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PBL FOR TRANSFORMING LEARNING PERCEPTIONS

Running head: PBL FOR TRANSFORMING LEARNING PERCEPTIONS

PROJECT BASED LEARNING TO TRANSFORM NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF
STUDENTS TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH

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Research Report submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master in English Language Teaching for Self-Directed Learning

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Abstract

The teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language is a challenge for the teacher, given the different contexts in which it takes place. Therefore, his responsibility is to continually search for strategies that allow him to adapt to students' needs. The author focuses on the use of lessons based on PBL approach as a teaching-learning strategy, which aims to change student perceptions towards learning English. This promotes the creation and implementation of self-learning strategies that lead students to develop learning autonomy. Teacher-research chose Eleventh-grade students, from a state school located in Maní, Casanare, to carry out this pedagogical intervention. It consisted of four stages over nine lessons. Students planned, researched, presented a project and then evaluated it. This resulted in a better disposition towards learning and, although impossible to affirm that they became autonomous concerning the construction of their knowledge, teacher-researcher did observe a change in the importance they gave to the use and learning of English as a foreign language. She recommends the application of this methodology to lower grades to promote self-reflection, autonomy and empowerment in students starting their secondary education, to be able to obtain better results at the end of this school stage.

Key words: autonomy, context, empowerment, PBL, perception, self-learning, Teaching-Learning process.

Resumen

El proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera es un desafío para el docente, dados los diferentes contextos en los que se desarrolla. Por lo tanto, su responsabilidad es buscar continuamente estrategias que le permitan adaptarse a las necesidades de los estudiantes. El autor se centra en el uso de lecciones basadas en el enfoque de aprendizaje basado en proyectos como una estrategia de enseñanza-aprendizaje que tiene como objetivo cambiar las percepciones de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del inglés. Esto promueve la creación e implementación de estrategias de autoaprendizaje que llevan a los estudiantes a desarrollar la autonomía de aprendizaje. Los estudiantes de undécimo grado, de una escuela estatal ubicada en Maní, Casanare, fueron elegidos para llevar a cabo esta intervención pedagógica. Consistió en cuatro etapas sobre nueve lecciones. Los estudiantes planearon, investigaron, presentaron un proyecto y luego lo evaluaron. Esto dió como resultado una mejor disposición hacia el aprendizaje y, aunque era imposible afirmar que se volvieron autónomos con respecto a la construcción de sus conocimientos, el docente-investigador observó un cambio en la importancia que le daban al uso y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Ella recomienda que esta metodología se aplique a grados más bajos para promover la autorreflexión, la autonomía y el empoderamiento en los estudiantes que comienzan su educación secundaria, para poder obtener mejores resultados al final de esta etapa escolar.

Palabras claves: autoaprendizaje, autonomía, contexto, empoderamiento, enseñanza-aprendizaje, PBL, percepción.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein cited in Good reads, n.d.).

In a globalized world, in which information is available for supporting and expanding knowledge, learning a second language becomes an advantage for individuals who want to be part of the current globalized context. It demands competitiveness and efficiency in the use of strategies, which result in performing well in different aspects, whether professional, academic or even personal. Taking into account that the use of a second language, such as English, is one communication skill that could make an individual more competitive (as it is considered the most important language used for global communication); the Colombian government launched a national bilingualism program in 2004. The Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo 2004-2019, “Inglés como lengua extranjera, una estrategia para la competitividad” 2004-2019 (National Bilingual Program, 2004-19, “English as a foreign language, a strategy for competitiveness”). It is part of an official government initiative to improve the quality of education in Colombia.

As a result, new strategies and tools to restructure the English language learning process have emerged with the objective of “having citizens able to communicate in English with internationally comparable standards, so that the country is inserted in universal communication processes in the global economy, and cultural openness” (MEN, 2006, p.6).

As part of this program, educational institutions should follow guidelines outlined within the program itself, by proposing and creating strategies that can be adapted to different contexts, all of which aimed at meeting the objectives proposed by the Colombian government through the Ministry of Education.

In accordance with the aforementioned guidelines, the author decided to implement a pedagogical intervention strategy, based on PBL (Project-Based Learning) approach, as a means

of observing the impact it can have on students' negative perceptions towards learning English (which were duly noted during the diagnostic stage).

This document describes the different stages of the research involved, such as planning, implementation, data collection and analysis and presentation of study results. The information is presented in six chapters: the first one explains the statement of the problem, the research question, objectives, and rationale. The second one consists of the literature review and definitions of the constructs; the third chapter involves the research design. The fourth chapter contains the pedagogical intervention and implementation; the fifth chapter concerns data analysis and findings; finally, chapter six presents conclusions and pedagogical implications. Various appendixes then follow, which support the development of the research undertaken.

Statement of the problem

The most important language used for global communication nowadays is English. As stated by Crystal (2003) who in the book "English as a global language" describes the reasons and situations that have turned English into the language used around the world for communication in different scenarios. He argues concerning the English use that:

The socio-cultural explanation looks at the way people all over the world, in many walks of life, have come to depend on English for their economic and social well-being. The language has penetrated deeply into the international domains of political life, business, safety, communication, entertainment, the media and, education (p. 29-30).

Consequently, in response to the need to be a globally competitive country, the national government established English as part of the teaching curriculum in state-run educational institutions. That way, students acquire the ability to communicate and interact with other

cultures using the English language. This, in turn, will allow them to have a broader view of the world around them and access to both academic and work opportunities.

However, despite government strategies and policies, English teaching has not had the expected results, due to the many variables that affect the learning process, which becomes especially evident in the different learning contexts. For example, Cárdenas (2006) questions the suitability of the country's conditions for bilingualism, because there are too few hours dedicated to teaching English; there is a shortage of qualified materials and teachers and in general, there are very few opportunities to use English in authentic communication.

The school where the research is carried out, is a small, public and rural institution, with many educational difficulties due to the few resources that it gets from the government, the social difficulties faced by the students and their families, the general population's economic circumstances and their living conditions.

In this context, the English learning process is affected by students' perceptions and beliefs associated with their cultural background. It means that students are not very interested in learning a language that, according to them, is only a mandatory subject in the school studied to get a good grade. Indeed, students say they are not going to use it beyond the academic period of their life because they do not expect to travel abroad, for which they would need the English language. As Breen (2001) states: "Beliefs and attitudes that students bring with them to the learning situation are key factors in the learning process and ultimate success" (cited in Carrero & Camargo, 2010, p.81). In addition, Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, and Cuthbert (1988) stated, "a belief is a way to describe a relationship between a task, an action, an event or another person and an attitude of a person towards it" (p. 53). Beliefs concerning learning that students bring

with them, in other words, what they think about a certain subject can impede or favor their perception and disposition towards learning and therefore their performance.

The results of a previous questionnaire, (see Appendix A) which was applied to all secondary students of the school (70 persons), served to confirm situations based on the teacher's pedagogical practice. These also helped to describe the characteristics of the context. The responses and comments from students show that they are performing a passive role in the learning process, considering that they are just carrying out tasks copying from their classmates or solving grammar exercises, i.e. the English language is worked on but is not studied – not learned. They argue that this is due to a bad disposition toward the English language, which leads them to be lazy, not to pay attention to explanations, to copy homework and class activities from others. In other words, they show a total lack of interest and make no effort whatsoever to improve their English learning.

The students' responses show, for instance, that they are not aware of the positive impact that a second language can have on their life project, and how this can influence the improvement of their quality of life, and therefore, their vision of the future. The results also show that although 20 % of the interviewed students have a negative attitude towards English class and they are not interested in carrying out the proposed tasks or activities (they argue that they do not like English at all). The remaining 80% (56 persons) said that they like English class at school.

These results changed the teacher's belief about students not liking the learning process. However, given that 85 % of these students also say that they do not find it useful to learn this language, arguing that the main use, from their angle, would be traveling to another English-speaking country. This would be quite difficult for them due to the economic factors and the

context of the population. Therefore, it can be concluded that, although students try to study the topics of the class, since English is a mandatory requirement for students to be passed to the next grade or for obtaining a diploma, they strongly believe that English has no significance in their lives, which prevents them from learning the language as a communicative tool. Based on the data, we can thus confirm that, from the interviewed students, about 70% prefer to work in groups instead of working alone, because they consider that teamwork provides them with an opportunity to improve their learning.

Identifying the factors that influence students' perceptions regarding the English learning process at this Institution was essential to design strategies specifically adapted to the learners' own characteristics (learning style, need, expectations etc.) and reconcile the perceptions that might prevent the learning process of the target language.

Concerning eleventh grade students as the participants in the research, the following aspects were taken into account. First, these students have already carried out a learning process during their secondary school studies having experienced a lot of different teaching situations and methodologies, which have affected them in a positive or negative way; and on the other hand, they must make important decisions concerning the next stage they are going to start after leaving the school. They must be aware of their responsibility for increasing their own knowledge through the development of self-directed learning strategies.

In this way, it would be useful to implement a strategy that involves student as the principal actor in the teaching-learning process. This aspect is considered in PBL methodology, which suggests the use of the English language through participative, interesting and reflective activities, which allow engaging the students in a process of an experiential learning. (Thomas, 2000).

This study focused mainly on analyzing and describing the students' reflections, before, during and after the application of the intervention strategy. This in order to identify the impact of lessons designed in base to the guidelines of PBL approach on the students' perceptions regarding the learning of English as a foreign language; as previously mentioned, if learners do not find what they are learning meaningful it would not be interesting and important for them.

Research Questions

- How do lessons-based on PBL approach impact eleventh-grade EFL students' perceptions towards the English language?
- How do the aforementioned lessons empower eleventh-grade EFL students at the focused School to develop self-directed learning strategies?

Research Objectives

- To analyze the impact of lessons based on PBL approach in eleventh-grade EFL students' perceptions concerning English language learning.
- To describe how lessons based on PBL approach can empower the target population in the language learning process with the development of self-directed learning strategies.

Rationale

National Policies such as the National Education Plan (PNE –Plan Nacional de Educación) and the National Bilingualism Program 2004-2019: “English as a foreign language, a strategy for competitiveness” (Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo 2004-2019, “Inglés como lengua extranjera, una estrategia para la competitividad”) amongst others, describe the learning of English as foreign language as imperative to have competitive citizens. These claims, however, contrast with the reality of the population discussed in this document. While, it is true

that via the implementation of standards and guidelines for learning a foreign language, in this case English, the Ministry of Education in Colombia, seeks to place the student within a range of competitiveness. This in order to facilitates entry into the labour market and or also for academic purposes, it is necessary to mention some limitations that arise, as to the characterization of Colombian contexts in which the learning process of a foreign language is undertaken, for example, the difference between urban and rural areas. British Council (2015) mentions that:

In the case of rural areas, where Program policies do not arrive due to a lack of resources and/or personnel, learning English is still low. In fact, in these places, where a quarter of the Colombian population lives, only 40% of the students remain in school until the 9th grade, and in many of the schools, English is not taught (p.1).

The context where this research is done is part of the statistics described above, as the school is located in a rural area with a small population and little access to technological advances, educational resources and few opportunities for improving one's quality of life to that found in large cities.

However, in spite of these facts, it is important and necessary to look for strategies that can be applied to a specific context. This in order to promote analysis and reflection that can contribute to the improvement of pedagogical practices, taking into account that the teaching process must be focused on the needs of the target population and the demands of today's world. This research emphasizes the application of the project-based learning approach as a tool, which facilitates the engagement of students in real and meaningful activities during the development of a project. At the same time, they can be challenged in the application of learning strategies that support their learning process.

Although learning situations are different according to the characteristics of the context in which it is carried out, it is important to identify common elements with other experiences that serve to analyze the situation described in the context of this research. A research carried out in a school in Medellín by students from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, focused on analyzing the attitude of students regarding learning English. It describes how, good attitudes and motivation promote the interest in learning, and concluded that, after identifying students' characteristics, it is necessary to design strategies which involve students in the learning process as a way to increase learning motivation (Vásquez, Peláez & Peláez, 2013).

Another study conducted in the ICESI University, Cali, analyzes the incidence of some factors such as anxiety, motivation, learning styles and learning strategies. It concluded that there are certain attitudes and behaviors, which influence the learning process (Díaz, 2014). Such research experiences help to describe how this problematic situation can be addressed in the context where this research is developed and how the target population will be affected by the application of the proposed intervention strategy, in order to achieve the objectives of the current study.

Although there is information from similar investigations, they were carried out in contexts with characteristics different from those of this study; it is necessary to point out that there is no research, nor reports or information concerning student needs and perceptions, and specifically concerning the learning process in our context. The design of this study focused on analyzing the impact of project-based learning approach on eleventh-grade EFL students' perceptions. At the same time, it describes how the use of lessons based on this approach can empower the language-learning process via the development of self-learning strategies. Finally, the results of this study will also serve the teacher-researcher as a basis for reflection on the

teaching process and for the search of new strategies, with the purpose of continually improving her teaching practice. At the same time, it will serve as a base for future research aimed at improving the process of learning a foreign language and even concerning other areas of the curriculum in this academic institution.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

In order to describe the impact of project-based learning on students' perceptions towards English, and how this methodology can foster students' empowerment in their learning process. This research considers constructs which help us to identify characteristics of the learning process in an ideal situation, but which can be adapted to the solution of the stated problem, that is to say that corresponds to the theoretical support of the hypotheses, findings and/or conclusions derived from this study. These constructs include social constructivism, learning strategies, language attitude, Project-Based Learning, collaborative and cooperative learning, empowerment, and motivation. They represent the main concepts or variables that help to describe the object of the research based on the proposed intervention strategy.

Social Constructivism

Students say that they prefer working in groups, arguing that this is a good way to foster learning, and point out that they can gain knowledge through discussing with or ideas of their classmates. This is supported by social constructivist theory, taking into account that this considers the interaction between individuals who establish social relations, as a basis for knowledge construction. According to Vygotsky,

All cognitive functions originate in and must, therefore, be explained as products of social interactions and that learning is not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it is the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge-based community (cited in Ravi, 2016, p.72).

Likewise, the constructivist theory points out principles that can be integrated as part of what is intended to be achieved with this research, that is, it gives us a guide on what learning

conditions should be, in order to positively impact students' perception towards the construction of knowledge (Berube, 2008). These principles can be cited as follows:

- Learning is supported by social interactions: students in our context agree with and show their preference for group work;
- The ZPD (zone of proximal development) can serve as a guide for curricular and lesson planning: scaffolding enriches the construction of the knowledge, and the teacher acts as a guide and support throughout the process;
- School learning should occur in a meaningful context: Activities had to do with the student's real life.
- Real situations from the student's life should be brought to the classroom to provoke both, reflection and learning.

This theory suggests that learning is provided based on the interaction among peers with the teacher as a guide and that these relations are developed in the classroom, which must be transformed into a place with conditions that favor and facilitate the construction of knowledge.

The Vygotskian Classroom

A Vygotskian classroom emphasizes creating one's own concepts and taking ownership of one's own learning. This theory promotes active participation and collaboration between learners. Students work together in a teacher-student and student-student interaction to increase the learning that is taking place (Shelley, 2011, n.p.).

According to these guidelines, students must become active actors in the learning process, so activities should be interesting and catch their attention. Interaction with peers is very

important since they are building their learning with others' help and relying on the teacher's support. Therefore, the classroom is supposed to be a space to promote the curiosity and participation of students to facilitate knowledge construction. The constructivist theory also mentions that learner uses tools and strategies to work on the building of his/her knowledge. Taking this into account, in our context the classroom could be adapted to let students develop all their skills working with topics interesting to them, as well as to promote the development of learning strategies since, if students are aware of the responsibility in their learning they can identify how and where they can get and/or improve the learning.

Learning Strategies

According to Stern (1992):

All language learners use language-learning strategies either consciously or subconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. Since the language classroom is like a problem-solving environment in which language learners are likely to face new input and difficult tasks given by their instructors, learners' attempts to find the quickest or easiest way to do what is required, that is, using language learning strategies is inescapable (cited in Hismanoglu, 2000, p.1).

The aforementioned author suggests that in a learning context students are able to use learning strategies, even without they can realize. In this sense teacher as a guide should promote in students the capacity to identify them and create others new to favor their learning process.

According to Oxford (1990), these strategies are classified according to those that directly involve the target language; this means that the tools and personal actions students do to internalize new knowledge, and those that support the process, indirectly serving as a learning context.

Table 1
Oxford's strategy classification system (1990)

<i>Direct strategies</i>		
Memory Strategies	Cognitive Strategies	Compensation Strategies
Help students store and retrieve new information	Involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself.	Help learners to understand or produce messages in the target language despite limitations of knowledge.
<i>Indirect strategies</i>		
Metacognitive Strategies	Affective Strategies	Social Strategies
Involve planning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring and evaluating one's progress.	Help students to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes.	Help to learn through interaction with others.

Note: (Garrido, 2008).

It is to say that encouraging students to be able to identify and develop learning strategies can promote their sense of empowerment and the conscious of responsibility in the construction of knowledge. Meaning that, if they are aware of their skills, and what they must do to improve, they surely will feel committed within themselves to look for the appropriate tools and actions to facilitate their own learning process.

Learning Empowerment

Empowering students to be able to reflect on their own learning process, and help them be able to identify what is simple or easy for them allows them to make decisions about how to take advantage of their strengths and how to work on their weaknesses. “To be an empowered learner means to be motivated to perform tasks, and more specifically an empowered person finds the tasks meaningful, feels competent to perform them, and feels his/her efforts have an impact on the scheme of things” (Houser & Frimer, 2009, p.36). It also represents the capacity of students to recognize their skills and abilities to perform tasks with quality. As cited by Bandura (1994) “self-efficacy is defined as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 2). It is to say that when students take control of their learning and are motivated they are encouraged to develop tasks and products with quality.

In addition, by empowering students, they are challenged to take the control of their learning and become more autonomous. Autonomy is concerning the students’ performance and their independence from the teacher control as they can demonstrate that are able to work by themselves without teacher intervention, although with her support. Page and Czuba (1999) propose: “Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important” (p.37).

Findings made during the diagnosis stage demonstrate that students do not find English meaningful or useful in the context of their daily lives. Their attitudes towards English do not enable them to cultivate their own learning processes. In short, students need to be empowered concerning language acquisition. Take into account that when students are empowered, they

learn more, they learn better; this acts as motivation for doing the best; they can successfully carrying out those activities asked of them.

Motivation

It is important for this study to refer to the concept of motivation taking into account that this is what makes us act in a specific way when we want to get something. We could say that when students are motivated to learn, they display a good disposition and attitude and put their effort and attention into knowledge acquisition; and they will be engaged in doing their best. The term motivation in a second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1985) as “referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p.10).

In an educational context, Skehan distinguishes four main sources of motivation, presented in the following table:

Table 2
Sources of Motivation. Skehan, (1989)

	Learning contexts	Learning outcomes
Outside individuals	Materials	Rewards
(extrinsic motivation)	Teaching/learning tasks	Success and failure
Inside individuals	Success and failure throughout	Goals
(intrinsic motivation)	the process	

Note: (cited in Madrid & Pérez, 2001, p.325).

These sources of motivation can be understood in the learning context: on one hand, external motivation focused on the development of interesting tasks, which can give rewards as

positive scores. On the other hand, internal motivation activated in the individual by his personal desire and purpose of success in the process moved by his own decision to reach goals.

Given that the main objective of motivation is to have the attention of learners, there are tools and strategies, which inspire students to be motivated to learn. Dornyei (1994) says that motivation strategies in learning must be considered from three levels or components: the learning level, that is, what student is learning for and why. The student level, which has to do with the self-concept concerning his performance in the use of English and the learning situation level, meaning the quality of teaching methods, content, curriculum, and materials that support this process, as well as the interactions of the student with teacher and peers.

As mentioned above, motivation is, therefore, an important aspect that can help to promote interest and a good attitude. It can serve as an instrument to change the negative perception students have toward learning English and empower in their language learning process to become self-directed learners. Motivation can make students change their attitude concerning learning English as a foreign language, as they are using it in real contexts and for communicative purposes.

Language Attitude

One of the factors that students presented in the diagnosis stage regarding their negative conceptions toward target language is that they do not find English useful or pertinent in their context. They think English is only a mandatory subject as part of their school's curriculum and they point out that they are not going to use English in what they describe as their future. These opinions demonstrate that students do not show a good attitude toward learning English. As Gardner (1985) points out, "attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object,

inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent”(p.9). In addition, Visser (2008) states that “attitude is considered as an essential factor influencing language performance” (p.121). These ideas suggest that when learners are motivated their attitudes towards the learning change to achieve the proposed objectives.

According to Padwick, (2010) “besides the intellectual perspective, the nature of language learning has psychological and social aspects and depends primarily on the learners' motivation and attitude to learn the target language” (p.121). Abidin et al.(2012, Cited in Eshghinejad, 2016) “states that the ability of students to master a second language is not only influenced by mental competence or language skills, but also on the students' attitudes and perceptions towards the target language” (p.3). It is thus necessary, based on the intervention strategy applied to the target population, to determine how negative perceptions and motivation change during the English learning process. With this in mind, it is pertinent to mention and describe the principles and guidelines of PBL approach. As they were used as the base for the strategy proposed to achieve the objectives established in this research.

Project-Based Learning

PBL can be defined as a model that focuses on the development of meaningful projects driven by students with the teacher's guidance. Students are involved in real situations and activities, which finally result in the acquisition of experiential learning. Stivers (2010) defines Project Based Learning, or PBL, as:

An instructional approach built upon learning activities and real tasks that have brought challenges for students to solve. These activities generally reflect the types of learning

and work people do in the everyday world outside the classroom. PBL is generally done by groups of students working together toward a common goal (p. 2).

Thomas Markham (2011) describes project-based learning (PBL) as “PBL integrates knowing and doing. Students learn knowledge and elements of the core curriculum, but also apply what they know to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter” (cited in Yuen et al., p.388).

These concepts suggest that the PBL methodology focuses on the student and his needs, allowing him to construct his knowledge using learning strategies and according to his learning style. A flexible method that promotes the development of activities. Each individual is able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, in order to share their skills and knowledge with others and, at the same time, learn from their peers what they need to improve in their learning. Finally, students present a product demonstrating the acquired knowledge by communicating the results to others. The role of the teacher during this process is to guide and scaffold the student’s progress so that he builds his knowledge first with help and then more independently.

In Project-Based Learning, activities are carried out using information and topics from the close context. These activities are based on the interests of the students who work in collaborative groups and assessment tasks and activities proposed during each stage of the project. It begins with planning and finishing with the project delivery and presentation of the final product. Students and teachers must be committed to the development of the project; students as drivers and teachers as support.

Based on the data obtained during the diagnosis phase, which describes the characteristics of the target population. In addition, the negative conceptions and opinions students have about learning English. We can say that lessons based on principles of PBL methodology can become

an excellent tool for students to empower themselves in the construction of their own meaningful and useful knowledge. That is, to apply learning in their own life, their immediate environment, and further afield according to their needs.

State of The Art

There are different studies aimed at describing the impact of the project-based learning approach on students' perceptions regarding the English learning as a foreign language. The conclusions refer situations and features that influence the learning process in a positive way. This is the case of a study carried out in Ioannina, Greece, by Iakovos Tsiplakides (2009). After the implementation of the PBL approach in a foreign context, he reported that students improved the four skills in English because they were more active in the performance of activities. They were given the opportunity to use their knowledge in real and meaningful situations, which enhanced their communicative competencies. The researcher also pointed out that students demonstrated increased self-esteem and motivation for learning.

Similarly, the conclusions of a study carried out in a university in Japan, by Ibrahim Farouck (2016) focused on identifying the effect of project-based learning approach on the motivation to use the language for communicative purposes. It describes how the students affirm that they gained confidence to communicate with peers using the English language during the development of projects instead of the use of textbooks. Another conclusion describes that students became more independent in the use of materials and in the use of learning strategies.

Another study conducted by Leung (2005), at the University of Hong Kong, attempted to investigate whether project-based learning could change learners' attitudes towards autonomous learning. The study concluded that, after being exposed to PBL approach, there was evidence of a positive change in learners' attitudes towards autonomous learning; students' dependence on

their teacher was reduced; student awareness regarding their responsibility to learn was increased and they showed more acceptance for corrections from peers as a way to work on difficulties, resulting in better learning. In general, the researcher concluded that the changes mentioned showed important autonomous learning behaviors.

In a paper presented by Güven & Valais (2014), entitled “PBL: A Constructive Way Toward Learner Autonomy” they describe a qualitative research with the aim of determining students’ attitudes toward PBL implementation after identifying a lack of functional language use at the School of Foreign Languages at Selçuk University. After the implementation of the PBL approach, the researchers were able to conclude that most of the students liked working collaboratively to develop a product. In addition, they describe PBL as one of the methods used in the constructivist classroom, meaning that “students learn by making connections between what they already know and what they potentially can learn through various processes, under the guidance of teachers who help students attain their intellectual identity” (Güven & Valais, 2014, p.188). These findings reveal that Project-Based Learning could be used as a means to guide learners towards autonomous learning.

In Colombia, a study conducted by Castañeda (2014) aimed to describe to what extent Project-Based Learning keeps students motivated to learn English. The study was carried out in a rural school with eighth-grade students with low motivation to learn English, which the researcher associated with bad experiences and the low significance of English in students’ lives, amongst others. The conclusions made by the researcher revealed that project-based learning contributes to enhancing both, motivation and improvement in coexistence because working in a group promotes values like self-confidence, cooperation, and tolerance. The researcher also pointed out that the connection between English learning and the students’ context resulted in

students perceiving English as a need, suggesting meaningful learning, as they are able to use English for communicative purposes.

Concerning group work, a study carried out by Criollo, Parra and Romero (2016) in a school in Bogotá, concludes that it was possible to promote some of the characteristics stated in the collaborative work. It also describes how the students changed their perception regarding what implies working with others to achieve the proposed objectives at the beginning of the project. These conclusions suggest that working with projects can involve students in a compromise to help each other and favors their learning and others.

Based on the conclusions and findings described in the previous studies, it is necessary to mention that motivation is one of the important characteristics in all of them, for achieving positive results. However, few describe the impact that the use of the PBL approach can have on the students' perceptions, that is to say, the change of thought or paradigms that they have concerning the learning and use of English beyond the classroom. This is a crucial component in motivation because, if students feel that what they are learning is not important to them, they are not going to focus or put effort or resources into that task, activity or project because they are not motivated enough. This is why this research aims at the use the PBL approach in lessons, in order to describe how this intervention strategy can transform the student's thinking regarding English learning, and at the same time, to identify changes in their performance as learners, that in the end allows them to show positive and meaningful results.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Once the constructs used in this research, have been presented, in light of existing theory and after the state-of-the-art, the current chapter describes the elements, components, and procedures carried out as part of research development. First the type of study and the characteristics concerning to context and participants; next the vision of the curriculum, language and classroom; teacher and students' roles and finally data collection instruments and procedures.

Type of Study

This study is described as an action research, taking into account that it proposes an interventive action with the aim of provoking reflection on the English teaching-learning process where a problem is identified in order to improve teaching practices and student learning. As mentioned by Reason & Bradbury (2001), action research is “an interactive inquiry process that balances problem-solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes, thus enabling future predictions concerning personal and organizational change” (Cited in Franch & Soffer, 2013, p.5). Mills (2011) indicates that this tool “Provides professionals with new knowledge and understanding on how to improve educational practices or solve significant problems in classrooms and schools” (Cited in Gregory, 2013, p.1). This action research study will give the researcher the opportunity to reflect on her educational practice and use the information and findings from her own close context to improve her teaching process and produce a positive change in everyday practices.

Stephen Kemmis (1981) describe a model of the cyclical nature of the Action Research process. “A cycle with four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, where the central

question is: How can I help my students improve the quality of their learning?" (cited in Nugent et al. 2012, p.18). Follow this model, this action research process starts with the identification of a problem; then, a plan is devised and implemented. This is the part of the process where the interventive action takes place. After implementing the plan, it is necessary to observe whether the process works well or not and make the necessary adjustments for future interventions. This involves observation, questionnaires, and interviews through are collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher develops this process in her own context, to describe how students' negative perceptions can be positively transformed by using the strategy of Project-Based Learning and how this strategy could empower students in own knowledge construction and acquisition.

Characteristics of the Context and Participants

The school where this research is carried out is a public institution located in the rural area of a town called Maní, a municipality in the department of Casanare, quite far from big cities. There are some difficulties with the educational service according to the municipal development plan "Maní, 2012-2015," which describes:

Educational institutions in the rural area were identified as having problematic situations such as poor infrastructure in most, a deficit in the number of classrooms, sanitary units, water wells, dormitories in boarding schools, electricity, and availability of drinking water, resulting in low quality in the provision of education, discomfort to the educational community and risk of disease. There are also deficiencies in staffing, availability of internet and telecommunication services, staff and school transportation shortages (Alcaldía de Maní, 2012, p. 14).

This research is applied to the group of seven eleventh grade students graduating in 2016. Their English level is low (A1) according to the test “Saber 11”. They range between the ages of 14 and 20 years old and mostly belong to families from the village. In the institution, three hours are assigned weekly for English teaching.

In secondary school, the questionnaire applied as a diagnosis showed that students point out that the use of the target language is only for academic purposes and not in real situations, which implied that students study English but they do not learn it. Despite this, it was also noted that these students have common likes and interests, which can be used as an advantage using interesting topics and meaningful language that involves students in their learning.

That is how the proposed intervention strategy is focused on eliciting self-direction and empowering learners, so they will become conscious of their responsibility for learning, not only in the current situation as students but, mainly, for their futures.

Vision of Curriculum

The curriculum for the area of English at this School is based on the concept given by the program Colombia Bilingüe in the document “Suggested Curriculum Structure”: “the suggested structure is a proposal that each school, considering its institutional autonomy, analyze carefully and make appropriate decisions for its implementation” (MEN, 2016, p.13). As it is framed in the adoption of standards given by the Ministry of Education. It proposes a curriculum mainly based on the PBL methodology: “with respect to teaching-based learning in projects, it is proposed that students participate actively in the planning, development, and evaluation of a project that is in accordance with the needs of the world today” (MEN, 2016, p.21).

This implies the development of tasks and activities adapted to the particular context, which engage students in projects that make them feel motivated to use the target language to

work in creating alternatives and solutions to problematic situations that happen in their environment, in order to involve students at the center of the learning process.

Therefore, for this study, the curriculum will be based on guidelines from Ministry of Education but adapted to students' needs and the context in question. Thus suggesting a flexible curriculum that can accept ideas from the students regarding, for instance, topics to work on, or a type of assessments that foster self-reflection. The curriculum must also give the opportunity to students to control their own learning progress using the teacher's guide to help them think and act as experts.

Vision of Language

The intervention strategy proposed in this study raises a number of activities aimed at transforming the negative perception that students have by using language in real situations and with actual significance for them. So, within the learning process, language must become a vehicle for learning, framed in the concept of the standard. As cited by the Ministry of Education in – the “Estándares básicos de competencias en inglés”:

As in other areas, the standards of English are clear criteria that also serve as a reference point to establish what students know about the language and what they should know how to do with it in a given context (MEN, 2006, p.11).

In the context of this research, the intervention strategy based on the PBL approach could transform the negative perception of students toward the target language. As pointed out by Abdullah (1998) “PBL can positively support language instruction from the Constructivist perspective because language learners develop their understanding of target language conventions through involvement in the kinds of language activity found in real life, not by

learning lists of rules” (p.2). Students will thus be able to use English to communicate and share ideas with others in a more confident way to interact with their peers and teachers both in the classroom and outside it, given that language use through projects could involve the whole community.

Vision of the Classroom

The classroom must be a dynamic environment where students can exchange ideas and build knowledge through interaction and cooperation among members of the group, working on the solution of an identified problem and carrying out tasks, which are meaningful to the lives of the students. This is described by B.G. Wilson (1995), who defines the learning environment as “a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities” (p.5). This may include discussions, negotiation, self-reflection, and scaffolding, amongst others, developed by the participants during the learning process. It is thus necessary, at this point, to consider the different functions and roles that both the teacher and the learner have during the learning process.

Adapting or transforming the conditions of a simple classroom into a learning environment where resources, tools and support are based on students, as the center of the process, is an efficient way to optimize the use of resources. During the learning process, values such as responsibility concerning individual performance and group tasks, tolerance for different opinions and respect for differences between people are promoted to foster good social interaction.

The Role of Teachers and the Role of Students

PBL approach, suggests that participants in the learning process must take on different functions and roles; a teacher must become a guide or coach who scaffolds the process and fosters self-reflection, while students must become self-directed learners, who control their own learning. Both must remain focused on the development of tasks and activities, aimed for the delivery and presentation of a final product that describes the proposed solution to an identified problem and, at the same time, is evidence of the learning acquisition. Regarding the teacher's role, Laffey, Tupper, Musser, & Wedman (1997) suggest, "coaching necessarily involves responses that are situated in the learner's task performance" (cited in Reigeluth, 1999, p.233). In the same way, constructivist theory points out that teachers must constantly encourage students to assess how the activity is helping them gain understanding and construct knowledge.

Given that in this research, the teacher also acts as the researcher, it is pertinent to describe how this role is performed during the process. The teacher-researcher must simultaneously act as participant and observer, conducting research in her own classroom and designing intervention strategies according to the need for analysis. She also designs the tools for collecting and analyzing data. However, taking into account that "the main role, is to nurture local leaders (students) to the point where they can take responsibility for the process (learning)" (O'Brien, R., 2001). The teacher-researcher must also act as a facilitator of the process, providing continuous feedback and scaffolding students' performance, creating space for learners to self-reflect concerning the learning process and in the same way, the teacher-researcher reflects on her own teaching practice.

Data Collection Instruments

As mentioned before, within the functions of the teacher-researcher, in action research, the design of the tools for collecting data plays an important role, because it allows one to gather information which then becomes the data that supports and validates the findings and hypotheses in order to answer research questions and meet stated objectives. As pointed out by Johnson (2012) “the goal of action research is to understand some element of your classroom by collecting data. Data are any form of information, observations, or facts that are collected or recorded” (p.1). The data collection instruments for this intervention were selected according to the objectives of the study; such as those that directly gather the thoughts and reflections of the students and the teacher-researcher in each stage of the intervention strategy: interviews were carried out, a teacher’s field diary and student journals were kept.

Interviews and questionnaires.

As an initial stage, a questionnaire was applied to secondary students to explore and make a diagnosis concerning the context of the research. Then, in order to describe the impact of the intervention strategy, two interviews were administered to students participating in the research, to identify and analyze their perceptions and opinions concerning English learning, both before and after the intervention. Kvale (1996) regards interviews as “... an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (p.14).

Semi-structured interviews were applied during this study taking into account that the number of participants allowed for interaction between researcher and students. In the same way,

flexibility in conducting questions was vital in order to obtain relevant information for the study from the students' point of view.

The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation (Corbetta, 2003, cited in Tavakoli, 2012, p. 579).

In the pre-stage interview, participants in the research asked some questions to diagnose the current perception they had regarding their use of English language and their previous experiences with the English learning process. The questions were divided into three aspects: first, the learning context whose purpose was to identify how students described their current learning situation, regarding the materials, methodology, teacher, etc. Second, the learners' attitudes: it was expected to know, how they described themselves as learners; and third, regarding meaningful learning, which aimed at finding out expectations regarding learning English. There were 17 open-ended questions formulated to get descriptive answers (See Appendix B). This interview was validated by pre-testing one student from the group of the target population in the research, which allowed, while answers were given, for the researcher to identify questions that were unclear for students. Others had to be modified because the information was not relevant or useful to the investigation.

The final interview (See Appendix D) was applied to the participants after implementation. Students answered the questions posed by the teacher-researcher, who recorded the information. Students were free to add information to clarify or explain the responses. This

process served to contrast the impact of the lessons based on PBL methodology on their English-learning perceptions and how this process, empowered them to achieve meaningful learning of the English language. This post-stage interview helped to determine the effectiveness of the intervention strategy. It explored concepts such as the PBL methodology (eight open-ended questions), the English-learning process (six open-ended questions) and perceptions toward English language use (six open-ended questions). Open-ended questions were used because they allowed students to feel free to answer questions from their point of view and to describe different situations, even beyond the given question, which resulted in important information and conclusions emerging, regarding the intervention strategy. As cited by Foddy, (1993), “close-ended questions limit the respondent to the set of alternatives being offered, while open-ended questions allow the respondent to express an opinion without being influenced by the researcher” (p.127). It is thus possible to affirm that this interview allowed learners the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

Field notes.

The teacher-researcher recorded notes from contacts, interactions, and observations with and around students, during each stage of the intervention strategy, as part of her role as observer. All aspects and information pertaining to research questions and the proposed objectives, such as students’ opinions, attitudes, behaviors, performance in tasks and activities, materials used, questions and/or requests from students before, during and after each session were duly noted in a field diary. According to Schwandt (2015), “Field notes refer to notes created by the researcher during the act of qualitative fieldwork to remember and record the behaviors, activities, events, and other features of an observation” (cited in University of Southern California, 2017). In addition, Ahmed, Opoku & Aziz (2016), state that “Observation

is, in some part, an intuitive process which allows individuals to collect information about others by viewing their actions and behaviors in their natural surroundings” (p.216).

For this study, observations of the process were registered on a form designed by the teacher-researcher (See Appendix F). The observations also led the researcher to reflect on important issues emerging throughout the process, as well as record her insights and thoughts. Observations helped construct the conclusions of the study as, throughout the intervention, the findings gave a vision of what was expected to happen according to the research objectives.

Student reflections: Learners’ diary.

Given that the aims of this research are regarding the change in the negative perception of students towards English language and the way in which they could be empowered for self-learning using PBL lessons, it was relevant and necessary to encourage self-reflection in order to directly obtain from students their thoughts, reflections, ideas, experiences etc. According to Bailey and Ochsner (1983):

A diary study in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching is an account of a second language experience, as recorded in a first-person journal. The central characteristic of diary studies is that they are introspective: the diarist investigates his own teaching and learning (cited in McKay, 2006, p.67).

That is to say, that all the information, which could reveal what, was occurring with students during the intervention strategy was collected and developed. Student reflections for this study were collected in a learner’s diary form designed by the teacher-researcher, Appendix G, which showed the perceptions regarding the learning process after finishing each one of the different stages of the project. On this form, participants were asked for their views regarding their own progress, strengths, strategies used, and opportunities for improvement while carrying

out the activities. As mentioned by Rogers (1969). “It also encourages independent learning – you have to write your own journal and because you ‘own’ the learning, it is likely that it will be more meaningful to you” (Cited in Moon, 2010, p.6). Therefore, it is important to mention that it served as a tool to introduce students to the awareness of their responsibility for becoming self-directed learners, given that although the information was gathered in forms designed by the teacher-researcher, students were given the time and freedom to write down their views, opinions and feelings concerning the learning process.

Data Collection Procedures

Before the research started, a questionnaire (in Spanish) was applied to all secondary students (70 persons), (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained 26 questions concerning experiences in learning English, the learning context, expectations, attitudes, and perceptions of students towards the use of the target language. Each student had to complete a questionnaire form. This questionnaire was administered in one-hour sessions with each grade of secondary during a week according to the class schedule.

This helped the researcher to confirm facts and characteristics based on her pedagogical practice as English teacher at the focused school. In short, information gathered during this stage became the starting point for the description of the problem in this investigation, as it was evident that students’ perceptions had a negative impact on the English learning process because they reflected a gap between the teacher’s expectations and those of the students. In other words, there was a difference between what the teacher wanted to teach and what the students wanted to learn.

Once the research started, two interviews were applied only to the participants (seven eleventh grade students). An initial one before the intervention (see Appendix B) and a final

interview after the intervention (see Appendix D). Both, the first and the final interview were carried out in class sessions of three hours each one. During the application time, students were encouraged to be alone to answer the questions because in some cases they tended to answer with the words said by their classmates, therefore, the teacher-researcher had to elicit answers using other words or readdressing the question. Each student answered all the questions proposed; however, some provoked new ones with important information. The teacher-researcher made the records and wrote down facts like behaviors, feelings – that is to say, not just the information from the questions but also from the whole context of the interview activity. The same methodology was used in the second interview as that of the first one: face-to-face interaction, teacher-researcher asked the student the proposed questions and she recorded responses and comments on the form.

The teacher journal (see Appendix F) and the learner's diary (see Appendix G) were completed after each work session in order to record important information regarding the development of the tasks and activities. In addition, opinions, perceptions and thoughts from participants during or immediately after the session was over; otherwise, the participants could forget some important information or facts that occurred during the session. Ten minutes were given, before finishing the session, to allow both students and teacher to complete the form designed.

Design and validation of the instruments and procedures

Data collection instruments were an important part of the research, given that they provided all the necessary information to support responses to the research questions and the accomplishment of the proposed objectives. Therefore, these instruments were designed focused on aspects and issues concerning the investigation. Interviews allowed one to get real and

authentic data from the views of the participants, as well as the observations and reflections that were recorded at the same time as when actions occurred or immediately after, to avoid a potential loss of information that could benefit the research.

Regarding validity, as stated by Burns (1999):

It is an essential criterion for evaluating the quality and acceptability of (a) research. Internal validity is a confirmation of the correctness of the study design. Pilot testing of instruments is a procedure to enable the researcher to make modifications to an instrument based on results. External validity is the extent to which the results of the study can reflect similar outcomes elsewhere, and can be generalized to other populations or situations (cited in Diether, 2016, p.1).

Internal validity of the instruments, (interviews), in this study was determined by a piloting process, in which a student was randomly selected from the class list to complete the questions from the interview. From this, the appropriate adjustments were made in terms of language selection and clarity of the questions. For example, it was necessary to change some of the items that were not relevant to the research, such as in the “learning context” section, time dedicated to English class, because this did not provide information that could serve the study.

External validity was made established through a triangulation process where information from the instruments was organized and analyzed. This resulted in many common data, meaning that similar facts and information were repeatedly collected by the different data collection instruments. Once this process was carried out, the next step was to analyze the information in light of the objectives and research questions.

Data analysis in this research was performed using Grounded Theory as the framework of analysis, taking into account that the research question is focused on student’s own perceptions

as a response to the intervention strategy. According to Creswell (2009), grounded theory “is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher derives a general abstract theory of a process action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (p. 229). In other words, the focus of this research is to get directly from students the information necessary to identify, describe and understand a situation or phenomenon which is given in the learning process and framed by everyday life experiences and valuing participants’ perspectives. The present study follows a model proposed by Corbin and Strauss (1990), which describes that:

The first step in coding the data is the open coding process. First, the researcher assigns all meaningful quotations to a higher-level major category of information. Subsequently, the researcher then organizes these categories further through axially coding. It means that the open codes are analyzed to uncover the core phenomenon as well as the categories around the core phenomenon such as categories that influence the central phenomenon (...), strategies for addressing the phenomenon, contextual and intervening conditions shaping the strategies and consequences of undertaking the strategies. The final coding step consists of selective coding which refers to ‘the process by which all categories are unified around a “core” category, and categories that need further explication are filled-in with descriptive detail (cited in Johnson, 2015, p. 263).

Taking into account this description, all the gathered information was analyzed, classified and organized, using an Excel™ format, which allowed one to create relations, compare and identify categories and facts to help support the possible responses to the research questions and objectives.

Ethical Considerations

In a qualitative study, the procedures for the protection of human participants should be stated. Students were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and they were free to participate in this research. They were told about the role they would perform and they were aware that the information gathered by the different instruments was confidential and only for use in the investigation with the purpose to develop the planned research. Care was taken to ensure that the participants fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that participation would be voluntary. A statement was made that confidentiality of recovered data would be maintained at all times, and identification of participants would not be possible either during or after the study.

For this research, the students were informed about their participation and they agreed to sign an informed consent. Two forms were used: one for those students older than 18 years and another for parents of underage students. In the same way, a letter was addressed to the director of the Institution asking for consent to apply the research to students of eleventh grade (see Appendix V, W, and X).

Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

Throughout this chapter, the application of the intervention strategy is described. It was planned for the eleventh-grade students, who are level A1 in the use of English as a foreign language according to the CEFR. The intervention strategy corresponds to the use of PBL lessons, in order to describe the impact on the perceptions of students towards the use of the language and also to observe how, through these lessons, students were able to create and apply self-learning strategies that allowed them to become self-directed learners.

Instructional Design

The intervention strategy was then carried out, based on the diagnosis from the questionnaire applied before starting the research and the first interview of the participants in the intervention. The intervention strategy was focused on transforming negative perceptions and empowering students by involving them in activities and tasks that were related to their real context, as well as relevant to their life and future. It consisted of the development of lessons based on the PBL approach, which allowed carried out a collaborative project. Given that PBL suggests that projects must define a final product to present findings and conclusions to the community, a bulletin board was chosen as the final product, which consists of a mural fixed in a visible and common place of the school with the purpose of publishing and communicating important information to all the members of the school community. The bulletin board became a channel through which students could share ideas, opinions and important facts, with the all the members of the school.

The collaborative project was carried out in nine sessions organized according to the stages of a project within the PBL approach. Two work sessions dedicated to planning the

project activities; three sessions to searching for and classifying the information; three sessions to writing, designing and producing texts, and one session to assessing the project.

After the necessary analysis of the data obtained during the first stage of the implementation strategy and using the project-based approach, eleventh-grade students planned and developed a collaborative project. With English as the target language, the students presented a final product related to the project. It involved the performance of activities and tasks during nine sessions of work, according to lesson plans and with the guidance of the teacher-researcher. During the development of the lesson plans, students worked on both individual and group activities and at the end of each session were encouraged to self-reflect on their performance.

According to Dornyei (2001), project work encourages motivation, fosters group cohesiveness, increases one's expectancy of success in the target language, achieves a rare synthesis of academic and social goals", reduces anxiety, increases the significance of effort relative to ability, and promotes effort-based attributions" (cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.114).

In the PBL approach, students are placed at the center of the process and are encouraged to negotiate topics, tasks, presentation of a final product and assessments because they must become responsible for their learning. At the same time, the teacher must act as a guide and scaffold the process, supporting activities and tasks with materials, explanations, tools, information, and resources that facilitate knowledge construction.

Action Plan and Lesson Plan Description

This section describes the development of the intervention strategy. The stages of the project are outlined below, as well as the activities carried out before, during and after the intervention. Observations are made through this whole stage in order to give the teacher the

opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the intervention. This reflection allows her to implement changes or make adjustments based on the experience gained from the intervention strategy.

Pre-intervention Stage.

This stage corresponds, in the first place, to the diagnosis made through a questionnaire and the first interview of participants in the intervention. This helped to confirm some situations identified by the researcher during her pedagogical practice as the English teacher in the school where the intervention took place.

After diagnosing and taking into account the facts described above, as well as, the characteristics of the PBL approach, it was proposed to use lessons based on this methodology as the intervention strategy. In this stage, the Project-Based Learning approach was introduced to the participants involved in the research and in the same way, the project to work on was socialized with them. Students had many expectations although they did not have previous experience working using the PBL approach.

As previously stated, the project involved the students of the eleventh grade in the second semester of 2016, and the time for the development of the project was during the class sessions. Students of eleventh grade were responsible to use the bulletin board as a means to share information and as a tool to motivate all the students of the school to use the English language to communicate.

While-Stage.

Students developed the project called “Paint your future” with the driving question for promoting student reflection: “How do my decisions influence my life project?” As suggested by Thomas (2000), “PBL projects are focused on questions or problems that ‘drive’ students to

encounter (and struggle with) the central concepts and principles of a discipline” (p.3). Students, through a brainstorm, identified some themes related to the academic context, which were important to work on.

The final product in this project, as was previously mentioned, was the publishing of the bulletin board. The published information included such things as ideas, thoughts, suggestions and even advice, from students to students, in order to provoke and encourage reflection concerning self-awareness and responsibility for the future.

The project was shaped according to stages outlined by Kriwas (1999), which may be used for successful project implementation as follows:

- Speculation involves choosing a topic and discussing it within the group, including the teacher. The idea for the topic may be inspired by the curriculum or a topic of current affairs, for example (Brinia, 2006, cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.114).
- Designing the project involves forming groups and assigning roles whereby tasks may be delegated, according to one’s responsibilities within the group. This stage also includes decision-making regarding the methodology to be used, sources of information that may prove useful and activities that will take place (Fragoulis, 2008, cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.114).
- Conducting the project, in short, requires displaying the final product. This may be done in school or within the wider community and aims to inspire students, teachers and even others outside the school community to think, discuss and act. In this way, a Project becomes much more than just another school assignment – it becomes a social intervention, as it flows between the schools, its community and, in fact, real life (Fragoulis, 2008, cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.115).

Table 3
Project structure and timeline

PBL STAGES	ACTIVITIES	PRODUCTS	ASSESSMENT
Date: July 26 th Speculation (Session 1)	INDIVIDUAL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection, regarding participation in the discussion;
	Use of previous knowledge, and experiences.	✓ Topic and ideas for working on	
Dates: August 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th and 23 rd Designing the project activities (Sessions 2-3-4-5)	GROUP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher feedback; • Rubric for group brainstorm
	Discussion about scholar topics for working on.		
Dates: September 6 th , 13 th , 20 th and October 11 th Conducting the project activities (Sessions 6-7-8)	GROUP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Assessment; • Teacher feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of the workgroup and assignation of roles; • Topic investigation; • Description of Methodology and development of class guides; • Planning activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Workgroup; ✓ Roles; ✓ Information about topic; ✓ Products of the work guides; ✓ Student's journals. 	
Dates: October 18 th and 25 th Evaluation (Session 9)	INDIVIDUAL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Feedback and comments. • Rubric for individual assessment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting the publishing; • Checking to make adjustments; • Designing the final version of the work to be published; • Completing students' journals. 	✓ Presentation of the bulletin board.	
	GROUP		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration and presentation of the final product (publishing the bulletin board). 		
	GROUP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubric for the bulletin board. • Peer assessment form.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group discussion about the final product; • Group discussion about group and individual performance. 		

Note: by the author

- Finally, the evaluative stage refers to assessing activities carried out by students. This includes evaluating whether the aims and goals laid out at the beginning of the project have been achieved, the carrying out of the process itself and its final product (Brinia, 2006, cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.115).

The teacher carried out a scaffolding process during the project in order to support student learning. The teacher acted as a guide, helping the students control their learning process, clarifying aspects of tasks and encouraging students to develop tasks using their skills and capacities. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that:

There are two parts of a learner's developmental level: the "actual developmental level" and the "potential developmental level". The zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (cited in Lombardi, 2017, p.14).

During the activities and tasks, it was observed that students asked for the teacher's help when they did not understand concepts, while using grammar rules, giving feedback and suggestions concerning the development of tasks and activities. As a guide, the teacher was also responsible for providing materials, tools, and resources as guides or formats to work on; that is, scaffolding was carried out throughout the process to support students' learning during the different stages of the project, which are henceforth described in detail.

Speculation.

This stage was two sessions (See Appendix H). In this stage, the students presented ideas concerning the design of the bulletin board and the information, which could be posted according to the topic. Students had to be creative and took into account the target population or readers of the bulletin board. This stage represented what students already knew; it means that by brainstorming, the previous knowledge was activated using what students knew about the topic of the project to generate ideas for its development. The objectives of the project were stated and the final product described. In this session, students watched a power-point presentation and images of different bulletin boards. The vocabulary of the theme, “Making decisions and setting goals,” was introduced, with a matching exercise. Students decided the type of information required the design and structure of the bulletin board and finally, feedback was carried out between students and the teacher about adjustments, questions or doubts concerning the elaboration of the bulletin board.

Designing the Project Activities.

Activities were carried out during this stage, such as workgroup formation and role assignments, topic investigation, description of the methodology used, and activity planning (See Appendix I). Initially, during the first session, the seven students from eleventh grade formed the work group. Roles were then assigned, taking into account likes, skills, and capacities of each one of the members of the group. The assigned roles were: the leader, who was responsible for encouraging the development of activities. The facilitator, who moderated team discussion, kept the group on task, and distributed work; the recorder, who took notes summarizing team discussions and decisions, and kept all necessary records; the reporter, who served as group spokesperson to transmit information to the classmates or instructor, summarizing the group’s

activities and/or conclusions; and the runner, who got needed materials and was the liaison between the group and the teacher. Considering that all participants should be involved in the development of the project and that there were seven students in the group two students were assigned as recorders and two as runners to support the more demanding activities.

The investigation activity refers to the research done by students individually and in the group through discussions concerning the main theme for the bulletin board: “Making decisions and setting goals”. This represented what students needed to know regarding grammar, sentence structure, concepts, and vocabulary on the topic for publication on the bulletin board. For three sessions, the students worked on collecting information and doing activities to practice the elaboration of the final product.

In the first session, students worked on the guide called, “Who am I”? (See Appendix L) The aim was to foster self-recognition. First, they wrote and presented a poem describing some personal issues about themselves in order to use known vocabulary applied to their own life. Then they were introduced to the process and information that could describe the different aspects of a person – such as family, personality, likes and dislikes and abilities. Students used a format given by the teacher to describe their own information. The final product was a personal poster called “All about me” and the assessment was made on the poster exhibition with peer comments and teacher feedback.

During the second session, students worked on the lesson, “Decisions,” which was focused on promoting reflection concerning students’ decisions (See Appendix M). First, they participated in a mini forum, where they shared some decisions they had made in their lives and the impact on the present. Students had to use English for this discussion. To introduce the topic to the students a presentation was made about what a decision is, what it involves and the process

to make a decision. Students also searched for information on the Internet, but as the internet connection was not very good, the teacher supplied most of the information. However, students were able analyze, classify, summarize and construct knowledge from it. They had to use the learning acquired to complete a “making decisions” worksheet and design a simple mind map with decisions they are going to make after graduating from school. This was the final product in this session and the assessment was carried out via feedback and comments from peers and teacher.

The third session as part of the investigation stage was called “Setting goals/plans.” (See Appendix N) In the initial part of this session, students played a matching game regarding making plans and the associated vocabulary. The presentation of the topic was performed with information about the definition of what a plan is and the process for setting plans. In the production, students completed a setting plans worksheet, which was the final product for this session, and the assessment was formative with comments from the group and the teacher.

Conducting the Project Activities.

Following the PBL methodology, stage three involves the presentation of the project. The design of the information to be published on the bulletin board was carried out at this stage. Once students had acquired new knowledge, they were able to use it in the elaboration of the final product. Students needed to work during three sessions on products as evidence of their learning or the outcome of knowledge construction (See Appendix J). It represented what students were able to do with their learning. They decided what information could be published and shared with all the school community, then students made the design of the article, the draft and final product the bulletin board was erected with revised versions of informative texts from the students. This stage was carried out in the following three sessions:

Session number one, “Organization:” (See Appendix O) First, students played a matching game with text type vocabulary; then information about the type of texts and structures was introduced, for analysis by the students. They interacted with their classmates to find out concepts and meanings. Also, they started to classify the information that they already had from the investigation stage to decide what type of text they wanted to work on and publish. During the production stage, students had to organize the selected information into a text; this text was the final product for this session. The texts were shared with the other team members to avoid repeating information and to receive comments from them.

Session number two (See Appendix P), “Drafting a text to publish:” The initial activity of this session was to read some published text as a writing model; then students identified the purpose of the texts, the structure and the process for designing a text. With this information, students made an outline of the text to publish, taking into account the purpose and the audience of the text. The final product of each student was the outline of the texts; the assessment was performed using comments and feedback for adjustments.

Session number three (See Appendix Q), “Writing a final version:” Students started identifying the punctuation used in reading, then, they revised the punctuation in their texts and wrote the final version. In this stage, they worked creatively to design texts that caught the attention of all the community, (images, type of letter, design etc.). In this section, students also presented the bulletin board. They worked on as a group to adapt and decorate the mural where the bulletin board was placed (see Appendix Y). The assessment of the bulletin board was made using an adapted rubric from the internet (See Appendix R).

Evaluation.

The fourth stage in PBL is the Evaluation, Assessment, and Feedback:

This stage was carried out in one session, (See Appendix K), during which students had to give and receive feedback. They assessed the work individually and also as part of a work team.

Initially, students talked about their experiences and feelings after observing the bulletin board published. Then they had access to information concerning what a rubric is, its purpose, and how it is used. They adapted a basic rubric to assess their own work with the guidance of the teacher. Students proposed items they considered as part of the evaluation of their work and the teacher helped to organize the ideas. The final product turned out to be a rubric for individual assessment and for assessing the bulletin board.

During the project's development, the interaction between the students was necessary and important, as well as teacher-student interaction, as it promoted collaboration in the tasks and activities. Given that the work group had to present the project with the participation of all members, responsibilities were both individual and as a group. Students assessed the group work using the peer assessment form (see Appendix U).

At the end of each session, students were encouraged to complete their student's journal in order to record all their experiences, perceptions and feelings concerning their performance in the activity or task and the advance or progress made in their learning process.

Post-intervention Stage.

After the project was presented to all students of the school, the eleventh-grade students participated in a final interview where they pointed out their reflections regarding the experience of project work and the perceptions concerning the influence that these lessons had on their vision of learning and using English. Then, all the instruments used to collect data were gathered in order to start analyzing the information.

Chapter V: Results and Data Analysis

Taking into account that the objectives in this research were focused on describing the impact of project-based learning on eleventh-grade EFL students' perceptions concerning the English language. At the same time on describing how this methodology might empower students to develop self-learning strategies to achieve meaningful learning of the target language, it is necessary to mention the information that was collected during the research stage. The instruments used were: students' journal, field notes, a questionnaire and interviews. Then the information gathered was triangulated and analyzed in the light of Grounded Theory as a framework of analysis.

Data Management and Procedures for Data Analysis

This information was systematized and organized using the Excel™ tool and then analyzed based on Grounded Theory, given the qualitative nature of the data and the descriptive focus of the research. Strauss and Corbin (1998), describe that in Grounded Theory:

The process of analyzing information begins with the use of analytical tools – such as finding key phrases or words in documents and experimenting with meanings, open coding – ‘the process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data’ (...), axial coding – creating subcategories and associating these with ‘properties and dimensions’ (...) and selective coding – ‘integrating and refining the theory’ (...) by using categories and their associations with subcategories to create a type of case study of a particular sub-phenomenon (cited in Lancaster University, n.d, p.3).

Following the aforementioned process for data analysis, themes within the information were identified, as well as, patterns, categories, and the relations between them to establish

associations. This allowed the teacher-researcher to obtain data that described facts such as individual performance and the perception of the development of activities, during the intervention strategy as a whole, in order to support the findings, which answered the research questions.

The data collected via different means – such as interviews, field notes and student diaries- was rigorously analyzed and using triangulation to corroborate the findings from qualitative data. The first stage of this analysis was entitled “Open Coding.” Information obtained from the respective instruments was revised and re-read and then in the light of the questions proposed for this research, labels were tentatively created for themes that summarized this information, based on the emerging meanings of the same data. In this first step, ten codes were identified:

- Interesting topics that motivate learning;
- Applying learning in real-life situations;
- Student Performance;
- Student behaviors;
- Autonomy and self-efficacy;
- Collaborative work;
- Scaffolding;
- Fostering values;
- Bulletin board;
- The importance of English.

Table 4

Core Categories

Research questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do project-based learning lessons impact eleventh-grade EFL students' perceptions towards English? • How do the aforementioned lessons empower eleventh-grade EFL students at the focused School to develop self-directed learning strategies? 	
Categories	
1. Connecting English learning with the student context.	2. Developing self-direction.
Subcategories	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 Using real information from students' lives; • 1.2 Identifying likes and interests to work on; • 1.3 Interacting with peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Using reflective assessment; • 2.2 Using scaffolding.

Note: By the author

The second stage – Axial coding – consisted of identifying relationships between the codes established in the previous stage, i.e. observing how the codes were connected to each other. This was done by assigning colors to pairs of themes, according to their affinities and characteristics. Each code was related to its pair, and, finally, after this processes, three categories were identified.

From the third stage- selective coding- two different categories emerged:

1. “Connecting English learning with the Student Context.” It allowed students to keep engaged with the development of the project, as they felt involved in what they were learning.

2. “Developing Self-direction.” It was demonstrated that students were aware of their responsibility in the learning process as they were able to control their progress, identify their capacities and take responsibility for their own learning.

Findings

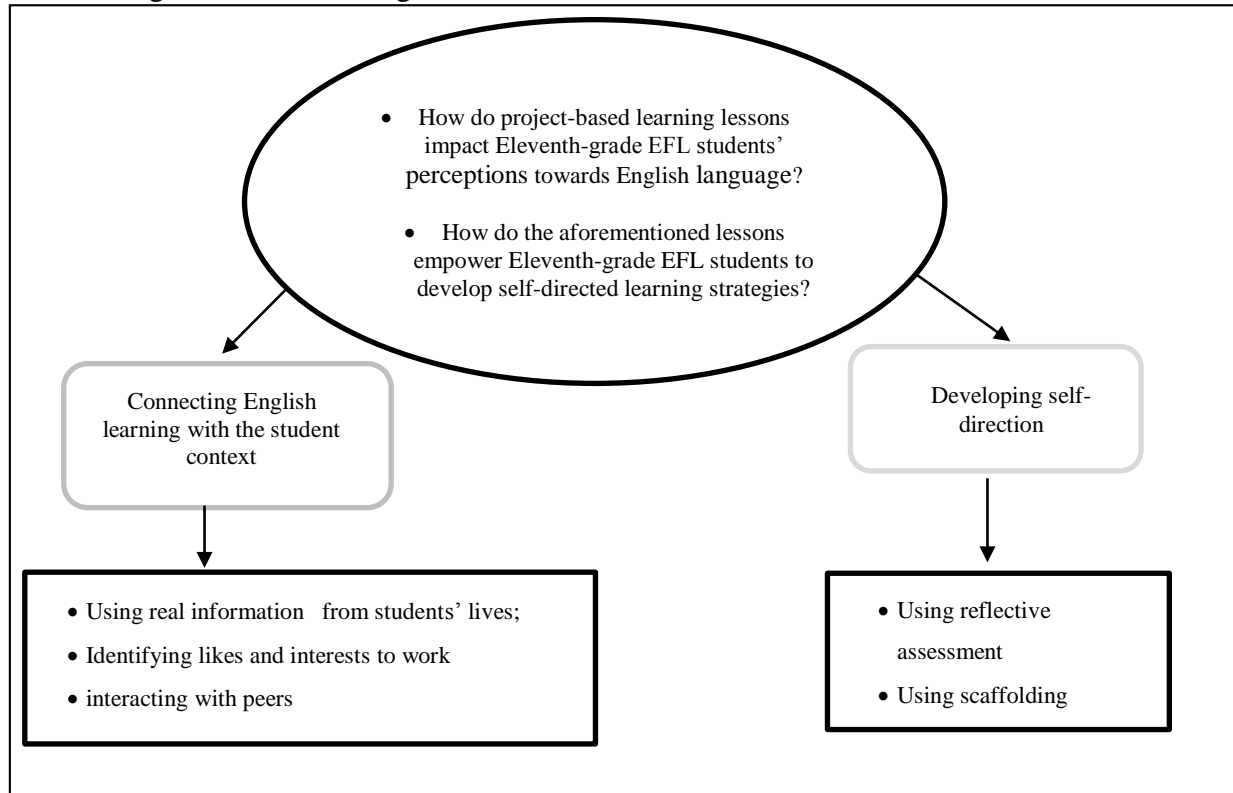
As mentioned above, two categories emerged during the final stage of the data analysis. The first one named “Connecting English Learning with the Student Context”; as it promoted meaningful learning. This category involved subcategories such as: Using Real Information from Students’ Lives, Identifying Likes and Interests to Work on and, Interacting with Peers.

The second category named “Developing Self-direction,” and described how students considered that, with the help of the project; they would develop autonomy and self-efficacy in their work performance. In this category, teacher-researcher identified two subcategories: Using Reflective Assessment, and Using Scaffolding.

Category one: Connecting English Learning with the Student Context.

This category emerged from students’ reflections regarding the use of the language; that is to say, from communicative competence and describes how important it was for students to carry out a project where they were able to use their knowledge in the proposed activities. As pointed by Simpson (2011) “when learners see the language that can be used in their lives and is applicable to their tasks or needs, they can develop their language skills and communicative competence” (p 41). While carrying out activities and tasks, students felt that the target language was used for sharing their thoughts regarding important issues from their life, which piqued their interest in learning.

Figure 1
Categories and sub-categories



Note: by the author.

Here are some of the most relevant comments from the students, regarding their experience working on the projects:

Student 1: *“Excelente porque todos estuvimos interesados y participábamos en las actividades de grupo o individual.”*

In this respect, the teacher-researcher also commented that: “Students had a lot of expectations about the project; they seemed very excited about the challenge to be responsible for driving the development of tasks and activities” (Field notes session 2). It is necessary to point out that although students did not have previous experience with the Project-Based Learning approach, they were very interested in working with this methodology.

Three subcategories emerged from this category: Using Real Information from Student’s Lives, Identifying Likes and Interests to Work on and, Interacting with Peers.

Using real information from students' lives.

This subcategory described the perception of students concerning the use of English to describe facts of their own lives; they felt very confident to speaking about topics relating to what they did in their everyday life and with issues that had to do with their future. This is also pointed out by Markham et al. (2003) who argues that, as learners in PBL are involved in tasks that encourage them to think through multifaceted problems or topics, learners can “know” and “do” in their learning. That is why the teacher-researcher commented that: “*activities were worked with real information from the students' lives.*” “*Students reflections on their lives were motivated during the development of the project*” (Field notes session 7).

From the final interview, concerning the question: “¿De qué forma influyó la temática trabajada en el proyecto, a su aprendizaje?” Students' comments were:

Student3: “*Bueno porque como son cosas de nosotros, entonces las recordamos más.*”

Student 4: “*Excelente porque son cosas que tienen que ver con nosotros.*”

Students recognized that they felt motivated to learn given that, on one hand, they could apply what they learned to everyday situations that were important for them, that is, they were able to adapt the acquired knowledge to their context. On the other hand, students learned to make decisions regarding what they wanted to do and to plan how it was going to be achieved, meaning that they started to take responsibility for taking control of their work and learning. Díaz-Rico contends that “because a project is emergent and negotiated rather than fully planned by the teacher, it encourages students to go beyond the minimum standards of involvement” (2004, p. 1).

In the students' diary in the section, “What did I find interesting?” comments such as the following were found:

Student 6: *“Usamos lo que aprendimos en cosas que son de nuestras propias vidas y que tienen significado para nosotros.”*

Student 4: *“Usar inglés para hablar de cosas que nos suceden a nosotros mismos es muy interesante y aprendemos mejor.”*

In the same way, in the field diary, the teacher-researcher reported that *“students were interested in using what they were learning, in the development of tasks, as the tasks were regarding the topic of the corresponding session, and were focused on practicing, in order to encourage an improvement in students’ competencies.”*

From these data excerpts, it can be said that students agreed that it was more useful and meaningful for them to work on topics which involved real situations, and use what they learned for the development of activities which applied and were relevant to the facts and situations of their surroundings and lives.

Identifying likes and interests to work on.

This subcategory describes that students were more motivated by activities related to their likes and interests because they had to use their own information and each work they did, became part of the vision of their lives. As stated by Kriwas (1999), “a further benefit of working on PBL is that project work progresses according to the specific context and students’ interests” (cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.114). Throughout the project, students had the chance to make decisions concerning, for instance, the tasks and activities involved in presenting the project to the community. In the same way, as roles in the workgroup were assigned according to the students’ interests, work was delegated according to their likes and dislikes – for example, whoever liked to write was assigned the function of taking notes.

Students commented on how comfortable they felt working according to their likes and interests, and how it became an opportunity not only to strengthen their capacities but also to improve their weaknesses in the learning process. They pointed out that, for example:

Student 6 (Student diary, Sesión 7): *“Cuando se trabaja en lo que uno quiere o le gusta se aprende mejor.”*

Student 5 (Student diary, sesión 7): *“Creo que aprendí mejor porque era un tema que nos interesaba.”*

From the final interview administered to students, we can cite the following answers to the question: *“¿De qué forma influyó la temática trabajada en el proyecto, a su aprendizaje?”*

Student 1: *“Es bueno porque aprendemos sobre lo que nos llama la atención.”*

Student 6: *“Cada uno tiene su propia forma de trabajar y cosas diferentes que le llaman la atención.”*

These data excerpts suggest that because students had the opportunity to choose topics for the project, they worked better and were more motivated to do so. They found it more interesting to work using information concerning their own lives. For example, they really enjoyed describing facts about themselves instead of unfamiliar people and issues. This helped them to engage in meaningful learning since it was easier for them to work on topics that are more familiar.

Regarding this aspect, the teacher-researcher observations mentioned that: *“Students were free to choose the topic and other issues concerning the project, guided by the teacher. They were encouraged to work hard to accomplish the objectives, which were negotiated and established by themselves, as they are driving the project. It is evident the compromise and desire to deliver a good final product (Field notes - Session 9).*

This supports the assumption that, when students feel comfortable and involved, it allows them to explore their interests using their skills, which encourages the acquisition or improvement of knowledge. Indeed, the students in this study were more active, interacting with their peers and teacher to receive feedback that helped them to improve their learning. Altogether, they seemed more motivated to use English to communicate their ideas, to the point where errors were seen as opportunities to do better next time.

Interacting with peers.

This pattern highlights that, during the activities, the interaction between the members of the working group was fundamental to the process at hand. This interaction had two important aspects; first to support knowledge construction, and second to support the improvement of social integration. Concerning the latter, it aimed around promoting values and attitudes, which encouraged good relations such as tolerance when somebody disagreed with another's opinion; responsibility in the accomplishment of tasks and functions; respect for others' work and, most importantly, respect for one's peers and teacher as individuals. As is discussed by Gibbs (1995), group work promotes negotiation, communication, respect, and student collaboration. Indeed, Jaques (2000) argues that group work encourages social integration and well-being (cited in Mamas, 2016, p.1).

The following are extracts from students' diaries regarding this subcategory:

Student 3 (Final interview): "*La responsabilidad fue importante para el desarrollo del proyecto.*"

Student 5 (final interview): "*La comunicación fue mejor cuando respetábamos al que estaba hablando.*"

The aforementioned excerpts demonstrate that group work became an excellent tool for promoting a good learning environment by fostering healthy relationships that facilitated and favored knowledge construction among group members.

This subcategory also indicates that interaction with peers allowed students to improve their learning and acquire new knowledge. As cited by constructivist theory, knowledge construction occurs within Vygotsky's (1962) social context that involves student-student and expert-student collaboration on real-world problems or tasks (Cited in Neff, L., n.d.). Throughout the learning process, students demonstrated different levels of performance and skills. They shared endeavours between expert and less-expert participants in their working group; this reflects back to the fact that, sometimes, students are able to carry out tasks individually, without help, but at other times, they are going to need the help from their peers or even from the teacher. This implies that less advanced students can take advantage of the knowledge of more advanced peers and at the same time, these latter ones can also reinforce their skills and learning. Some thoughts and comments from students and the teacher-researcher supporting these assumptions are:

Student 1 (session 7) *“El trabajo en grupo es importante y puedo pedir ayuda cuando la necesito.”*

Student 1 (session 8) *“Con la ayuda de los compañeros y la profesora podemos solucionar dudas.”*

Student 3 (session 7) *“Hay ayuda dentro del grupo y colaboración.”*

Student 5 (session 7) *“Hicimos actividades individuales y en grupo para mejorar nuestro arpendizaje de inglés.”*

Those data excerpts referred to the significance that interaction had for students regarding knowledge acquisition as pointed out by Brown (1994), who asserts that “the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself” (cited in Lin, 2015, p. 22). Students argued that the advantages of working in a group was one of the most important characteristics of PBL lessons, as interactions within the group promoted cooperative learning, defined as group members working together to accomplish shared goals (Guillies, 2007, p. 246). Another definition given by Panitz (1996) describes collaborative learning as a “sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the group’s actions” (p. 3). These definitions were also given by students, although not in such technical vocabulary, but in their own words.

Student 3 (session 7): *“Tenemos roles, responsabilidades y tareas individuales y también en grupo.”*

According to the interview applied after the intervention, students said:

Student 5 *“El grupo trabajó para lograr los objetivos propuestos.”*

Student 3 *“Todos en el grupo sabían lo que necesitaban hacer.”*

These patterns described by students and teacher-researcher proved that in the context of group work, sharing knowledge encouraged and supported the development of tasks and activities. Because the members of the work group had different abilities and capacities, mutual help became a guideline to support any difficulties encountered. Gokhale (1995, p. 22) defines cooperative learning as “an instructional method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal.” In others words groups take advantage of students’ skills and support to enhance those of students with difficulties.

The patterns identified in this sub-category demonstrate that students used the work group as a support that allowed them to develop their self-esteem and confidence. According to

the aforementioned excerpts, social relations favor learning and encourage coexistence regarding work and collaboration between the group members.

Regarding this, Dornyei (2001) states that,

Among other potential benefits, project work encourages motivation, fosters group cohesiveness, increases the expectancy of success in the target language, achieves “a rare synthesis of academic and social goals,” reduces anxiety, increases the significance of effort relative to ability and promotes effort-based attributions (cited in Tsiprakides, 2009, p.114).

These benefits can be associated with the improvement of students regarding the learning process, as interaction and mutual help support and favour dealing with difficult tasks. The teacher-researcher’s observations taken from the field diary reinforced this argument. She reported:

“Students also have support in their group and use the capacities and abilities of others.”

“Students were aware that the work group helps them to improve their learning, as a support.”

“Students investigated and performed proposed activities, as a group or individually.”

“Different skills and capacities were identified among members of the group” (Field notes)

Session 7.

For the teacher-researcher, the importance of group work was evident by the fact that students showed an improvement in the performance of activities and in their knowledge acquisition. While some tasks or activities were difficult for students to do, because of the level of knowledge on the subject they had at that point, using help and guidance of their peers or the teacher, they finally were able to work on them. As Gibbs claimed (2006), “The power of being

included and valued by peers motivates students to actively participate in their own learning” (p.10).

The teacher-researcher also described her observations regarding the social interactions within the group. *“Students are aware of the responsibility of each one and as a team; while interacting with each other, they compromised respect each other, as student Communication was necessary to solve difficulties, while working as a team the group used values as tolerance, respect, cooperation and responsibility for achieving the common objectives of the project”* (Field notes) Session 8.

According to these excerpts, it was evident that communication within the group was important, indeed, necessary to maintain an adequate learning environment. Students recognized that interaction promoted values such as tolerance and respect for others’ opinions. They mentioned that:

Student 1 (Session 7): *“Somos respetuosos y tolerantes trabajando con los compañeros.”*

Student 5 (Session 7): *“Trabajar en grupo somos tolerantes y respetamos las opiniones de otros.”*

Student 4 (Session 8): *“Hubo colaboración, respeto y tolerancia durante las evaluaciones.”*

In general, this category emerged to support the assumption that when students were involved in their learning process they demonstrated more motivation for working as active participants in the achievement of the proposed objectives and in taking responsibility for their learning process.

Category two: Developing Self-direction.

This second category describes how students considered that throughout the project, they would develop autonomy and self-efficacy in their performance. Bandura (1997, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as “the beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.” Put simply, this describes one’s personal opinion of what he or she can or cannot do. Other authors state: “It is about learning how to persevere when one does not succeed” (Pajares, 2005, p. 345). “It is related to individuals’ beliefs about the possibility of successfully performing a given academic task” (Kornilova et al, 2009, p.597); “It is a process in which students’ sense of ability to perform a task influences their success, which in turn contributes to increased effort and persistence” (Aliegro, 2006, p.18). It can be deduced from these quotations that self-efficacy plays an important role in and has an impact on, what students can achieve regarding their learning.

As at first learning English seemed without significance for them, they felt they were unable to learn the target language. Learning autonomy certainly has a part to play, as evidenced by the following citations. “It is the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p.3). “It is the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (Benson, 2001, p. 47); “It is learners’ ability and willingness to make choices independently” (Little, 1996, p.97); “It is a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others as a social, responsible person” (Dam et al., 1990, p.102). Based on these statements, it is possible to argue that autonomy allows students to make decisions about learning. For instance, what is useful or important according to their needs, personal goals or even their likes; decisions concerning what learning strategies are used and even, how the learning process will be controlled, in order to accomplish the proposed objectives are all opportunities to demonstrate and develop autonomy.

From this category, two subcategories emerged: using reflective assessment, and using scaffolding.

Using reflective assessment.

This subcategory concerns students' perceptions regarding the assessments they had to carry out regarding others' work and their own, as well as the impact of fostering self-reflection concerning their performance in the English learning process using PBL lessons. Regarding this, Brinia (2006) defines evaluation as "the assessment of activities from participants and discussion about whether the initial aims and goals have been achieved, the implementation of the process and final products" (cited in Tsiplakides, 2009, p.115). In addition, Chappuis (2005) argues that "Students need to know learning targets and receive regular feedback on their progress toward them" (cited in Bond, 2015, p. 4). The following extracts have been taken from students' diaries and interviews, and highlight students' thinking based on their notions and perceptions concerning reflective assessment:

Student 2: "*Podemos identificar algunos errores en nuestro trabajo y corregirlos*"

(Students' Diary) session 7;

Student 5: "*Recibí correcciones y comentarios para mejorar mi trabajo*" (Students'

Diary) Session 8;

Student 2 "*Usar las correcciones para hacer un mejor trabajo y mejorar el aprendizaje*"

(Students' Diary) Session 9;

Student 4: "*Puedo evaluar mi propio trabajo*" (Students' Diary) Session 9.

Patterns like those mentioned above suggest that students agreed that making and receiving corrections can be transformed into a strategy for improving the performance of tasks and activities because they could identify and correct the error and even avoid its repetition in

new tasks. In the final interview, comments revealed that students became aware of the importance of feedback and assessment to improve their skills in using and learning a language:

Student 5: *“Aprender se volvió más importante que las notas que podíamos tener”* (Final interview);

Student 3: *“Las correcciones y los comentarios fueron necesarios y con esos pudimos hacer un mejor trabajo”* (Final interview);

Student 1: *“Cuando cometíamos un error, esto se convertía en una oportunidad para reforzar lo que estábamos aprendiendo”* (Final interview);

These data excerpts represented the students’ recognition of capacities and difficulties in the English learning process; that is to say, they became more aware of what they could do and what they needed to improve regarding the performance of tasks and activities during the project’s development. This can be related to self-efficacy as previously mentioned. “According to their sense of self-efficacy, learners perform a task satisfactorily, unsuccessfully or extraordinarily. Learners’ beliefs in their ability to perform a task or achieve their goals promote their success in learning a language process” (Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011, p.3). For the teacher-researcher, reflective assessment in the project allowed her record observations as such as:

“Students need to make objective judgments about their performance as part of a group and individually”. (Field notes) Session 7;

“Students were able to give objective judgments for both individual and group work.” (Field notes) Session 8;

“They also evaluated the development of the cooperative project and the impact on the students’ learning” (Field notes) Session 9;

“Students recognize that assessing other’s work is easier than assessing their own. Sometimes it is difficult for them to be objective, so it is necessary for one’s work to be assessed by a peer or teacher, to help identify what can be improved.” (Field notes) Session 9.

These data excerpts demonstrate that, although it was difficult for them when students put their own work through a reflective assessment, they were able to identify strengths and difficulties in their learning processes, and this allowed them to look for actions that helped them improve their performance, proving that they were developing personal learning strategies. As pointed out before, while developing autonomy and self-efficacy, students performed different actions and use resources and tools for supporting their language acquisition. This suggests the concept of learning strategies as “specifications, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners or encouraging oneself to tackle a difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning” (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 63).

The excerpts below are taken from the final survey, learners’ journals and researchers’ field notes and served as evidence of how students who participated in the research performed various actions, which could be defined as learning strategies.

In the students’ diaries, we can find statements such as:

Student 4 (session 5): *“Desarrollamos estrategias personales para mejorar el aprendizaje;”*

Despite students being unfamiliar with the concept of learning strategies, they realized that they were using some of them:

Student 3 (Session 6): *“Usamos algunas estrategias para obtener mejores notas;”*

Student 6 (Session 8): *“Pudimos identificar algunas estrategias que usamos sin darnos cuenta;”*

Student 7 (Session 8): *“Para aprender mejor, me gusta revisar el vocabulario de la clase;”*

Students demonstrated a sense of responsibility in learning during the development of the project, both with the work-group and individually.

Student 5: *“Sabemos que podemos hacer muchas cosas, pero es necesario trabajar duro y comprometidos con lo que hacemos.”*(Final interview);

Working on the project increased students’ self-knowledge, to the extent that they were able to identify and take advantage of their skills and difficulties, to improve them and improve their English.

Student 7: *“Del desarrollo de actividades y tareas conocimos nuestras capacidades y habilidades en el uso del inglés”* (Final interview);

Student 1: *“Aprendimos a conocernos y a ponernos retos en nuestras habilidades en inglés”* (Final interview);

The teacher- researcher’s reflections regarding this were: *“Everyone does their best to achieve the proposed objectives of the project’s development (Session 7).”* *“Students are aware of their progress and capacities”* (Session 7). *“They also have identified their strengths and weaknesses (Session 8).”* *“They know they are able to perform different tasks in the project’s development (Session 8).”* *“Some students are aware they do not have a good attitude in learning English, however, they participate in activities”* (Session 7). *“Knowledge of difficulties and capacities fostered the students’ empowerment”* (Session 8). *“Students improve self-efficacy in their performance”* (Session 6).

These data excerpts represent the fact that, other than working on the project itself, different skills and capacities were developed in students. Some improved directly, as part of the

language learning process, while others improved indirectly as a result of being inherent to the nature of the project. Teacher-researcher can thus say that the project itself impacted learners' behavior and attitudes, such as their autonomy and self-efficacy, as these last far beyond the academic stage and foster lifelong self-directed learning.

Indeed, the aforementioned excerpts demonstrate students' reflective assessment, which supports the theory that lessons based on the PBL approach can have a positive impact on students' perceptions as they interiorize the concept of assessment. This, in turn, fostered self-efficacy in the English-learning process, as they were empowered to take ownership and responsibility for their learning control.

Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci (2011), point out that

Individuals' beliefs of self-efficacy have a significant effect on how they think, feel, motivate themselves and take actions. These beliefs can increase or diminish their success in every field of their lives. In other words, individuals architect their own destinies by their sense of self-efficacy (p.1285).

Using scaffolding.

This category involves the perceptions of students and the teacher-researcher towards activities and resources that gave support and reinforcement for the difficulties identified during the proposed tasks and activities. Wood et al. (1976), cited in Fisher & Frey, (2010), define scaffolding as a process "that enables a child or novice to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). In addition, the same authors, cite that Maloch (2002) "found that teaching scaffold includes direct and indirect explanations, modeling, highlighting strategies and reconstructive caps (p. 108)". In this sense, Bodrova, Leong & Paynter (1996) argue that "the teacher's role is to provide the path to independence - a goal of all

educators" (p. 3). The following excerpts were taken from students' diaries, interviews and field observations, in relation to what scaffolding represented during the development of the project for the participants in this investigation:

Student 3: *"El aprendizaje es individual pero con el apoyo de otros"* (Students' diary)
Session 6;

Student 7: *"Tuvimos la ayuda y la guía de la profesora durante el desarrollo de las diferentes actividades."*(Final interview);

Those data excerpts demonstrate that support received from peers or the teacher was important and necessary for students only to resolve doubts or to obtain information, resources or tools, but also to receive feedback concerning their performance and work.

Student 2: *"Durante las actividades la profesora contestaba nuestras preguntas y nos dió material para el trabajo como formatos e información."* (Final interview);

These patterns suggest that when the students needed indications, explanations or guides that would help them to correct errors or facilitate work progress; they felt free and confident to ask help from their peers or teacher.

From the field notes, the teacher-researcher reported that:

"Students ask for indications and explanations from the teacher" (Field notes, Session 6);
"During the session, the teacher is scaffolding the activity and guiding its development" (Field notes, Session 7); *"Students were given necessary materials for working according to the activity and they were also encouraged to strive to do a good job"* (Field notes, Session 8);

During the project, the teacher gave the students the resources and materials necessary to the accomplishment of tasks and activities in each session.

“Students were respectful in making comments on each other’s work and in accepting and following indications and explications in correcting errors in their work and in the use of English while interacting with their peers and teacher.” (Field notes) session 9.

This excerpt demonstrates that in agreement with Elbers (1996), “errors were fundamental in the learning process because they provided occasions for various suggestions, demonstrations, or explanations” (Cited in Fisher & Frey, 2010). This was why scaffolding became a key for the development of the project in order to support knowledge construction. As described by Benson (1997), “scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know and if it’s properly administered, will act as “an enabler, not as a disabler” (Cited in Fisher & Frey, 2010, p.2). As shown, the role of the teacher during the process was transformed from that of someone who had the control of everything during class to being someone who mainly supported the students’ performance.

The students were encouraged by their teacher to do their best in the different activities. It can be said that this favored students’ independence, to the extent that while the project was being developed students demonstrated a decrease in the dependence on the teacher’ instructions for carrying out tasks and activities. This is a common behavior in self-directed learners. The teacher becomes a guide and support for the development of the project. Students are encouraged by the teacher to complete the proposed tasks and activities.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The results obtained in this study, based on the research questions and objectives, allowed the description of the impact of the use of a PBL approach on eleventh-grade students' perceptions regarding English language learning. These results also explain how PBL lessons empowered these students to identify and develop self-directed learning strategies. This chapter also presents a vision of the pedagogical implications and limitations of the study and suggests possible topics for future research.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the results of data analysis, we can state that the use of Project-Based Learning lessons generated a positive impact on the students' perception toward the English language, insofar as it was possible to improve motivation towards learning, through the use of topics based on students' likes and preferences or related to their surroundings. We can cite Gardner, who defines motivation as “a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language” (Gardner, 1985).

From the acquired experience during these research, the teacher-researcher can now describe how the students' attitudes, changed as the project progressed. During the first interview administered to the participants, observations showed passive students with a negative perception towards English. They completed the proposed tasks without any motivation for learning, only to obtain a passing grade. However, over the course of the project's development, it became evident that the students felt increasingly interested and motivated in developing the activities that required the use of their own experiences and information. On the same matter, Stipek characterized students who are motivated to learn as follows:

A motivated student ... is actively engaged in the learning process ... approach[es] challenging tasks eagerly, exert[s] intense effort using active problem-solving strategies, and persist[s] in the face of difficulty. Motivated students focus on developing understanding and mastering skills; they are enthusiastic and optimistic; ... they take pleasure in academic tasks and pride in their achievements (Stipek, 1996, p. 85).

The learning environment was also transformed because the students actively took part in the activities and tasks in which they had to apply and use the acquired knowledge. That is to say that the learning became more dynamic because it changed the perception of studying as being only for passing a test, usually of a summative nature, to that of learning how to use the target language to communicate thoughts and ideas. This also encouraged students' curiosity by taking them outside of the classroom, in order to research and improve their acquired learning by themselves. Students were more confident in their language production and development of tasks because they used language in real and relevant situations and felt that this facilitated and improved their learning.

Another finding was the fact that the students enjoyed and optimized working as a group. Their perception of the advantages that this way of work represented for them was positive because teamwork allowed knowledge construction supported by the interaction with peers and mutual help. According to Vygotsky (1978), "students are capable of performing at higher intellectual levels when asked to work in collaborative situations than when asked to work individually. Group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience contributes positively to the learning process" (cited in Sanders, 1995, p.1). The author's research indicates that both individual and group skills were developed: the group took advantage of members' skills and strategies were created to work on difficulties encountered. In the same way, each group member

contributed his knowledge and made efforts to carry out the activities and achieve the objectives at hand. Another advantage of group work is that it generated a space for interaction where students felt committed to, and at the same time, confident in their performance; in other words, that is, group work helped them to improve their self-esteem. At the same time, group work and collaborative learning served as a scenario for the adoption of ethical values such as tolerance, respect and responsibility. During the development of the project and the activities, students assumed their roles as part of the group and were responsible for the execution of tasks that influenced the achievement of the established objectives.

From analyzing the data obtained during this research, it is important to note how students were empowered to achieve meaningful learning through the use of PBL lessons. The development of student autonomy was proved by the ability of students to take responsibility for their own learning as they worked on activities and tasks; they improved their performance, supported by the work group and the teacher. They were aware of their personal achievements and learning progress, as well as the difficulties they had to work on and improve at every stage of the project; that is to say, that self-evaluation allowed students to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

This suggests an improvement in their self-efficacy, which concerns personal judgment and one's awareness concerning what can be performed on one's own and what needs to be reinforced to obtain good results through learning. In this sense, it can also be related to empowerment, given that "the empowerment of students produces an environment which fosters maturity and responsibility in students for their learning. The teacher becomes a facilitator instead of a director and the student becomes a willing participant instead of a passive follower" Panitz & Panitz (2004).

The development of the project based on the PBL approach made students aware of their own responsibility for learning and promoted self-control of learning. This was evidenced by the fact that while they developed the activities and tasks, they were able to identify their strengths, in order to take advantage of these and share them with their peers. In the same way, it showed them their difficulties, and how they were able to use and create strategies that helped them to improve their learning, given that “in experiential learning, learners participate in concrete activities that enable them to ‘experience’ what they are learning about and the opportunity to reflect on those activities” (Silberman, 2007, p.8). In this sense, the teacher-researcher acted as a support to foster students’ reflection regarding their performance and the actions they carried out to develop tasks and activities easier and with a better quality.

Importance of the study

These findings are valuable insofar as they serve as the basis for decision-making regarding the adoption of similar strategies in other areas of the school’s curriculum, as well as for other institutions, which may want to adopt the methodologies contained in this study to their contexts. It is important to bear in mind that this is the first research in the field of learning focused on this particular context. In the same way, it is pertinent to reinforce and support the adoption of the intervention strategy, based on the guidelines and principles stated in the PBL approach, taking into account the positive effects that it has had in different contexts and learning situations where it has been used.

The characteristics of the context of this research, which drove the identification of difficulties and problematic situations, suggested an intervention, which could originate a change in the students’ perceptions by involving them in their own learning process. It was done by giving them the responsibility to learn what they wanted to learn and to control this learning to

the extent that they were able to perform personal actions to facilitate the knowledge construction and acquisition.

For the teacher-researcher, this was an enriching experience as it allowed her to reflect on her pedagogical practice, in order to analyze and identify opportunities to improve her teaching process. Through the intervention strategy, the teacher-researcher could promote students' empowerment and provoke a positive change in the perception of these students towards the English language.

Similar investigations show analogous conclusions to those of this study: A research carried out in a school in Medellin by students of the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana focused on analyzing the attitude of students with regard to learning English. They mention conclusions such as "The positive reaction and higher levels of motivation ... Students see that the teaching of English is contextualized at their level of ability and is presented in a tangible way" (Vásquez, Peláez & Peláez, 2013).

Another study, undertaken by the ICESI University, Cali, explores the incidence of some factors such as anxiety, motivation, learning styles and learning strategies, concluding that there are certain attitudes and behaviors, which influence the learning process. A combination of low levels of anxiety, the use of study strategies, especially metacognitive and social and a high motivational intensity, can make a student perform better (Díaz, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is necessary to mention that although a good result and acceptance by the group of students in the research was obtained, one of the biggest limitations in the institution, which affected the development of the study, is the poor quality in Internet connection. While it is true that students currently have computing equipment, it is being

underutilized because the information was limited to whatever was obtained by the teacher or occasionally by some students who were in charge for bringing it to the classroom. However, when it was necessary to consult the Internet for information as part of the activities, it was almost impossible to obtain it in the expected timeframe, causing numerous inconveniences and delays.

Further Research

This research could be applied to the primary grades of an educational institution, taking into account that when children begin their secondary studies, it is common for most of them to have a poor level of English. Therefore, the secondary-school teacher must invest time in trying to cover basic concepts that familiarize students with the target language.

This experience would be an excellent strategy for a child to achieve success from the start of his school life and have a lovely experience learning English. According to the author, this would result in secondary students performing better, with a better attitude and perception, using English to communicate and not merely for evaluative purposes as is currently done in our educational context.

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Appendix A Questionnaire for diagnosis of the context



CUESTIONARIO

PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE SECUNDARIA DE LA INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA CAMILO TORRES, CON RESPECTO AL APRENDIZAJE DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA.

El siguiente cuestionario se realiza con el fin de indagar y explorar su percepción con respecto al aprendizaje del Idioma inglés como lengua extranjera. Es importante que tenga en cuenta que sus respuestas serán totalmente anónimas.

A continuación se presentan una serie de preguntas, marque con una **(X)** en el cuadro que acompaña a la respuesta que más identifique su opinión. Por favor conteste con sinceridad, recuerde que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, lo que nos interesa es conocer su opinión.

Edad: _____ Género: _____ Procedencia: _____

1. ¿Utiliza el servicio del Internado en la institución? SI _____ NO _____
2. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de su papá? _____
3. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de su Mamá? _____
4. ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva en esta institución? _____
5. Cuándo comenzó su aprendizaje de inglés:
Primaria _____ Secundaria _____
6. ¿Ha tomado cursos de Inglés particulares? SI ___ NO ___ ¿Dónde? _____
7. Señale la materias que más le gustan con un  y las que menos le gusta con una 

Asignatura	
Lenguaje	
Matemáticas	
Lengua extranjera (inglés)	
Biología, Física, Química	
Tecnología	

1. Señale los espacios o momentos en que usas el inglés:
En clase de inglés
En internet
En un chat
Cuando veo películas/ TV
Cuando escucho música
2. En su opinión, que le gustaría hacer para aprender inglés: señale una o varias opciones.
Aprender canciones. _____
Trabajar en grupos. _____
Desarrollar proyectos. _____
Usar un libro de gramática y hacer ejercicios. _____
Buscar información y recursos por mí mismo. _____
3. En su opinión se aprende mejor inglés
Trabajando en grupo. _____ Trabajando solo. _____

Porque _____

4. ¿Cuáles temas le gustaría que se trabajaran en la clase de inglés?

5. ¿Qué es más fácil en la clase de inglés?

Lectura _____

Escritura _____

Habla _____

Escucha _____

Ninguna _____

6. ¿Que tanto usa el inglés en su vida diaria?

Nada _____

Poco _____

Muy poco _____

Mucho _____

7. ¿Según su opinión que factores considera que han impedido su aprendizaje de inglés?

8. Escriba **Si** o **No** en los siguientes enunciados.

Enunciados / Escala	
9. Me gusta estudiar Inglés.	
10. Me gusta hablar Inglés.	
11. Es importante aprender Inglés.	
12. Quiero aprender bien Inglés.	
13. Para mis padres el Inglés es una asignatura importante.	
14. Para el colegio la asignatura de Inglés es importante.	
15. Me gusta la asignatura de Inglés en el colegio.	
16. A mis amigos les gusta estudiar Inglés.	
17. Saber bien Inglés es importante en el futuro para conseguir un trabajo.	
18. Saber Inglés es importante para poder viajar a países donde se habla Inglés.	
19. Saber bien Inglés es importante para comunicarme con gente de otras culturas.	

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para completar esta encuesta.

Appendix B Primera entrevista a participantes en la investigación

Students Interview Questions

Estas preguntas tienen como objetivo conocer su percepción respecto al aprendizaje del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera. La información suministrada es confidencial con fines únicamente educativos durante esta investigación.

Contexto de aprendizaje.

1. ¿Cómo describe la clase de inglés? ¿Por qué?
2. ¿Cuáles recursos o materiales utiliza durante la clase?
3. ¿Qué tipos de actividades le permiten mejorar el aprendizaje de este idioma?
4. ¿Ha desarrollado proyectos de clase en inglés? ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre este tipo de actividades?
5. ¿Describa su experiencia con el aprendizaje y uso del inglés?
6. ¿Utiliza el conocimiento que tiene de inglés en otros lugares o para otras actividades diferentes a las del colegio? ¿Por qué?

Actitudes

7. ¿Frente al aprendizaje y uso del inglés cómo se siente? Señale la opción que mejor describa su opinión.
 - Temeroso
 - Ansioso
 - Confiado
 - Interesado
 - Desinteresado¿Por qué?
8. ¿Qué estrategias personales ha utilizado para mejorar su aprendizaje de inglés?
¿Cuáles piensa usted que han funcionado?

9. ¿Qué situaciones, actitudes o factores pueden influir negativamente en su aprendizaje del inglés?
10. ¿Para qué estudia inglés?
11. ¿Le interesa mejorar su inglés? ¿Por qué?

Aprendizaje significativo (percepciones).

12. Describa lo que le gusta de aprender inglés.
13. ¿Que considera que se le dificulta en el aprendizaje de inglés?
14. ¿Cuál considera que es su fortaleza en el uso del idioma inglés?
15. ¿En qué situaciones ha utilizado lo que sabe de inglés?
16. ¿En qué situaciones en el futuro piensa usted que puede o podrá utilizar el conocimiento que tiene de inglés?
17. Describa el nivel de importancia que considera el inglés tendrá en su vida profesional.
¿Por qué?

Appendix C First interview-participants

Pre – Intervention Interview

This interview aims to determine their perception of learning English as a foreign language. The information provided on this is confidential with only educational and to be used for educational purposes only during the course of this investigation.

Learning Context

1. How do you describe English class? Explain your answer.
2. What resources or materials do you use in class?
3. What types of activities allow you to improve learning this language?
4. Have you worked on projects in English class? What is your opinion about these activities?
5. Describe your experience with learning and using English?
6. Do you use the English language elsewhere or for different activities, apart from school? How?

Attitudes

7. How do you feel about learning and using English? Highlight the option that best describes your opinion.

- Fearful
 - Anxious
 - Confident
 - Interested
 - Uninterested
- Why?

8. What personal strategies do you use to improve your English? What works for you?
9. What situations, attitudes or factors can negatively influence learning English?
10. Why do you study English?

11. Are you interested in improving your English? Why?

Meaningful learning-perceptions

12. Describe what you like to do while learning English.

13. What do you consider is difficult for you in learning English?

14. What do you consider is your strength while using English?

15. In what situations have you used English?

16. In what situations in the future might you use English?

17. Describe the level of importance you consider English will have in your professional life. Why?

Appendix D Entrevista después de la intervención

Esta entrevista está diseñada con el fin de identificar el impacto de PBL en su percepción acerca del aprendizaje y uso de inglés, además de conocer elementos importantes sobre su experiencia de aprendizaje y su opinión con respecto a los resultados obtenidos. La información es confidencial y para el uso de la investigación en curso.

PBL methodology

1. Describa su experiencia en el aprendizaje por proyectos.
2. ¿Qué dificultades se presentaron durante el desarrollo del proyecto?
3. ¿Qué estrategias utilizó para resolverlas?
4. ¿Cuáles considera que son las ventajas del trabajo en equipo?
5. ¿Cómo describe la interacción y las relaciones dadas en el grupo de trabajo?
6. ¿Cómo describe su aporte al trabajo en grupo?
7. ¿Cómo describe el desempeño del equipo de trabajo?
8. ¿Qué evidencias se presentaron en el cumplimiento de los objetivos propuestos?

Learning process

1. ¿Cómo describiría el proceso de aprendizaje con la metodología PBL?
2. ¿De qué forma influyó la temática trabajada en el proyecto a su aprendizaje?
3. ¿De qué forma considera que mejoró su aprendizaje?
4. Describa su actitud hacia el aprendizaje durante el desarrollo del proyecto.
5. ¿Qué factores piensa que influyeron durante este proceso, en su aprendizaje?
6. ¿Cuál considera que fue su motivación hacia el aprendizaje durante el desarrollo del proyecto?

Aprendizaje significativo-percepciones.

1. Describa un aspecto positivo con respecto al aprendizaje del inglés a través de la elaboración de proyectos.
2. ¿Considera que la temática trabajada y la información recogida durante el proyecto tiene relación con su vida? Por qué?
3. ¿En qué situaciones en el futuro piensa usted que puede o podrá utilizar el conocimiento que tiene de inglés?
4. Describa el nivel de importancia que considera el inglés tendrá en su vida profesional. ¿Por qué?
5. ¿Cuál considera que es su fortaleza en el uso del idioma inglés?

Appendix E Post-stage Interview

Student Interview Questions

This interview is designed to identify the impact of Project-Based Learning on their perception of English learning and use, as well as important elements concerning their learning experience and their opinion about the results obtained. The information is confidential and for the use of ongoing research.

PBL Methodology

1. Describe your experience with project learning.
2. What difficulties were encountered during the development of the project?
3. What strategies did you use to solve them?
4. What do you consider to be the advantages of teamwork?
5. How do you describe the interaction and relationships between the members of the working group?
6. How do you describe your contribution to group work?
7. How do you describe the team's performance?
8. What evidence was presented in meeting the proposed objectives?

Learning Process

1. How would you describe the learning process using PBL methodology?
2. How did the theme of the project influence your learning?
3. How do you consider your learning to be improved?
4. Describe your attitude towards learning during the development of the project
5. What factors do you think influenced the learning process?
6. What do you consider was your motivation for learning during the development of the project?

Meaningful learning-perceptions.

1. Describe a positive aspect of learning English via project development.
2. Do you consider that the theme worked and the information collected during the project is relevant to your life? Why?
3. In what situations in the future do you think you can or can use the knowledge you have of English?
4. Describe the level of importance you consider English will have in your professional life. Why?
5. What do you consider to be your strength in English?

Appendix F Teacher-researcher field notes

Lessons based on PBL approach as strategy to transform the negative perception of the students toward the learning English

DATE:	SESSION:
DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY	
OBSERVATIONS	COMMENTS/ INSIGHTS/THOUGHTS
Development of the activity	
Actions/ performance	
Behaviors	
Attitudes	
FINAL REFLECTIONS	

Note: by the author

Appendix G Learners’ diary

Lessons based on PBL approach as strategy to transform the negative perception of the students toward the learning English

NAME:	SESSION:
	DATE:
DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY	
OBSERVATIONS	My views
What was the topic of today’s lesson?	
What did I do in class today?	Individual
	Group
What did I learn?	Content
	Language
What questions do I have about what I learned?	
What did I find interesting?	
How do I feel in this session?	
FINAL REFLECTIONS	

Note: by the author

Appendix H lesson plan (Speculation stage)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

PROJECT NAME: PAINT YOUR FUTURE

1. SPECULATION

NUMBER OF SESSIONS: TWO	WHAT STUDENTS ALREADY KNOW
--------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Goal (s):
Describing the characteristics of the project and its importance for the school community.

Resources and materials:
* Student’s previous knowledge and experiences. * Formats

Student’s activities
*Selecting the topic to work on; *Identifying needed information to work on the project; *Setting the Objectives of the project; *Completing the Student’s journal.

Teacher’s activities
*Introducing vocabulary; *Sharing information concerning the topic; *Clarify Student’s doubts and Questions.

PBL approaches in the lesson

- Interesting topic organized by students;
- Students are the responsible of the development of the project;
- Students reflect on the performance of the activities during the session;
- Teacher acts as a guide;
- Work group to promote interaction.

Appendix I lesson plan (Designing the project activities)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

PROJECT NAME: “MAKING DECISIONS AND SETTING PLANS”	
2. DESIGNING THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES	
NUMBER OF SESSIONS: THREE	WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

Goal (s):	Resources and materials:
Plan and develop activities concerning the acquisition of the knowledge of the topic of the project in order to present a final product.	Information from internet and text books Work guides Student’s journals Field notes

Student’s activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Asigninig roles and tasks; *Designing activities and tasks for carrying out the project; *Consulting information concerning the topic; *Make reflections regarding the sessions (performance, activities, Workgroups).

Teacher’s activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Scaffold the activities of the session (formats, guides, information); *Record the observations done during the sessions.

PBL approaches in the lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities have to do with the student’s reality; • Tasks are designed based on the student’s interests; • Students reflect on the performance of the activities during the session; • Teacher acts as a guide; • Work group to promote interaction.

Appendix J lesson plan (Conducting the project)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

PROJECT NAME: “MAKING DECISIONS AND SETTING PLANS”	
3. CONDUCTING THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES	
NUMBER OF SESSIONS: THREE	WHAT STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO DO WITH THEIR LEARNING

2. Goal (s):	2. Resources and materials:
Presenting the final product as evidence of the development of the project	Information from internet and text books Work guides Student’s journals Field notes Rubrics

Student’s activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Drafting the publishing; * Checking to make adjustments; * Designing the final version of the work to be published; *Presentation of the final product (publishing the bulletin board); * Completing students’ journals; *Assessing other’s work and own.

Teacher’s activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Scaffold the activities of the session (formats, guides, information); *Record the observations done during the sessions.

PBL approaches in the lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use some strategies to improve the learning; • Interaction with peers help the learning • Students reflect on the performance of the activities during the session; • Teacher acts as a guide; • Work group promote interaction.

Appendix K lesson plan (Evaluation)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

PROJECT NAME: “MAKING DECISIONS AND SETTING PLANS”	
4. EVALUATION	
NUMBER OF SESSIONS: ONE	WHAT STUDENTS CAN ASSESS.

Goal (s):	Resources and materials:
Give a critical judgment regarding different elements and situations of the development of the project.	Student’s journals Field notes Rubrics

Student’s activities
* Complete different rubrics and formats for evaluating. *Complete the Student’s journal of the session.

teacher’s activities
*Scaffold the activity of the session (formats, rubrics); *Record the observations done during the session.

PBL approaches in the lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment: Students are able to Identify their strengths and what they need to improve; • Interaction with peers help the learning; • Students reflect on the performance of the activities during the session; • Teacher acts as a guide.

Appendix L work guide (“who am I”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Project Stage: INVESTIGATION
Topic: “who am I”?	SESSION: FIRST
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Encourage self-recognition on students.</p>	
2. Expectations of the session(s)	
<p>Students will be able to describe themselves and speak about their expectations regarding their future.</p>	
3. Warm-up	
<p>Students write and present a short poem describing some personal issues about themselves.</p>	
4. Presentation	5. Language goals
<p>It is introduced to students the process and vocabulary to describe different aspects of a person – such as family, personality, likes and dislikes and abilities.</p>	<p>Describing a person</p>
6. Production	
<p>Students use a format given by the teacher to describe their own information.</p>	
7. Final product	
<p>Personal poster called “All about me”</p>	
8. Assessment	
<p>Peer comments and teacher feedback.</p>	

Appendix M Work guide (“Decisions”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Project Stage: INVESTIGATION
Topic: “Decisions”	SESSION: SECOND
Standard/goal: promoting reflection concerning students’ decisions	

2. Expectation of the session(s)
Students will be able to describe and speak about experiences and the impact on the present.

3. Warm-up
Mini forum for sharing experiences of making decisions

4. Presentation	5. Language goals
What is a decision; what it involves. Process to make a decision.	Using Past and Present tense Describing Experiences

6. Production
To complete a “making decisions” format and design a simple mind map with decisions they are going to make after graduating from school.

7. Final product
Making decisions” format; Mind map with decisions.

8. Assessment
Peer comments and teacher feedback.

Appendix N Work guide (“Setting goals/plans.”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Lesson Plan Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Stage INVESTIGATION
Topic: “Setting goals/plans.”	SESSION: THIRD
Standard/goal:	
Promoting students’ reflection regarding plans for the future.	

2. Expectation of the session(s)
Students will be able to describe and speak about their dreams, wishes and expectations regarding the future.

3. Warm-up
Students develop a matching game regarding making plans and the associated vocabulary.

4. Presentation	5. Language goals
Information about what means a plan and the process for setting plans.	Describing wishes and plans. Using conditionals to talk about causes and consequences.

6. Production
Students complete a setting plans format.

7. Final product
Setting plans format.

8. Assessment
Peer comments and teacher feedback.

Appendix O Work guide (“Organization”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Lesson Plan Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Stage PRESENTATION
Topic: “Organization:”	SESSION: FIRST
Standard/goal:	
Identify the types of text for publishing in a bulletin board	

2. Expectation of the session(s)
Students will be able to select what type of text they would to publish in the bulletin board concerning the importance of making decisions and setting plans for future.

3. Warm-up
Matching game with text type vocabulary.

4. Presentation	5. Language goals
Information about the type of texts and structures.	Writing a text to publish.

6. Production
Students organize the selected information into a text for working.

7. Final product
Text to work on.

8. Assessment
Comments from peers and teacher.

Appendix P Work guide (“Drafting a text to publish”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Lesson Plan Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Stage 1-2: PRESENTATION
Topic: “Drafting a text to publish:”	SESSION: SECOND
Standard/goal: Designing and creating a text or article to publish in the bulletin board	
2. Expectation of the session(s)	
Students will be able to design the first version of the texts to publish.	
3. Warm-up	
Reading some published text as a writing model.	
4. Presentation	5. Language goals
Information about the type of texts and structures.	Identifying characteristics in a text.
6. Production	
Students make a sketch of the text to publish, taking into account the purpose and the audience of the text.	
7. Final product	
Sketch of the texts	
8. Assessment	
Adapted rubrics.	

Appendix Q Work guide (“Writing final version”)

Lessons based on PBL approach to transform negative perceptions of students towards learning English

1. Lesson Plan Information	
Subject: English	English level: A1
Grade Level: Eleventh grade	Stage PRESENTATION
Topic: “Writing the final version:”	SESSION: THIRD
Standard/goal: Present the text or article to publish in the bulletin board	

2. Expectation of the session(s)
Students will be able to present the final version of the texts to publish.

3. Warm-up
Students start identifying the punctuation marks used in a reading as a model.

4. Presentation	5. Language goals
Information about punctuation, grammar and style.	Using punctuation marks in a text. Writing properly.

6. Production
Students revise the punctuation, grammar and style in their texts and write the final version with adjustments. They work creatively to design texts that catch the attention of all the school community, (images, type of letter, design etc.).

7. Final product
In this section, students present the bulletin board, they work as a group to adapt and decorate the mural to place it.

8. Assessment
Adapted rubrics.

Appendix R Rubric for Evaluating the Bulletin Board

Item					
Tidiness and Organization	20 points Content is well-organized and easy for students to understand.	15 points Overall organization appears flawed, somewhat easy for students to understand.	10 points Content is logically organized for the most part, however hard for students to follow.	5 points There was no clear or logical organizational structure, just lots of facts.	2 points A total mess.
Theme and Creativity	10 points Every item on the bulletin board is related to the assigned theme. Good use of color, space and pictures.	8 points Most items on the bulletin board are related to the assigned theme.	6 points Fairly reasonable-some items on the bulletin board are related to the assigned theme.	4 points Items are weak – it is difficult to understand how items relate to the assigned theme.	2 points Items do not relate to the theme at all.
Informative	30 points Every item on the bulletin board is informative and helpful.	25 points Most items on the bulletin board are mostly informative.	20 points Some items on the bulletin board are informative.	15 points Items are weak in the informative area.	10 points Bulletin board is not informative – very little information.

Adapted from: <https://goo.gl/6ChLbZ>

Appendix S Rubric for Evaluating Individual Publishing

Number of Points. Skills	Excellent	Average	Poor
Language	Excellent at grasping key concepts; stimulates reflection. Ideas are expressed clearly, concisely. Uses appropriate vocabulary.	Shows evidence of understanding of most major concepts; some signs of disorganization with expression; transition wording may be faulty.	Has a mostly shallow grasp of the material; Poor language, only an occasional idea surfaces clearly; expression seems disjointed; paragraphs often appear unrelated to each other.
Purpose	The purpose of the item published is according to the topic of the bulletin board, and is clearly understood.	The purpose of the item published is according to the topic of the bulletin board, although it is not easy to understand.	The purpose of the item published is not according to the topic of the bulletin board, and it is not easy to understand.
Design	Its title and images are used adequately to catch the reader's attention and accord with the purpose of the articles published. Excellent order and presentation.	A title is used regarding the topic but images do not represent the purpose of the articles published. There are some faults in the order and presentation.	Images and title are not used in the publishing, or are inadequate. It looks disordered and does not have a good presentation.

Adapted from: Assessing Student Work from Chat rooms and Bulletin Boards. p. 35
http://www.acousticslab.org/dots_sample/module3/Bauer2002AssessingChatrooms.pdf

Appendix T Rubric for Evaluating a Brainstorm

	4 pts. Exceeds Expectations	3 pts. Meets Expectations.	2 pts. Nearly Meets Expectations.	1 pts. Below Expectations.
Quantity of Ideas How many ideas have you explored?	4 There are many ideas given by students.	3 There are some ideas given by students.	2 There are few ideas given by students.	1 There are nearly no ideas given by students.
Variety of Ideas Is there are a wide variety of ideas indicated in the brainstorm?	4 There is a very wide variety of ideas indicated in the brainstorm.	3 There is a variety of ideas indicated in the brainstorm.	2 There little variety in the ideas indicated in the brainstorm.	1 There is no variety of indicated in the brainstorm.
Depth of Detail Are ideas supported in detail?	4 All ideas are well-supported with many details.	3 Most ideas are supported with details.	2 Some ideas are supported with details.	1 Few ideas are supported with details.
Interaction and Behaviors. Have you used your creativity to all its potential?	4 All members of the group participate, and show respect for others' ideas.	3 Some members of the group participate, but everybody shows respect for others' ideas.	2 Few members of the group participate, but everybody shows respect for others' ideas.	1 There is little student participation.

Adapted from: <https://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=D29W2B&sp=yes&>


Appendix U Peer Assessment Form

Peer Evaluation Form

Name _____ Class Period _____ Date _____

Write the names of your group members in the numbered boxes. Then, assign yourself a value for each listed attribute. Finally, do the same for each of your group members and total all of the values.

Values: 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree

Attribute	Yourself	1.	2.	3.
Was dependable in attending group meetings.				
Willingly accepted assigned tasks.				
Contributed positively to group discussions.				
Completed work on time or made alternative arrangements.				
Helped others with their work when needed.				
Did work accurately and completely.				
Contributed a fair share to weekly papers.				
Worked well with other group members.				
Overall was a valuable member of the team.				
Column Totals 				

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Appendix V Institution Consent Format

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA EL DESARROLLO DE UNA INVESTIGACION

Especialista
Carlos Arturo Hernández
Rector I.E Camilo Torres Restrepo
Santa Elena de Cústiva

Asunto: Solicitud

Estimado Rector,

La presente tiene como finalidad solicitar respetuosamente su autorización para el desarrollo del proyecto de investigación titulado "Using Project Based Learning as Strategy to Transform Students' Perceptions towards English Learning", con la participación de los estudiantes del grado Once de la institución. Este estudio tiene como objetivo describir el impacto de la metodología de aprendizaje por proyectos en la percepción de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del idioma inglés y analizar cómo ésta metodología puede empoderar a los estudiantes en su proceso de aprendizaje.


Es importante mencionar que este estudio se implementa como parte del trabajo de grado de la *Maestría en didáctica del inglés para el aprendizaje auto dirigido*, programa que estoy cursando con la Universidad de la Sabana. Los estudiantes participarán en sesiones de clase y actividades para desarrollar un proyecto colaborativo basado en los indicadores y logros propuestos en el plan de estudios de la institución, y será presentado a la comunidad educativa. De esta experiencia se les pedirá a los estudiantes hacer reflexiones por escrito y una autoevaluación.

La información será recogida por medio de entrevistas y encuestas y será de uso exclusivo para esta investigación.

AGRADECIMIENTO
Instituto Educativo Camilo Torres Restrepo
Santa Elena de Cústiva

Le agradezco su autorización y colaboración a esta investigación que pretende mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en nuestra institución.

Atentamente,



Nidian Vargas
Docente investigador



Rector.

Appendix W Parents' Consent Form**Students' consent form**

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR EN UNA INVESTIGACION

Señor
Padre de Familia
I.E Camilo Torres Restrepo

Cordial saludo,

Comedidamente, solicito su consentimiento para que su hijo(a) pueda hacer parte de la investigación titulada "Using Project Based Learning as Strategy to Transform Students' Perceptions towards English Learning", este estudio tiene como objetivo describir el impacto de la metodología de aprendizaje por proyectos en la percepción de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del idioma inglés y analizar cómo ésta metodología puede empoderar a los estudiantes en su proceso de aprendizaje.

Es importante mencionar que este estudio se implementa como parte de mi trabajo de grado de la "Maestría en didáctica del inglés para el aprendizaje auto dirigido", programa que estoy cursando en la Universidad de la Sabana.

Quiero aclarar que la participación de su hijo(a), sólo tiene que ver con sesiones de clase y actividades para desarrollar un proyecto colaborativo que se presentará a la comunidad educativa, experiencia de la que se les pedirá hacer reflexiones por escrito y una autoevaluación. La información recogida será de uso exclusivo para este estudio y sus nombres no se usarán como referencia en las publicaciones que se hagan de esta investigación. Por tanto, agradezco su consentimiento para la participación voluntaria de su hijo(a) en esta investigación que pretende mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en nuestra institución.

Atentamente,



Nidian Vargas
Docente investigador

Instituto Educativo
CAMILO TORRES
Santafé de Bogotá
CALLE 100 No. 100-100
Tel: 338 4000

Appendix X Students' Consent Form**Students' consent form**

CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR EN UNA INVESTIGACION

Apreciados
Estudiantes Grado Once
I.E Camilo Torres Restrepo
Santa Elena de Cúsiva

Estimados estudiantes,

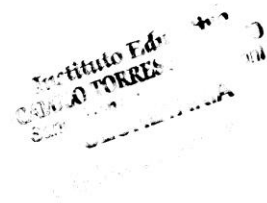
En la actualidad estoy trabajando en el proyecto de investigación titulado “Using Project Based Learning as Strategy to Transform Students’ Perceptions towards English Learning”, este estudio tiene como objetivo describir el impacto de la metodología de aprendizaje por proyectos en la percepción de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje del idioma inglés y analizar cómo esta metodología puede empoderar a los estudiantes en su proceso de aprendizaje.

Es importante mencionar que este estudio se implementa como parte de mi trabajo de grado de la *Maestría en didáctica del inglés para el aprendizaje auto dirigido*, programa que estoy cursando en la Universidad de la Sabana. Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior, solicito comedidamente su colaboración y consentimiento para hacer parte de dicha investigación. Quiero aclarar que su participación sólo tiene que ver con sesiones y actividades para desarrollar un proyecto colaborativo que se presentará a la comunidad educativa, experiencia de la que se les pedirá hacer reflexiones por escrito y una autoevaluación. La información recogida será de uso exclusivo para esta investigación y sus nombres no se usarán como referencia en las publicaciones que se hagan de esta investigación. Por tanto, agradezco su participación voluntaria y su colaboración en esta investigación que pretende mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en nuestra institución.

Atentamente,



Nidian Vargas
Docente investigador



Appendix Y Publishing the Bulletin Board



Presentation of the final product -Bulletin board.
By: the author