks decontextualized of real situations and providing quite too often stereotypical views of target cultures. Nonetheless, Chen affirms that “Web 2.0 technologies (blogs, Skype, and social networking sites) facilitate online practices that allow a classroom to connect with the world” (2014, p. 59). In this case, Skype videocalls and writing by hand a modernized folk story.

One key aspect that has to be enhanced when fostering intercultural communication competence through ICT is students’ motivation. In this sense, the experiences that

learners are offered are going to condition the level of their motivation. Dörnyei “suggests that motivation stems from the desire to lessen the dichotomy between one’s actual self, and the self one wishes to become” (as cited in Wu et Marek, 2010, p. 102). Furthermore, the author presents the idea that “the idealized English-speaking self is partially based on real-life encounters (or lack thereof) with speakers of the target language and partly on the way the students imagine themselves functioning in a cosmopolitan international society, not necessarily interacting only with representatives of native English speaking cultures” (as cited in Wu et Marek, 2010, p. 102). In this case, videocalls can encourage students’ positive self-image as learners of English by facilitating that they can envision themselves as real speakers in a real situation. In terms of motivation, it is interesting to consider it as “ethical self-formation” (Harvey, 2016, p. 69). In this type of motivation, a subject constructs its desired identity in relation to the world that surrounds it. This concept is relevant to intercultural communicative competency because it fosters ideological becoming, which can be defined as “a process of learning to be in the world, of finding one’s own voice through interaction with other voices” (Harvey, 2016, p. 71). Therefore, videocalls between different classes in different parts of the world are going to trigger the construction of the self: how the learner wants to be as a learner and as a human being.

#### **2.2.4. Skype and Mystery Classroom: connecting classrooms**

When we think of a classroom, we think of a closed space between four walls in which teaching and learning takes place. However, “[w]ith such a great influence of information technologies in human interaction, language teachers’ and students’ communication is not limited exclusively to live classroom interaction” (Romaña, 2015, p. 144). In other words, there is no reason why we should not incorporate in the classroom our daily life social interactions which happen partially through email, whatsapp or videocalls such as Skype. This kind of mediation that takes place through computer is known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (Romaña, 2015, p. 144). Therefore, Skype is a CMC tool that aims to human interaction mediated through computers for the exchange of information. Skype has also been defined as “a user-friendly voice over internet protocol (VoIP) software that allows users to make video and voice calls using the Internet” (Morgan, 2013, p. 197). One reason to choose Skype over other VoIP platforms is that it is easy to use and free. Furthermore, it allows for videocalls that can connect people all around the world. It also has a chat option which can be of great aid for learners as it is going to be commented afterwards.

Incorporating Skype in the classroom has clear benefits for learners. Firstly, it encourages learners to improve their oral skills and confidence. According to Ryobe, practicing daily or once a week can foster the development of communication skills (as cited in Yousefi, 2014, p.1941). Moreover, the communicative contexts in which learners are found in the classroom do not tend to resemble real environments. Likewise, they have “few opportunities to practice oral skills, and even fewer opportunities to benefit from practice with peers from other countries.” (Taillefer & Muñoz, 2014, 261). A project that involves Skype in the classroom can turn this

situation around because it addresses the issue directly creating a real environment to practice pronunciation. According to Morgan (2013) it is important to give students:

[t]he chance to balance the inopportunity to travel abroad. This type of teaching not only helps learners interact with native speakers, but also helps them develop a sense of global community. Only a few privileged students can travel abroad to benefit from learning in authentic cultural settings, yet opportunities to visit and learn are possible for any students who attend a classroom with Internet connection. (p. 198)

Therefore, Skype does not only help students improving their communication skills but also learners learning opportunities that previously had only been granted by traveling abroad.

Sometimes communication is frustrating for students not only because it is in a non-realistic environment because there are different options. One of the situations that eases communication for learners in Skype sessions is the fact that they get instant aid. On the one hand, Hrastinsky (2008) concludes that some of the positive parts of synchronous learning rely on the fact that “learners and teachers experience synchronous e-learning as more social and avoid frustration by asking and answering questions in real time. Synchronous sessions help e-learners feel like participants rather than isolates.” (as cited in Romaña, 2015, p.147). In the same line, Lamy and Hampel (2007) conclude that simultaneous communication engages peer collaboration which can be used as a means of giving feedback to students (as cited in Romaña, 2015, p.147). On the other hand, even if consisting of mainly oral interchanges of messages, Skype offers a written chat which can help students in their communication as well as clearing messages that have been misunderstood. Moreover, this chat can be of great support for students who have hearing incapacities.

However, Skype has its disadvantages. The first one is that for a classroom use it would require some hardware such as microphone or speakers when the call is done in group and headphones for each student when the calls are individual (Taifaller et al., 2014, p. 262). As it has been mentioned previously, when dealing with ICT in the classroom, it is important to have a good internet connection. In the same wise, Skype needs of a high speed internet to take full advantage of the platform. Also, the learner has to acquire how the program works prior to start either a group call or an individual call.

Skype has been used for different uses in the classroom: specialist talks, author talks, interviews etc. Nowadays, another trend through which teachers enhance oral skills in the EFL classroom is Mystery Classroom. This concept is defined as an “interdisciplinary activity which uses videoconference tools such as Skype or Hangouts to play the game ‘Mystery Classroom’. It is about playing between two classes with some specific rules to discover in which part of the world the other class is.”<sup>1</sup> (XTEC,

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s translation (a.t.)

n.d.). This activity needs to follow some steps. First of all, each student is going to be assigned a role or two to develop through the whole of the Mystery Classroom. They are going to be given a card which is going to be stuck in a corner of their table so the monitoring of the classroom is eased. The roles that students are going to perform go according to the following table:

ROLE	DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE
Greeter and cultural searcher	Welcomes schools without saying where the class is.
Moderator	Keeps the class in order. Shares information that is compiled and gives turns to survey takers.
Survey takers	These are the students that really talk with the other class. They are in charge of making relevant questions, as well as answering the questions of the other class.
Question Keepers	They have to record every question that is made as well as the answer. This allows that the information is reviewed during the activity. The questions are published later on in a blog or a wiki.
Google cartographer	They use maps online for searching a place based on the clues given. They use maps for searching different countries, states, cities and important geographical sites for specifying the location of the other class. After, they can share the information to reach to new questions.
Logical thinkers	They use the information to try to eliminate possible countries and cities.
Explorators and cultural searchers	They use a traditional Atlas for helping to find the location.
Photographer	They publish the photographs of the activity online.
Videographer	Records short videos of what is happening.
Clue agent	They use a map to mark all the important information. They can paint, underline or cross whatever that can lead to the location of the other class.

Figure 4: Table on the roles of students in the Mystery Classroom (XTEC, n.d.)

According to XTEC (n.d.), when a Mystery Classroom is targeted to beginners in this platform, there are going to be prepared 20 questions to ask to the other classroom and between 5 and 10 cultural clues (E.g. What kind of food is the most typical one in your country?). Because they are beginners, the questions are going to be created by the teacher. Consequently, not all the communication that students could obtain is developed. Moreover, the framework of the Mystery Classroom, despite claiming to be flexible, does not incorporate culture. Therefore, I have coined the role of the “cultural searcher” as well as cultural clues. The target classroom, in Germany, is going to do the same.

Despite the Mystery Classroom offers quite a superficial view on culture, it is the input step of ICC in the classroom. This Skype activity gets students engaged and, consequently, they start having curiosity for the country that is going to be further investigated in the classroom through folk stories. However, even if students had chosen

the questions and the clues, the communication skill would be guided. This proposal, offers the first step for students to feel safe in this platform. This is why, as it has been mentioned in Liddicoat's model (Figure 3), the noticing and reflection steps are going to be done, far from Skype, with a documentary on refugees in Germany and the traditional German folk story "The Elves and the Shoemaker" by the Grimm Brothers.

However, Skype is going to be retaken with the second noticing and reflection through peer writing revision of the rewritten folk tale story. Students are going to rewrite the folk story "The Elves and the Shoemaker" retelling the story of refugees in Germany. Moreover, each student is going to be free to rewrite it from the perspective they feel most comfortable too, even if in the end it becomes a very different kind of story. Skype is going to intervene as a tool for peer revision, which would be done with one student from the Spanish and one from the foreign classroom. Students are going to be given a guide to focus on certain points of their partners writing. Furthermore, "Skype is perceived as beneficial where it allows students to discuss and solve problems immediately and the relationships among group members were closer" after the task (Hiew & Hoon, 2014, p. 56). In this sense, it is key that peer revision of the folk tale story is done through Skype not only as a communicative improvement experience but also as a socializing experience, fostered under the ICC umbrella. Moreover, according to Attan et Khalidi, peer revision also encourages Vigotsky's Zone of Proximal Development because, in this case, the learner does not need to face the writing on their own but with the aid of a mate who can encourage him or her to think thoroughly on different issues of the writing (2015, p. 2). In the same line, these authors affirm that peer revision has a socially equal audience, seems more understandable than the teacher's feedback and it "can generate a rich source of information to address content and rhetorical issues, enhance intercultural information and give students a sense of group cohesion" (2015, p. 2). Nonetheless, some students still have doubts on the revision of their peers since they are not as qualified as teachers to revise their work (2015, p. 2).

#### **2.2.4.1. Role of the teacher and of the student**

In an ICC and ICT classroom, it is important to consider briefly which are the roles that the teacher and the learner occupy. Firstly, according to McCloskey (2012), teachers who are:

capable of promoting intercultural competencies possess knowledge of cultures that is deep, deliberate, and constantly evolving, and this knowledge is used in the service of complex communicative and reflective tasks. Teachers are critical, inquisitive and self-aware, and their dispositions reflect a flexible orientation toward the nature of knowledge and experience. They tolerate uncertainty because they are skilled in the process of broadening their perspectives through deliberate investigation of cultural texts and experiences. (p. 42)

Therefore, teachers can be perceived as multi-taskers as they are facing many fronts at the same time. However, regardless of the skills portrayed in class they first must have a



well-grounded cultural knowledge which can enhance non-stereotypical discussions in class. According to Alptekin (2002), teachers must increase awareness regarding cultural diversity and not only familiarize them with the topic. Nevertheless, many teachers are insecure of their own knowledge regarding an issue or even question the real value of a culturally oriented class (McCloskey, 2012, p. 42). However, fears regarding one's performance can be vanished with continuous formation and connecting with other teachers. One way to do the latter, could be using Skype and getting in touch with other teachers who are using the same platform in their classes. It could be a way not only to improve one's knowledge and confidence but also to establish a first contact with the target culture and classroom. Furthermore, both in a CMC and ICC classroom the teacher needs to offer guidance regarding technological and cultural issues, not only on the learning process (Hiew et al., 2014, p. 47). Therefore, the fact that the teacher feels confident in the classroom is not only going to affect their performance as teachers but also how their students develop in the classroom.

On the other hand, because the teacher adopts a monitoring role, the learner is going to become much more independent and autonomous. Nevertheless, at no step of the Skype classroom the student is going to be left without guidance. For example, in the Skype peer assessment part, students are going to have a guide which is going to contain what they have to focus on. Additionally, they have as an aid the help of the teacher. Furthermore, in this type of classroom students do not only learn to work on their own but how to communicate as good as possible with their class mates: "Students need to share their knowledge at hand and construct new knowledge through reasoning, explanation, and reflecting from different angles." (Hiew et al., 2014, p. 47). Therefore, one of the roles that the student is going to slowly develop in this classroom is the one of critical thinker.

#### **2.2.4.2. Literature in the ICC classroom: Folk tales**

Despite the main body of the present proposal revolves around Skype, the main point of reflection and deep knowledge of culture is going to be accomplished through literature. In this case, this is going to be achieved through the folk tale story "The Shoemaker and the Elves" by the Grimm brothers. What is more, it is feasible to use literature "in conjunction with new methodological innovations to facilitate intercultural learning processes" (Borham & González, 2012, p.109).

Moreover, literature provides the cultural background that can induce students to a powerful reflection towards their culture and the target culture:

The power of literary texts to construct sociocultural images and reflect different ways of experiencing the world has been widely acknowledged. The use of literary texts can promote reflection on cultural differences, develop understanding of the home culture, and consequently enhance more tolerant and open attitudes towards other cultures. (Borham & González, 2012, 108).

Therefore, in spite of the fact that Skype is a powerful tool to enhance communication skills and also direct contact with the target culture, it can be insufficient on its own to

get into the deep constructs of culture. Consequently, students are going to develop the cognitive and affective characteristics that entail self-awareness. Moreover, the fact that literary texts are authentic materials “may help discover culture dependent beliefs, opinions, habits and viewpoints.” (Borham et González, 2012, p.108). The framework to achieve this is going to follow the table:

Mystery Classroom	Pre reading	Reading	Post reading	Peer assessment
Discover where a classroom is in the world. First input of the target culture.	Discover what are folk tales and who the Grimm brothers are through a set of short questions.	Read the short story and write down what ideas you find related to: poverty, work and solidarity.	Phase 1: watch videos and read news papers about the situation of Syrian refugees in Germany.  Phase 2: with the information they have obtained, write an actualized version of the folk tale story.	Phase 1: comment on the writing of your German mate.  Phase 2: Skype (1-1) session to give feedback to each other.

Figure 8: Development of Skype and Literature in the classroom (author's)

### 3. Development

#### 3.1. School context: Spanish public school

In spite of the fact that new laws are passed throughout the years, if its cultural objectives have been filtered in the English classroom. However, the last curriculum of basic competences for Foreign Languages in Catalonia for Educació Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) has included a dimension named “Cross attitudinal and multilingual dimension”<sup>2</sup> which takes into account culture:

The attitudinal and multilingual dimension that is acquired when it is developed the capacity of using the knowledge and the linguistic experience to achieve an effective communication with a particular interlocutor and it is known how to value the cultural and linguistic implications that the speakers of other languages provide. (Escobar, C. & Gilabert, R. & Sarramona, J, 2015, 112)

Therefore, the new aims in terms of foreign language teaching target to a communicative approach in which students have to develop skills for a world with many different speakers. In the classroom, learners are going to become speakers due to the use of ICC and Skype.

<sup>2</sup> A.t.

However, from the observations I could take in my practicum in a state high school in central Catalonia, there was little technology that was functional in the classroom and the internet connection was working at a very low speed. We can infer that because it is a state high school and the investment they receive comes from the government, they are in the same position as regards technology. Furthermore, this high school only provides exchange programmes to the best students in all the subjects but especially in English. This leaves many students without the change of practicing English in a real environment, which is going to be tamed by the use of Skype in the classroom.

## **3.2. Implementation**

### **3.2.1. Preparation and materials**

Before starting to prepare the materials it is important to be clear about all the stages of this proposal which mixes Skype and literature:

- Mystery Classroom
- ICC noticing and awareness
- Rewriting of a folk tale story
- Peer review of the writing through Skype

Therefore, for each stage specific and authentic materials are going to be needed in accordance to the objective of the proposal.

Firstly, it is important that all the materials for the Skype sessions are working (computers, webcams, speakers, headphones and microphones). If some of the material is not working, we might ask if the high school has extra laptops or iPads. Once everything is granted to be working, it is very important that students get familiarized with Skype. This is going to be achieved through the preparation of an instruction sheet on how to install it and set up an account (Annex 1). Depending on the year students are in, this worksheet could be worked on along with the help of the IT teacher in one of their sessions or if IT is no longer in the curriculum of the year, as a pre-session before the Mystery Classroom. Students are going to create an individual account during this session which is going to be used throughout the peer revision of the writing. Another account is going to be used for the session for the group as a whole to conduct the Mystery Classroom. Some students might feel anxious about their performance in installing, creating an account and using Skype. For them, a video is going to be added in the worksheet explaining how to use it in a friendly way so they can revise at home. Other materials that are needed to be prepared beforehand are the photography camera and the video camera to keep record of the Mystery Classroom session. It is important to make sure that the batteries are fully charged and that, if possible, there are replacement batteries.

Once students know how to use Skype, it is important that they acknowledge the role they are going to have in the Mystery Classroom. In this case, it is going to be relevant to acknowledge what they are good at (e.g. geography, technology or language)

to assign roles that make them feel comfortable in the classroom. For example, a student who has stage fright, might not like to be the greeter and/or moderator. On the other hand, more creative students can perform the role of the photographer or the videographer. It is important to bear in mind that there can be more than one student performing each role so attention to diversity can be paid to for weaker students since they are going to obtain the help of their classmates. As it has been mentioned, for a smooth monitoring of Mystery Classroom each student is going to have a sticker in their table saying which role/s he/she is performing (Annex 2). In assigning the roles it is important to hear students' voices and needs so if they require it, there might be necessary to change some roles.

The next step in the preparation of materials is writing the questions. However, before that we need to find the adequate maps for the questions and for the students. Some students might be still unfamiliar with the world map and its knowledge should be done collaboratively with the geography teacher. Moreover, the high school might not have any Atlas in English which would lead to looking for maps on the internet that are suitable for the target country in the Mystery Classroom (Annex 3). Moreover, there is the need of a big world map in English so the clue agent can perform its job. So, maybe, the high school needs to purchase this kind of maps for the occasion. All students are going to have these maps and questions. Going back to the questions, they are going to be both aided by physical and political maps. Nevertheless, the clues, which are cultural issues, are going to be solved through the role of the cultural searchers and Google search. The questions are going to go from more general statements (e.g. Are you West or East of the Pacific Ocean?) to more specific questions (e.g. Are you close to the Coast of the Black Sea?). Consequently, cultural clues are going to be hand in hand with the development of the geography inquiry. In the worksheet that the questions and the clues are going to be in, there is going to be a space for writing the answer and writing extra information that the students feel that is relevant for the future development of the class (Annex 4).

The last step of the Mystery Classroom is to keep record of what has happened in the classroom. Therefore, a website is going to be created with Google Sites to post the answers and the questions worksheet filled in the computer and the photographs and videos that students have recorded. If students are not familiar with Google Sites and are a weaker class, another proposal to keep record of what has happened is to record students reading the questions and the answers and, finally, adding the videos and the photographs.

Another thing that should be taken into account is that the internet that day might not be functioning at the necessary speed for conducting both the Skype and looking at Google Maps. Therefore, it would be necessary that previously students would have downloaded in their personal cell phones the specified maps just in case internet is not working properly to perform their job correctly. Otherwise, students would be obliged to use the printed maps.

When it comes to the materials for raising awareness of the problem of Refugees in Germany, it is important to choose reliable and varied sources not only to make sure that what is shown mirrors the reality but also that they show different situations. Firstly, a documentary by *The Guardian* called “We walk together: a Syrian refugee family’s journey to the heart of Europe” (Annex 5). Some other visual material that is going to be provided are photographs published by the newspaper *The Guardian* and *Vice news* (Annex 6) which portray the daily lives of Syrian refugees in Germany, just after arriving and when they are fully settled. Despite that the documentary and the photographs uncover a hard reality that is present in our continent, it is part of the ICC classroom to reveal what is invisible and make it part of our classroom.

After students have dealt with the problem of Syrian refugees, it is important to connect the Mystery Classroom, the Syrian refugees issue and the Folk Tale Story. One of the last questions of the Mystery Classroom is “Has your city any famous folk tale story?” for which the expected answer would be “Yes, it is called ‘Town Musicians of Bremen’ and it was written by the Grimm Brothers”. Now, the concept of the folk tale story and the Grimm brothers can be shortly introduced through a Power Point presentation (Annex 7). Then, students, depending on the year and the level, are given one version of the folk tale story “The Shoemaker and the Elves” by the Grimm brothers along with basic comprehension questions and a glossary (Annex 8). Afterwards, the students are going to be given a sheet of paper with the task of rewriting the folk tale story (Annex 9). These instructions for the rewriting have to be clear about how they have to rewrite the story but also have to encourage them to be creative, to imagine and mostly to use the information they have got about the Syrian Refugees problem. If it were a weaker class, an example of a rewritten short story could be provided. But it would not be the ideal case, since one of the aims is to encourage student’s creativity and imagination.

Lastly, for the peer revision and peer Skype some materials are going to be needed. On the one hand, students are given a worksheet with correction indications ranging from identifying grammatical errors and mistakes to what they liked the most about the story (Annex 10). Finally, students are going to assess their mate in the peer revision of the writing through a peer assessment worksheet (Annex 11).

### **3.2.2. Carrying out the videocall**

The first step just before the videocall starts is to put the disposition of the classroom as it is shown in the next figure. Students are going to be organized in their teams. Each team is going to be one of the roles of the Mystery Classroom. In front of the classroom, we are going to have the digital board (1), the camera (3) and the computer (2) through which the Skype session is going to be held and a table with an extra Atlas and printed maps (4). On the first rows, in the central corridor we find the greeter (7) and the moderator (8) who are going to be part of the survey takers (5) and cultural searchers (6). These students are going to be closer to the camera since they are going to be the ones that interact mostly with the other classroom. Just behind the survey takers, we can find the question keepers (9) who have to be in constant contact

with the survey takers to keep record of the answers that the other class gives. Likewise, the explorators (10) need to be in close contact with the cultural searchers since their roles go hand in hand. In the last row, we find the Google cartographers (11) who are going to look for the locations in the internet and the clue agents (12) who are going to mark and cross the answers in the big world map at the end of the class. Despite the photographer (14) and the videographer (13) have assigned seats in the classroom map, they are going to have the freedom to move around the class as much as needed to keep the best possible record of the session. The students in charge of reuniting and weaving all the clues that are going to be in class are the logical thinkers (15) so they are going to discard any city or country that is impossible. Therefore, as we can see in the following picture, the disposition of the class is thought to help the development of the Mystery Classroom.

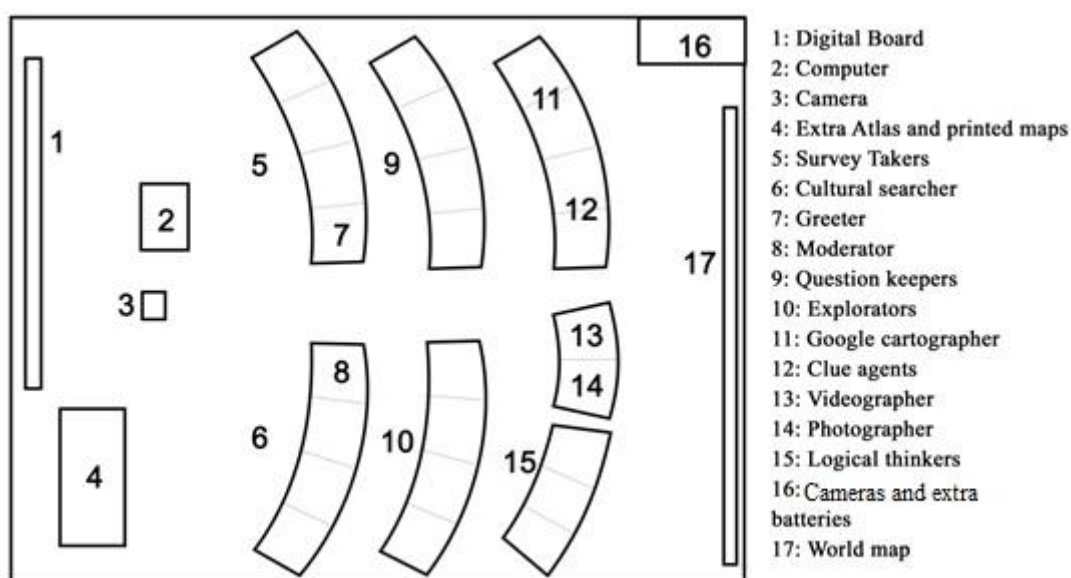


Figure 5: Disposition of the classroom throughout the Mystery Classroom (Author's).

The session is going to start with the classes greeting each other through the greeter but without saying where they are or the name of the school in order not to spoil the Mystery Classroom. Then, the moderators from both classes are going to go in front of the camera and present themselves as the moderators of the session. The teachers would have previously agreed which class starts with the questions. So, my class would start with one of the survey takers introducing herself or himself and asking a question and the other would answer. The question keepers would write the answer in the answer worksheet, explorators, google cartographers and clue agents would search for it in the maps to decide what to exclude and what to lead to next. In this proposal, because it would be the first time students do a Mystery Classroom, questions are given to ease the anxiety they might have towards their performance. However, ideally, especially with students that have a good knowledge of geography such as from 3<sup>rd</sup> of ESO onwards, the questions would be created by themselves as the class progresses and obtains more clues regarding the target location. That is the reason why, in this first Mystery Classroom, the question keepers are going to have a separate piece of paper for each question so they avoid the temptation of reading all the questions and spoil the mystery

and the process of discovery. The process of questions and answers is going to be done taking turns in both classes until the questions and cultural clues are finished and both classes have guessed where the other class is. Throughout the session the photographer and the videographer are going to have to take photographs and videos about the most relevant issues.

Finally, once the session is over it is important to recognize how well students have behaved and what a great achievement they have obtained. In this case, because the questions were guided, students should be given the chance to ask free questions about the other country without having to keep record of it, just to enjoy themselves and to get to know the other class a bit more. In this way, this will ease the transition into the peer revision Skype of the writing since students will have had the chance of talking in free practice using Skype.

### **3.2.3. Analysis of the videocall and information obtained**

Since the Mystery Classroom is expected to last only for 30 minutes, the rest of that session is going to be used to analyse what has happened throughout the first half of the session. The first 10 minutes will be used for students to unwind tension that has been created in the Mystery Classroom as well as sharing their impressions with the whole of the class. Since it is the first time students would do such an activity it is important that they are heard and that they can express what has been done properly. After this step, we would take 15 minutes to go through the questions that have been asked in the Mystery Classroom as well as the clues that have been discovered. This step is essential since it is going to help clearing out the doubts that might have arisen throughout the Mystery Classroom or that have been raised afterwards. This step is a chance to elicit what students have learnt throughout the session, not only regarding geography but also about the cultural clues. This is going to be envisioned through a mind map that is going to have as a central concept “Mystery Classroom” and the ideas that students convey are going to stem out of it. When the mind map is completed, the photographer is going to take a picture of it and it is going to be posted on the Google Sites for the Mystery Classroom:



Figure 6: Mind map (Author's)

In the next class, we would organize the materials and the information that has been gathered. Four different teams are going to be organized to divide the different tasks that are needed to be fulfilled. The first team, integrated by survey takers and question keepers, is going to be in charge for typing the questions, the answers, the cultural clues and the extra information they feel that is relevant from the Mystery Classroom into Google Sites. The second team, formed by cultural searchers and photographers, is going to be in charge of choosing the best photographs to post on the website. The third team is going to select the best videos from the session to post on the website. Finally, the last team is going to be in charge of ordering the material (Atlas, printed maps, world map and cameras), make sure everything is in a good condition and to return it to its place. The teacher's role in this case is going to be monitoring and offering aid to students in linguistic aspects as well as in technological issues regarding the website. To close how the session went, every student is going to write in a piece of paper what was the think they liked the most from the Mystery Classroom and I am going to type it as a final post of the Google sites of the Mystery Classroom.

### 3.2.4. Implementing Folk tales dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis

As it can be inferred from the questions asked in the Mystery Classroom, Intercultural Communicative Competence does not have a huge appearance in it because of the own limitations of the original model of Mystery Classroom. However, literature can offer us a magnificent way to enhance students' creativity. The exile suffered by Syrian Refugees is one of the most recent issues that Europe has had to deal with, especially in Germany. As European citizens, it is our duty to recognize each other and visualize this forgotten group. The way to raise awareness in this particular issue is going to be done, as the rest of the proposal, through Liddicoat's model (Figure 3). Before starting to deal with the issue, students are going to sit in their normal disposition in the classroom:

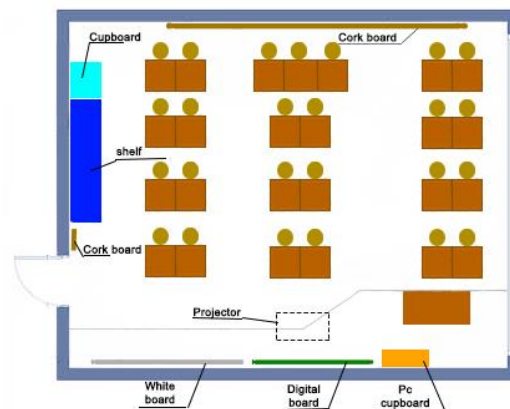


Figure 7: Normal disposition in the classroom (Author's)

To begin with, since it might be a problem that students are unaware of, the word "Refugees" is going to be written in the middle of the board and students are going to be asked to define it first individually, then comparing it with their mate and finally with the whole class. As a result, we would have a definition built by the whole



class since it would incorporate the students' own voice about the issue of refugees. After this, students would watch a documentary called "We walk Together: a Syrian Refugee Family's journey to the heart of Europe" by *The Guardian*. The documentary retells the story of different people trying to get to Germany from Hungary after their odyssey from Syria. The documentary is going to have subtitles in English to help students follow the message. In the case of having a weaker class, the subtitles could be in students' L1. After watching the documentary, students are going to answer some questions in pairs to reflect about what they have seen. Once students have completed the worksheet, we are going to reflect as a class on their answers. In this step it is important to give all students the chance to talk about what they have written since here it is not so important what they have said but that they have felt compelled to talk about the issue from a personal perspective. Once the discussion has been held students are going to have the chance to say how they would help Syrian Refugees living in Germany.

In the next session, students are going to be given the folk tale story "The Shoemaker and the Elves" by the Grimm brothers (Annex 8). Students are going to be assigned the same story but two different versions depending on their level of English. This is aimed at weaker students so they do not feel discouraged and students with more capacities can have the necessary challenge in order not to lose motivation towards the task. Along with the story, students are going to be given a glossary with the most difficult words from the reading (Annex 8) so the comprehension is eased for students. Once they are finished, students are going to be given a set of questions (Annex 8) that are going to ensure that students understand that a folk tale story has a morality and ethical story behind it. This step is key on the rewriting of the story since it is going to be the first step to induce them to the reflection on the version talking about refugees because this folk tale talks about solidarity, effort and selflessness. Before starting to write the story, we are going to read the task together and the students are going to ask as many questions as needed. Then students are going to be on their own writing the story, I will monitor but not tell them what to do or say except if they are in a writer's block.

### **3.2.5. Peer revision through Skype of the rewriting of the short story**

Because the writing task is going to have been monitored, I do not correct the writing before sending it off to Germany. The writings are going to be scanned for two reasons: to ensure that there is a copy for my correction and to send another copy to the school in Germany via email. The writings are going to be send by email to avoid delay and loss if they were to be sent through the post. This is a process that is going to run vice versa since the German classroom has worked with a Spanish folk tale and target to a Spanish cultural topic too.

Once every student of my classroom has a copy of a German counterpart, a correction worksheet is going to be distributed (Annex 10). I am going to project on the digital board an example of writing corrected according to the correction criteria that are going to appear on the worksheet. The correction criteria are going to be: Vocabulary,

Grammar, ‘what did you like about this writing?’ and ‘how well do you think it portrays the issue of refugees in Germany?’. Students are going to give a small comment for each section, marking on the text what they like or what should be improved and, finally, they are going to grade each section. Since students often feel insecure giving numeric marks to other students, they are going to mark each section from 1 (being the lowest mark) to 4 (being the highest mark). They are going to use coloured stickers for each section, as it is indicated in the correction worksheet. For example, if grammar is close to perfect they are going to attach 3 stickers in the grammar section. Consequently, they are going to give a numeric number but without them realizing. The students are not going to receive a rubric to do the correction but brief indications. Also the correction would be done in the classroom so I would monitor how students do it, make sure they are doing it properly and that students are not doubtful about what they do and empower them as correctors. When the corrections are done, the texts and corrections are going to be scanned again and sent to their original writers.

When everyone has its writing corrected and the worksheet filled by the corrector, it is time to get ready for Skype. Students might feel nervous for a face-to-face conversation with a student from Germany so it is important to tell them how I expect the session to develop. The peer review Skype is going to start with greeting the partner and asking simple questions (e.g. How’s your day been?). Afterwards, students would take turns to go through what has been commented on each other’s writing and asking question if there are doubts regarding the corrections made. It is important to make sure that students put emphasis on not saying “this is wrong” but “this could be improved” so students do not take it too personally and the Skype ends failing. While the Skype is conducted, students would have a white piece of paper to write any interesting comments. In case that the student would feel too anxious to talk, Skype offers the chat version which works at the same time as the videocall. To wrap up the peer revision Skype session, students are going to be able to ask questions that are not related to the writing of their partner. It is a time in which students can feel free to speak English to ask what creates curiosity in them.

### **3.3. Difficulties during implementation**

The first difficulty I encountered was the fact of finding someone with whom I could do the Mystery Classroom session. I used the platform “Skype in the Classroom” by Microsoft to find a counterpart with which to do the Mystery Classroom. Despite it is a very easy platform to use, it is difficult to sort out the place where you need the target classroom to be. Especially because there were few European schools available which means that the classes in the countries offered were in very distant time zones. Consequently, it would have meant keeping students for an afternoon after the school and that is barely possible since students have many extracurricular activities. I got in contact with two teachers from European countries (Hungary and Denmark). However, it was impossible to find a time to do the Mystery Classroom. In the case of the Hungarian teacher, the difficulty relay on the fact that the distribution of the hours in the high school was different than from the one in which I did my practicum. Therefore,

despite the interest of both sides, there was an organizational issue that made impossible that this Mystery Classroom was fruitful. Secondly, the problem that arose with the Danish teacher was the age and level of the students. Her students were in primary school and mine were already in First of ESO, which means that at a level of cognitive and linguistic development they were very distanced.

On the other hand, one of the things I realized trying to implement intercultural competency within the base model of Mystery Classroom was that the model itself has its own limitations. The model is said to be very flexible regarding the subject where you want to use it. It is true that if in EFL classroom students had thought of the questions themselves, it would have been much more fruitful communicatively. However, it is not easy to incorporate culture as such in a first session where one of the main aims is to discover where the other classroom is. Thus, the incorporation of folk tales as a way of weaving in culture using Skype.

As has been mentioned previously, it is key for a successful Mystery Classroom and Skype to have a proper internet connection. The high school the Mystery Classroom was planned to carry out is a very big high school with more than 800 students and, consequently, it has a very unreliable connection. Furthermore, from what I could observe there are many problems with the computers in the classroom either it is because they are very slow or because the sound is not working. Moreover, the problem develops upon the digital board itself because either the sound is not working in it or the projector is not well calibrated. Despite that this issues should be easy to solve, there is a lack of investment from the Government that affects directly to the technology schools are able to have. Furthermore, even if some of the materials are well taken care of, because students rarely use computers in the school context they sometimes take it as a light activity.

Another problem that can be found with the Mystery Classroom is that sometimes high schools, like the one I did my practicum, was old. This means that classrooms were designed to have a traditional distribution of students (Figure 7). However, the Mystery Classroom demands an especial distribution that allows students to move freely around the class (Figure 5). Then, the infrastructural problem of the building and the distribution of the classroom can make students feel enclosed and anxious in such a small space with such a particular distribution.

Furthermore, a problem that can arise especially in the Skype Peer review is that students that have been matched with each other might not get along. In a way, the matching instead of having been done randomly, it could have been done through a quiz in which students were asked about their personal tastes so they would find someone alike. On the other hand, another thing that should be considered is the level each student has. Thus, frustrations could be avoided regarding the self-image and one's confidence.

As regards students, there could have arisen two problems. Firstly, the topic of Refugees might not motivate some students enough even if it is presented in an active

learning way. On the other hand, students could also feel overwhelmed by the fact that they have to rewrite a short story from an original one. Maybe this could be tamed through limiting the word count depending on the level of the student.

### **3.4. Assessment**

In this proposal there are going to be different kinds of assessment. First of all, regarding the Mystery Classroom it is going to consist on formative assessment which will be done through an observation sheet (Annex 12). This is going to include items such as the participation, motivation and behaviour of the student. Therefore, in this part, I am going to value what the student has achieved independently of the results of the Mystery Classroom but based on the attitude. Because throughout the Mystery Classroom I am going to be monitoring, it is going to be impossible to fill the observation sheet. This will be done afterwards using the recording of the video.

Regarding the folk tale story, I am going to evaluate them formatively too, taking into account their behaviour, attitude and motivation throughout the sessions on refugees and folk tales. Furthermore, I am going to correct the reading comprehension of the folk tales in a summative evaluation.

This writing is going to be corrected through a peer review assessment and also a teacher correction. Both are going to account as formative assessment. The peer review assessment is going to be done through a worksheet that will comment on several aspects of the writing (grammar, vocabulary, what did you like about this writing? and how well do you think it portrays the issue of refugees in Germany?) and marking it from 1-3 with stickers of different colour depending on the issue that is being corrected. On the other hand, I am going to use a rubric which is going to be based on grammar, vocabulary, creativity and organization (Annex 13).

Finally, students are going to be assessed by their German partners in the Skype session in which they exchanged the corrections made in the writing. This assessment is going to take into account different aspects of the Skype session excluding the writing itself. The items that they are going to evaluate range from “Was your partner involved?” to “How well did you understand each other?”. All the sessions, except the Mystery Classroom, are going to be evaluated through the system of + (for a good behaviour) and – (not correct behaviour).

## **4. Conclusions**

Despite that the proposal has not been implemented due to the organizational and technical problems commented previously, there are some ideas that can be drawn from the development part. First of all, the proposal definitely complements course books information on culture and it gives learners the necessary resources to become speakers in the real world and to lose the fear of participating in conversations. ICT is introduced in the classroom, keeping the balance with non-technological resources such as printed folk tales, Atlas or even the fact of writing the piece of writing by hand and not type the rewriting of the short story. For the aims of enhancing collaboration in the classroom

and raising awareness, it would have needed to be implemented to prove if it works or not. However, the proposal brings together real materials that can make students feel more compelled with the topic. Also having the capacity to interact with a group of equal teenagers in another country is expected to be exciting and might trigger motivation to work together as a team. Regarding the implementation of ICC in the classroom through folk tale stories, I think that it would have worked because from my experience in the practicum I saw that students liked being creative and having their say in the topics dealt with in the classroom since it involved them as an important part of the learning process. However, the rewriting part might have been overwhelming for some students and providing a guide with the paragraphs and basic ideas that they should convey, might have been a good idea for this especial target student. Without offering them an extra help, frustration would have appeared and they might have had a negative reaction towards the task.

As regards the materials, they have been carefully chosen in order that students have different kinds of input: visual, oral, hearing and written. This addresses diversity in the classroom and different intelligences of our students so they can do their best in the tasks. Furthermore, most of the materials are real regarding the issue of refugees so real voices are heard. The documentary offers different voices: several refugee families, the Hungarian citizens who aid the refugees and the journalists themselves. Therefore, students have the necessary sources for writing the new folk tale story from the perspective they wish to. However, the short stories are adapted to the level of students since the translation of the original story might have been overbearing for students depending on their level.

This proposal has encountered systematic difficulties in its implementation regarding the technology resources and finding someone with whom doing the Mystery Skype. The educational system does not contemplate technology and mostly a good maintenance of the resources available thoroughly. Furthermore, due to the low investment in education, high schools prefer to invest their funding in having less students in classrooms to attend them correctly than to invest in a good internet connection. Nevertheless, students are eager to engage with ICT classrooms. Maybe in the near future, high schools are able to have better technological resources for proposals like this one.

There are several things that could have been done differently. Firstly, I could have looked for a classroom nationally in Spain. This would have made it easier to match classrooms since the time zone and the organization of the time table would have been the same. This would have had the advantage that students would be more or less in the same stage of learning in the curriculum and they would not be tamed by a higher/lower level classroom from another country.

Despite I tried to look for them, Atlases in English are not always available in high schools. This would have had to solved with a purchase with my own money since the experience of looking in an Atlas book is different from looking to a printed map,

because the maps have been selected whilst in the Atlas there are many more resources for the students to investigate.

I think that one thing that could have been completed is the participation of students in several choices in the classroom. Despite that students have already the chance of assessing their peers and the experience of the Mystery Classroom, they could have had a voice in choosing the topic that has been dealt with through the folk tale story. I would have provided several topics that are related to Germany but ultimately students would have had the last choice in the topic. This would have ensured that students are motivated towards the topics.

As the present proposal touches several topics and ways of implementing both ICC and Skype into the classroom, in real life it would take weeks to fulfil all the tasks. Therefore, one thing that should be improved and changed in the future could be reducing tasks and timing so it would not get tedious for students to deal with the same topic for several sessions. However, the proposal's framework offers flexibility as regards the planning of the sessions according to students' needs since they might need more time to complete the tasks than the one we had previously expected to.

One final thing that could be improved is looking for ways to reduce paper waste. This proposal, despite being ICT, requires a high number of worksheets for students to complete. Maybe the peer review of the rewriting of the short story could have carried out done online with a survey or type on a worksheet in pdf.

However, overall, this proposal has proved to be an experience that students can enjoy and through which they can not only become more proficient speakers but also more autonomous learners. This proposal brings together many topics and this involves a lot of preparation from the teacher but ultimately the learning experience for the student is rewarding and has a good communicative outcome. Consequently, connecting classrooms through Skype and merging in culture and literature in the classroom can be a great addition to students' learning processes.

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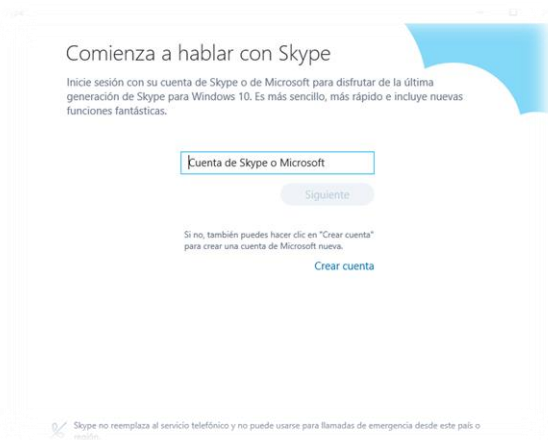
## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. Annex 1: Skype instruction sheet

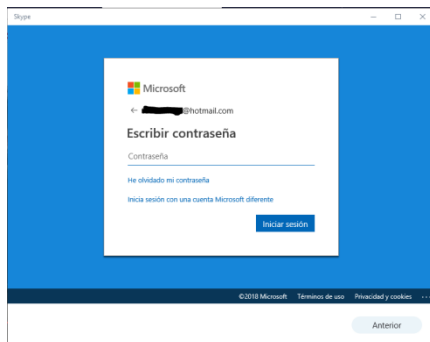


1) To install Skype into Windows 10 we need to go to the “Windows Store”, look for the application and click “Inici” or “start”.

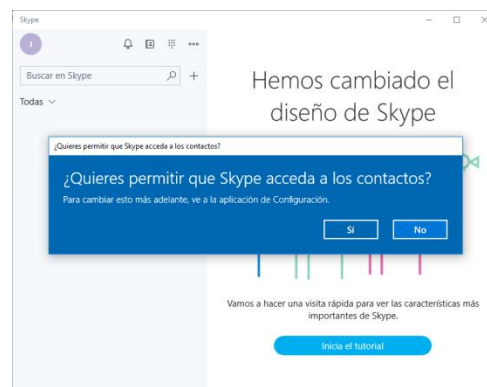
2) The application of Skype is going to open and we will have to fill in the information asked. We will write our email and if we already have a Skype account, we will introduce it.



3) We are going to introduce a safe password.



4) If we want Skype to accede to our saved contacts, we are going to click “yes” or “si”. If not, we will insert them manually.



**TIPS!** Skype also offers us a tutorial to see quickly how to set an account and the options offered by the program. From here, we can add and chat with whoever we want.

<https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA11098/how-do-i-get-started-with-skype>

6.2. Annex 2: Role cards for the table

Greeter and cultural searcher

Moderator

Survey takes

Question  
keepers

Google cartographer

Logical thinkers

Clue agent

Explorators and  
cultural searchers

Photographer

Videographer

6.3. Annex 3: Maps for Mystery Classroom













#### 6.4. Annex 4: Mystery Classroom questions

QUESTION 1	<i>Are you East or West of the Atlantic Ocean?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 2	<i>Are you North or South of the Lake Chad?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
CULTURAL CLUE	<i>Has any country in your continent Swahili as an official language?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 3	<i>Are you close to the Arabian Sea?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 4	<i>Are you East or West of The Ural Mountains?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 5	<i>Are you North or South of the Danube river?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
CULTURAL CLUE	<i>Does your country speak a Romance language?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 6	<i>Are you North or South of the river Rhine?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 7	<i>Is your country washed by the Baltic Sea?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 8	<i>Is your country washed by the North Sea?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 9	<i>Are you part of the Scandinavian peninsula?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
CULTURAL CLUE	<i>Is bread an important part of your breakfast?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 10	<i>Is the capital of your country Copenhagen?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 11	<i>Are you close to the Thüringer Wald?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 12	<i>Are you close to the Polish border?</i>
	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION	<i>Are you close to the Czech border?</i>

13	Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 14	<i>Does your city/town have sea?</i> Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 15	<i>Are you North or South of the river Elbe?</i> Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 16	Are you in the region of Sachsen-Anhalt? Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 17	<i>Are you in Hannover?</i> Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 18	<i>Is your city/town near the Deutsche Bucht?</i> Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 19	<i>Is your city/town washed by the river Weser?</i> Answer: Extra information:
QUESTION 20	<i>Are you in Bremen?</i> Answer: Extra information:



**6.5. Annex 5: Documentary (Link)**

*Link to “We walk Together: a Syrian Refugee Family’s journey to the heart of Europe” by The Guardian*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubGhzVdnhQw>

**6.6. Annex 6: Syrian Refugees photographs**

*Photos by Sean Gallup (Getty Images) – The Guardian (Mon 12 Oct 2015 09.30 BST)*





*Photos by John Beck – Vice (October 7, 2015 | 4:00 pm)*







## 6.7. Annex 7: Power point: Grimm brothers and folk tales

### THE GRIMM BROTHERS

- Born in Hanau (Germany)
- Collected folklore during the 19th c.
- They collected more than 200 folk tale stories!
- Translated to 100 languages.
- Adapted by Disney.



Orally transmitted

Moral behind the story

Traditional of a region

What are folk tale stories?

Traditional of a region

What else?

## 6.8. Annex 8: The shoemaker and the elves, glossary and reading comprehension

### THE SHOEMAKER AND THE ELVES

Peter Schumaker worked hard and was kind to everyone in the village, he could never earn enough money making shoes. On this particularly cold and snowy day, all he had left in his workroom was enough leather to make one last pair of shoes.

That evening, Peter carefully cut up his precious leather and laid it aside for the morning, when he would sew them together. The sun rose the next morning and Peter was ready to start work, but to his great surprise an exquisitely crafted pair of shoes sat on his worktable. “What magic!” said Cecilia, his wife. They quickly put the shoes in the shop window, for the holiday shopping season had just begun.

As luck would have it, the shoes fitted the finicky Mrs. Sniggins perfectly, and she paid a generous sum for the fine fit. With the money, Peter went to buy more leather, enough for two more pairs. That evening, he once again set to work cutting his leather, and he left the pieces on the table when he went to bed. Hoping for a good design, he fell asleep dreaming of shoes. When he awoke early the next morning, he again found two finely crafted pairs of shoes before his eyes. Customers bought these up quickly, for they were masterpieces.

Now Peter could buy enough leather for four pairs of shoes. This magical business went on for some time, and Schumaker’s name became well-known for the finest shoes in town. These days, life was much better for Peter and Cecilia. One day Cecilia said, “I wonder who has been helping us so much?” Peter announced: “Tonight, we will hide in the workshop and see what goes on there!” And so they did. At exactly midnight, two tiny elves tiptoed in and began to work, swiftly making the fine shoes. They were shabbily dressed and weren’t even wearing shoes themselves. Before daybreak, they had already dashed off, leaving several pairs of shoes ready for sale that day.

Peter and Cecilia were grateful to these little elves, and worried about them working so hard in such cold weather. So Peter set to work making two tiny pairs of shoes, and Cecilia stitched two warm sets of clothing for each of them. On Christmas Eve, instead of leather pieces, they set the little shoes and clothes out and hid themselves again.



At midnight, the elves popped in and saw the new clothes. In a flash, they had them on their little bodies! They were so happy that they laughed and chuckled, and danced right out the window, never to be seen again. Peter continued making shoes everyday, and he and Cecilia lived a very happy and contented life for many years. As did the elves!

**THE END!**

GLOSSARY

Enough	Prou	Craft	Confeccionar	Tiptoe	De puntetes
Leather	Pell	Finicky	Tiquismiquis	Shabbily	Pobrament
Sew	Cosir	Well-known	Famós	Dash off	Sortir correns
Stitch	Punt	Chuckle	Riure entre dents	Contented	Content

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What happened after the first night? What could do Mr. Schumaker do after it?
  
- 2) What did Mr. Schumaker and Cecilia do one night? Why?
  
- 3) How did they make the elves happy?
  
- 4) Why do you think the elves helped Mr. Schumaker and the elves? Why do you think the couple helped them back?

**6.9. Annex 9: Task for rewriting the story**

*Once upon a time...* there was someone like you, ready to write the other side of the story. You have the power to write the story of someone living in Germany as a Syrian Refugee. Take as a base story the folk tale “The shoemaker and the elves” and rewrite it. Use the ideas discussed in class through the photographs and documentary! Feel free to let your imagination, your ideas and your deepest thoughts. Remember, do not be scared, your teacher is here to help you ☺



**6.10. Annex 10: Correction sheet for the students**

Now, you have to think about how well your German partner has done! Write in the comments sections and mark them with the stickers that are indicated in each section from 1 (being the worst), 2(it's ok!) or 3 (wow! This is amazing).

**STATION 1 : VOCABULARY**

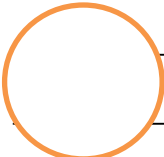
Does this story have rich vocabulary?

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How many vocabulary mistakes (wrong word, spelling) have you found?




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What did you like the most about this story's vocabulary?

Your mark 

**STATION 2: GRAMMAR**

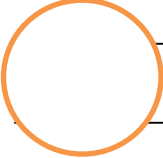
What are the best grammatical structures in this story?

---

---

---

How many grammar mistakes have you found?




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What did you like the most about this story's grammar?

Your mark 


**STATION 3 : What did you like about this writing?**

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Your Mark 


**STATION 4 : How well do you think it explains the issue of refugees?**

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Your Mark 







### 6.11. Annex 11: Peer assessment task

YOUR NAME	
NAME OF THE MEMBER OF THE PEER REVIEW WRITING	
	<div style="text-align: center;">★</div> <div style="text-align: center;">★</div> <p>WISH:</p>

### 6.12. Annex 12: Observation sheet (Mystery Classroom)

AREA	OBSERVATIONS	COMMENTS
<b>Attitude</b> The student has behaved well: respecting turns and respecting classmates		
<b>Organization</b> Uses well time to fulfil the tasks and organizes the information		
<b>Presentation skills</b> Holds eye contact, clear language, enthusiasm and interest		
<b>Impact on learning</b> Development of problem-solving and critical skills. Engaged with the task.		

### 6.13. Annex 13: Writing rubric

	Grammar 	Vocabulary 	Maturity/Creativity 	Organization 
1	Does not show SVO order. Does not use adverbs or adjectives that help creating the story. Does not use modals nor conditionals.	Does not use accurately the vocabulary. Does not use collocations. Bad spelling.	Sentences are not coherent. Sentences are short. Unoriginal. It does not reflect the issue of refugees fully.	Dirty. No paragraphs.
2	Simple use of SVO Uses few adverbs or adjectives that help creating the story. Has used a few modal verbs and conditionals.	Simple use of vocabulary. Uses few collocations. Not accurate spelling.	Shows coherence but ideas are not fully connected. Short sentences. Some good original ideas. Does portray a bit the issue of refugees.	Not polished enough No paragraphs
3	Shows a great use of SVO structures. Adequate use of can and adverbs and adjectives in the context. Adequate of modals and conditionals.	Uses vocabulary correctly. Uses some collocations. Some mistakes in spelling.	Coherence and connection is adequate. Short sentences. Shows imagination and good portrayal of originality. Does show the issue of the issue refugees adequately.	Clean No paragraphs
4	Complex SVO structures. Good and understanding use of adjectives and adverbs. Good use modals and conditionals.	Accurate use of vocabulary. Accurate use of collocations. No mistakes in spelling.	Coherence and connections of ideas. Good structured sentences. Original text and ideas. Good portrayal of the issue of refugees.	Clean Paragraphs. Coherent.