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# Student and Teacher Perspectives on Co-created CLIL-Appropriate Materials Focused on Critical Thinking and Active Citizenship

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*Perspectivas de estudiantes y docentes sobre materiales pertinentes para el AICLE creados en conjunto y centrados en el pensamiento crítico y la ciudadanía activa*

*Perspectivas de estudantes e docentes sobre materiais pertinentes para a AICLE criados em conjunto e focados no pensamento crítico e na cidadania ativa*

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**ABSTRACT.** The International Relations English program at a university in the north of Colombia is a CLIL-based program. Students share an interest in issues related to rights and politics, both locally and globally. Colombia arrived at a historical juncture with the signing of the peace accords between the government and FARC guerrillas in 2016. However, this coincided with an extreme polarisation of political discourse. This polarisation was evident throughout the 2016 plebiscite on the peace agreements and further intensified in the build-up to the 2018 presidential elections. In response, teachers and students created a web series where students outlined the candidates' critical proposals without revealing the candidates' identities. Students researched the proposals and worked with a teacher to prepare English transcripts of the proposals. Eight videos were created, shared via social media, and made available to local English teachers at secondary and university levels. The project's purpose was to encourage active citizenship and foment a more critical analysis of the candidates' proposals. To achieve this, students utilised the anonymity of the candidates and English as the chief medium of communication. This project allowed teachers to use authentic and relevant student-generated materials to encourage more critical discussion. The students involved in the project reported feelings of political efficacy and civic engagement. Teachers expressed satisfaction at having contextually rich language materials. This project indicates the potential for student-generated materials to provide contextually relevant and highly motivating educational materials.

**Keywords (Source: Unesco Thesaurus):** 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills; active citizenship; CLIL materials; civic engagement; student-centered.

**RESUMEN.** El programa de Inglés para las Relaciones Internacionales de una universidad en el norte de Colombia se fundamenta en el AICLE. Allí, los estudiantes comparten el interés en temas relacionados con los derechos y la política, tanto a nivel local como mundial. Colombia alcanzó una coyuntura histórica con la firma de los acuerdos de paz entre el gobierno y la guerrilla de las FARC en 2016, pero coincidió con una polarización extrema del discurso político, la cual se evidenció durante el plebiscito sobre los acuerdos de paz de 2016 y se intensificó aún más en la campaña para las elecciones presidenciales de 2018. En respuesta a esto, se creó una serie web en la que los estudiantes del programa investigaron y describieron las propuestas importantes de los candidatos sin revelar sus identidades; además, trabajaron con un docente para preparar las transcripciones en inglés. Se generaron ocho videos, los cuales se compartieron a través de las redes sociales y se pusieron a disposición de los profesores locales de inglés a nivel de bachillerato y educación superior. El proyecto tenía como objetivo fomentar la ciudadanía activa y un análisis más crítico de las propuestas de los candidatos. Para lograr esto, los estudiantes aprovecharon el anonimato de los candidatos y el inglés como principal medio de comunicación. Por otra parte, este proyecto permitió a los docentes usar materiales auténticos y pertinentes generados por los estudiantes para fomentar una discusión más crítica. Los estudiantes involucrados en el proyecto informaron sentimientos de eficacia política y de compromiso cívico, mientras que los docentes expresaron su satisfacción por contar con materiales lingüísticos ricos en contexto. Por lo tanto, este proyecto indica el potencial de que los estudiantes generen materiales educativos pertinentes para el contexto y altamente motivantes.

**Palabras claves (Fuente: tesauro de la Unesco):** Habilidades del siglo XXI; ciudadanía activa; materiales de AICLE; compromiso civil; centrado en el estudiante.

**RESUMO.** O programa de inglês para as relações internacionais de uma universidade do norte da Colômbia está fundamentado na Aprendizagem Integrada de Conteúdos e Línguas Estrangeiras (AICLE). Nesse programa, os estudantes compartilham o interesse em temas relacionados com os direitos e a política, tanto no contexto local quanto no mundial. A Colômbia atingiu uma conjuntura histórica com a firma dos acordos de paz entre o governo e a guerrilha das Forças Armadas Revolucionárias da Colômbia em 2016, mas coincidiu com uma polarização extrema do discurso político, a qual foi evidenciada durante o plebiscito sobre os acordos de paz de 2016 e intensificada ainda mais na campanha eleitoral para presidente em 2018. Como resposta a isso, foi criada uma série web na qual os estudantes do programa investigaram e descreveram as propostas importantes dos candidatos sem revelar sua identidade; além disso, trabalharam com um docente para preparar transcrições em inglês. Foram gerados oito vídeos, que foram compartilhados pelas redes sociais e colocados à disposição dos professores locais de inglês do ensino médio e superior. O projeto tinha como objetivo fomentar a cidadania ativa e uma análise mais crítica das propostas dos candidatos. Para isso, os estudantes aproveitaram o anonimato dos candidatos e o inglês como principal meio de comunicação. Ainda, esse projeto permitiu aos docentes usarem materiais autênticos e pertinentes gerados pelos estudantes para fomentar uma discussão crítica. Os estudantes envolvidos no projeto informaram sentimentos de eficácia política e de compromisso civil, enquanto os docentes expressaram satisfação por contar com materiais linguísticos ricos em contexto. Portanto, esse projeto indica o potencial de que os estudantes gerem materiais educacionais adequados ao contexto e altamente motivacionais.

**Palavras-chave (Fonte: tesauro da Unesco):** Habilidades do século XXI; cidadania ativa; materiais de AICLE; compromisso civil; foco no estudante.

## Introduction

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Education and its approaches tend to be dynamic as teachers and researchers look to respond to advances and development in pedagogy. One of the more dynamic aspects of education is found in materials development. Traditionally, language learning materials were focused on the textbook and associated listening materials, providing language teachers with a ready-made combination to guide them and their learners through a level or course. The advantages of such an approach to materials may include the adherence of textbooks to international standards (typically the Common European Framework [CEFR]). Said materials also meant that teachers need not necessarily develop materials for their class as the textbook served this purpose. Paradoxically, this last point also highlights one criticism of this approach to material selection; a reduction of autonomy on behalf of the teacher and the learners. As educational theory has shifted increasingly towards a focus on the sociocultural setting and how it impacts learning, the local context (students, teachers, educational setting, educational backgrounds, socioeconomic status, first language, second or additional language, political atmosphere, dominant discourse practices, and so on) has drawn a greater level of attention. Furthermore, a traditional textbook approach also raises the question of by whom the textbook was made, for which audiences, and, particularly, the appropriateness of some textbooks for contexts that share little in common with the topics and themes presented in the prescribed materials.

Parallel to such criticism of the traditional approach to materials provision is the call to help learners develop 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and media and technological literacy. Across many of these 21st-century skills is the concept of assisting and encouraging learners to become active global citizens who can utilise their skills and talents towards initiatives that foster greater awareness of critical issues facing people at local, national, and global levels. Research has also highlighted the importance of authentic materials, tasks, and projects as a source of motivation and empowerment for learners. One such local problem over the past number of years in Colombia has been polarisation in

the political and social spheres. This problem must be seen as part of a global trend, given events elsewhere. However, it is undoubtedly local inasmuch that one of the principal causes of this polarisation has been disagreements over the basic principles and implementation of the peace agreement signed in 2016 by the government of President Santos and the FARC guerrilla organisation. This polarisation reached a high point during the campaign for the plebiscite over the final agreement (the Colombian electorate rejected the agreement by a narrow margin, meaning the agreement was amended and passed through Congress some months after), which persisted in public discourse and, in particular, on social media.

This atmosphere of polarisation in the lead-up to the 2018 presidential election campaign gave rise to a project between a teacher and some students from an International Relations English program to cut through the sense of polarisation to provide some objective information about the candidates' actual proposals. Keeping in mind recent research regarding the emotional impact of using our first language (L1), we decided that it would be appropriate to develop this project in English in a further attempt to create a distance between the information communicated and the emotion attached to politics (Dylman & Barta, 2019; Keysar et al., 2012).

The project sought to develop a web series named Candidates' Cards on the Table that would present the proposals of the five principal candidates on specific topics (the economy, health, foreign affairs, the peace agreement, among others) but with the caveat that the candidate behind each proposal would only be revealed at the end of the show. The project team (one teacher and 13 students from the upper levels of the from the International Relations English [IRE] program) selected the categories for the proposals, researched the proposals, and shared these findings in a document for translation into English (principally done by the teacher given time constraints but with assistance from some students). A basic script for each episode was made. The teacher and a panel of five students presented the videos with the proposals, commented briefly on what they liked and disliked about each set of proposals, and then revealed the identity of the candidate. The videos were made with the assistance of the faculty learning centre (CEDU, for its acronym in Spanish). Once the final editing was

done, the videos were uploaded to video-sharing sites and shared via social media. In addition, a link to each video was sent to English language teachers in the university where the research took place and to more contacts in secondary schools and universities in the surrounding region (over 100 teachers in all), inviting them to explore ways in which the video series could be used as additional material in their setting. Teachers and student-participants were later asked to offer their perspectives, and this quantitative data is the basis of this paper. This research paper will begin with a literature review of the topic before explaining the methods used, presenting and discussing findings, drawing some conclusions, and making tentative recommendations for teachers, researchers, and material developers.

## Literature Review

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The topic of critical consciousness primarily relates to Critical Pedagogy (CP), an approach to education stemming from the Paulo Freire's work. Freire (1972) rejected what he termed the "banking" concept of education, which he saw as a top-down approach to education that disproportionately serves the interest of elites at the expense of the mass "oppressed." Freire highlighted the anti-dialogical nature of such an approach and instead urged a rethinking of education as a process of communication based on "cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis" (Freire, 1972, p. 98), characteristics which he referred to as dialogical action.

Concerning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), what should be taught, who should teach it, and what its status as a lingua franca suggests about the world are issues that have been well documented. Pennycook (1999) highlighted how the teaching of English could, in many circumstances, be understood as a form of linguistic colonialism and stressed the need for an exploration of issues such as power, inequality, discrimination, and resistance in English language classrooms as a way of offsetting such linguistic colonialism. Sen (1999) highlighted how learning English is necessary for gaining access to international markets, while others (Copley, 2018) have criticised the sector for

reinforcing Neoliberal norms. Other common complaints towards the EFL/ESL (English as a second language) industry focus on a lack of contextual awareness; Kubota and Miller (2017) claim the industry excludes local voices, while Banegas (2017) has suggested a lack of responsiveness to different learning contexts.

Authors such as Breuing (2011) have written on the need for Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) to be meaningfully employed, with a clear focus on the situations faced by learners in their immediate context. Others have highlighted the appropriateness of CP when it comes to language learning, given the shared focus on communication skills across areas (Chun, 2010), with researchers drawing attention to how a dialogical approach can lead to learner empowerment (Contreras & Chapeton, 2017). Giroux (2010) demonstrates how CP could be paired with active citizenship when he wrote of the need for an informed citizenry that can think for itself. It is important to note that much of the research related to CP in language learning has been drawn from ESL rather than EFL. It is also pertinent to highlight that very little has been published about how aspects of CP could be reflected in the CLIL classroom.

Regarding appropriate materials for CLIL courses, Researchers, such as Ball (2018), emphasise that CLIL has always inspired an approach to material design tailored by teachers themselves, given the lack of ready-made materials which fit the context. However, the same author notes the impracticality of such material design given the time constraints under which many teachers operate. Mehisto (2012) outlines ten criteria that quality CLIL materials should incorporate. These criteria state that quality CLIL materials should make the learning outcomes clear to students, systematically target academic language proficiency, encourage learner skill development and autonomy, include formative forms of assessment, foster cooperative learning, incorporate authentic language and authentic language use, foster critical thinking, assist cognitive fluency via scaffolding, and ultimately help make learning meaningful.

Similarly, Meyer (2010) outlines the importance of materials and instruction within the CLIL classroom. He explains the importance of crucial strategies (rich input, scaffolded learning, rich interaction and pushed output, the inclusion of an intercultural dimension, an emphasis

on Higher Order Thinking skills, among others). Regarding the issue of involving students in the creation of language learning materials, Moiseenko (2015) emphasises the need for creativity in materials creation but argues that most students boast a sufficient level of creativity to complete such a task and that "...materials creation as a joint endeavor (teacher and learners) helps learners enjoy one of the key components of collaborative learning: active engagement" (p. 15).

Among those who looked at the importance of authenticity in EFL learning materials was Pinner (2016), who emphasised that authenticity is "...not about native speakers but rather is concerned with making the language relevant and meaningful to the learners, or in other words giving them a real reason to use the language within the pedagogic setting" (p. 10). Pinner (2016) urged future research into authenticity to be focused on local contexts sensitive to global tendencies. Pinner's work on authenticity in language learning materials built on that of Gilmore (2007), who had defined authentic materials as those created by "...language produced by a real speaker/writer for a real audience, conveying a real message" (p. 98). He argued that authentic materials, particularly audiovisual materials, offer a richer form of input and have more potential to be utilised in different forms to develop communicative competence in learners. Gilmore (2007) suggested that authentic materials related to the local learning context could be more motivational for learners despite conceding that it is not easy to establish a causal relationship between authenticity and motivation. Regarding student empowerment and active global citizenship, Broom (2015) advises that learners must be empowered to benefit themselves and society. Broom quotes Ross (2012) stating that good citizens "...are primarily understood to be individuals who actively participate in their nation's civic affairs, whether by engaging in more traditional practices such as voting or more activist means such as boycotting or protesting" before reflecting on how empowered citizens are those who feel capable of social, political or economic change.

The issue of how speaking in L1 or L2 impacts learners on an emotional level, mainly when talking about controversial or divisive issues, has attracted increasing attention in recent years. Keysar et al. (2012) found that bilinguals made more rational decisions when presented with problems in their L2. Dylman and Barta (2019) demonstrated that

purposeful use of L2 can decrease distress experienced by participants following exposure to input containing distressful content in the L1. It has been interpreted that this difference on an emotional level between L1 and L2 use concerning particular stimuli could be attributed to a greater emotional distance when communicating in a second language as opposed to one's mother tongue.

## Methodology

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As mentioned in the introduction, this project was about creating videos offering information on the proposals of five candidates ahead of the Colombian presidential elections in 2018. The videos were researched and created by a team of 13 International Relations students and an English teacher (the author) of their program. The English language videos were then sent by email to over 100 English language teachers at the secondary and university levels in the local context and shared on social media, with the teachers being invited to utilise the videos in their classrooms.

Upon completion of the education term and the first round of the presidential election in June 2018, a short survey (eight open-ended questions) was sent to the same teachers who had received the videos. Seven teachers (five at the university level and two from secondary school) responded to the survey, which was focused on their perceptions of the videos as educational materials. Furthermore, eight of the students who created the videos responded to a short survey of eight open-ended questions that sought to explore their perceptions of being involved in the project. In addition, three of the students volunteered for short semi-structured interviews regarding their experience and thoughts on the project and their involvement in it.

Before focusing on how this data was interpreted, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the project and outline details that are important to mention from an ethical standpoint. First, this is a small-scale research project based on a relatively small sample of respondents. As highlighted above, the data collected came from two open-ended question surveys, one answered by seven teachers



who had used the materials and the other answered by eight student-participants who had helped create the materials, and the three semi-structured interviews conducted with participants in the project. Furthermore, since the surveys were anonymous, there may have been an overlap between participants completing the survey and those who completed the interviews. However, on that point, it is relevant to highlight that the data collected via the interviews only featured in this paper in relation to active citizenship and the relevance of discussing serious issues in L2 to allow more elaboration.

From an ethical standpoint, it is necessary to highlight the relationship between the researcher and the participants, keeping in mind that the participants worked on the project directly with the researcher and had previously been students of the researcher. With this in mind, this close working relationship may have influenced the responses provided. Similarly, it is essential to state that some of the teachers who utilised the materials and completed the survey could have been colleagues, as the videos and later the surveys were sent to a mailing list of English teachers working in the university where the project was created as well as to teachers in other educational institutions.

In terms of data collection and analysis, the interviews conducted were transcribed verbatim and added to a document containing the survey responses. All these survey responses (teacher and student), and the interview transcripts, were read through, analysed, and coded following Thematic Analysis, a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006 as found in Nowell et al., 2017). This analysis approach was selected as it is a valuable method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (King, 2004). The survey and interview responses are included as an annexe to this document.

Having initially analysed the data compiled and bearing in mind the topics outlined in the literature review, five general themes were identified, with these being used to categorise the data. Of these themes, two emerged prominently in the responses from teachers and students alike; the themes of *critical thinking/awareness* and the

importance of authentic and contextually relevant material. The student responses (from surveys and interviews) also highlighted the themes of active citizenship, the benefits of exploring critical issues in a second language, and the challenges and benefits of performing in front of a camera. These five themes will be explored in the following section.

## Results

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### Critical thinking/awareness

The teachers who chose to use the videos and responded to the survey addressed critical thinking and awareness in response to the question regarding their motives for using the videos as class material. Three of the seven responses from teachers touched on the importance of allowing students to evaluate their preferences for a candidate and, by extension, of reflecting critically on these preferences:

*I also want the students to see all points of view in a neutral way. I think it is very motivating to hear the motives and goals of each candidate without saying the name and students hear it from students like themselves in English.*

*To encourage my students to get informed about the election.*

*To help students realize that they possibly had bias towards one candidate or to help them recognize their candidate better.*

The extracts above, and particularly the words and phrases in bold, demonstrate the teachers' motivation to encourage critical thinking among their students by having them strive for neutrality, become better informed, and identify possible biases that might influence their thinking.

When asked about the responses of their students to the videos, two of the teachers again provided answers that demonstrate they saw these materials as a tool to encourage critical thought:

*They guessed some of the candidates' proposals easily, but for some they were very surprised, and I think they enjoyed that sense of surprise.*

*The older group responded well, and the videos sparked some lively discussions. The younger group were fairly indifferent.*

Another comment from the teacher survey which stands out concerning critical thinking was from a response to a question asking whether the teachers would appreciate more materials such as these videos, with one teacher responding:

*The videos were very useful inside the classroom and also something they could take and use outside as well to be better citizens.*

Here, it is evident that the teacher felt the materials were helpful to the students as learners and citizens, indicating materials helped promote critical thought regarding such an important issue. It is also worth noting the overlap of critical thinking with the availability of authentic materials focused on the local context and the overlap between critical thinking and notions of active citizenship. This theme will be explored further below.

The student participants also provided responses that indicated that they saw the benefit of their involvement in providing greater information and the opportunity to make a more informed decision in the election. They also stated that they recognised the value of such an experience in helping their peers and family make more informed decisions:

*It makes me happy to be part of this kind of project where I can contribute to help people make a smart choice when voting.*

*I learnt a lot about the candidates' proposals, more than I would have if I hadn't participated in the project, so not only did I get well informed but also could talk to my friends and family about the proposals as well.*

*I had a serious problem arguing with people about political stuff, because usually people don't matter or just know little about a candidate's proposal, so I saw an opportunity and I took it.*

*Also the fact that I could create my own opinion/point of view about the candidates and that it might be helpful for other students to become informed about politics in our country.*

## The importance of authentic and contextually relevant materials

The teachers who utilised the videos and shared their perspectives via the survey were asked about how their students responded to them. All seven teacher responses indicated that they felt the students demonstrated a clear interest in the topic, but two of the responses elaborated further on why they felt this was:

*They really enjoyed seeing students talk about the candidates in English and had a debate themselves about which candidate is whom. They got a bit heated at moments when deciding who is the best candidate but I think hearing all perspectives was very helpful.*

*I think everyone appreciated something in English that related to them as Colombians. They were quick to ask about words or pronunciation they didn't understand so that was a good way for them to be exposed to English from another angle.*

Both of these responses emphasise how their students responded positively to materials in English, which focused on critical issues to which they could relate as Colombians. Furthermore, both teachers added that they felt having these materials helped the students by exposing students to different words and phrases related to the topic in the latter extract and by sparking a heated discussion encompassing all perspectives in the former.

When asked if they would appreciate having more materials of this type, the responses were yet again positive, with six of the seven responses referring to the appeal of authentic, contextually relevant materials:

*Yes, because it is authentic and relevant to their lives and provides an opportunity to hear opinions expressed in English... I definitely recommend more videos with students expressing ideas about current events not only in politics or Colombia but also world events.*

*These were highly motivating videos because they were so topical and relevant to what my students care about. Also, students are always asking for ways to bring in current affairs, and these videos are a really engaging way to do that.*

*Yes! As I said, I think it's important to make the content relate to the students when we can and it was undeniably timely and useful.*

*It is fantastic. Learners feel they are part of the process of learning and they find it accessible. They also have the opportunity to talk about reality in context.*

*YES! It was awesome to have high quality academic material on a local political issue, timely and relevant.*

*Yes, because the themes are intrinsically interesting and important.*

One final point which is vital to reference is how some of the teachers mentioned that they saw these authentic, locally relevant materials as being complementary to content being covered in their classes:

*I wanted to relate the material of the election to the themes covered in the book and units from class, especially the environment and careers and economy.*

*Because they were related to nowadays news and learners need to work on supporting opinions.*

The students, for their part, were asked more generally about the impact their work may have had as an educational tool for students and teachers. Of the eight student responses, three focused more specifically on the local relevance of the videos:

*A lot. I think it's very useful to have short videos speaking about relevant topics for teachers and students alike.*

*And it also could inspire teachers to start thinking about how they can motivate their students to participate, be well informed, and share accurate information about the country's politics.*

*Huge, because the project shows how you can learn from different ways, not only the traditional one.*

*I think it had and it will be having a positive impact for educations because this project can be use (sic) as example to develop new things in class and to try different things with the students, also it can generate good expectation for students to get involved in different things that can help them to improve their skills.*

## Active citizenship

Student responses to the survey indicated the importance the participants attached to the experience in terms of civic engagement and active citizenship. This was expressed via references made to the importance they associated with being informed of issues related to their country's politics and their involvement in the political process as voters and citizens. Six of the eight student responses referenced these factors when asked a general question about their experience on the project, as shown in the following extracts:

*It was an amazing experience that helped me get more in touch with my country's political procedure.*

*It was a really fulfilling experience and I learned a lot by talking to other students about election times in my country since we all had to do a lot of research about the topic.*

*It was a very nice experience where I learned a lot about politics in my country. It makes me happy to make part of this kind of projects where I can contribute to help people make a smart choice when voting.*

*It was a new experience for me and helped me to get into a political project again since a long time that I was not active in projects. For that reason I felt really happy because I like politics.*

*It was really good. I learnt a lot about the candidates proposals, more than I would have if I hadn't participated in the project, so not only did I got well informed but also could talk to my friends and family about the proposals as well.*

*It was a very nice experience... talking about the proposals of the candidates regardless their curriculums was very interesting.*

When asked specifically about why they wanted to be involved in the project work, four of the eight participants again referred to a desire to be well informed about the political candidates and politics in general:

*To have the experience. Also, I am always very interested in topics related to politics.*

*Because I wanted to be updated with all the presidential candidates' proposals and also be able to create my own opinion about them.*

*I wanted to be involved because for me, being an spectator of the actual political environment, it was necessary to know better the proposals of each candidate but also help other people to understand them, taking a position based on the real proposals.*

*Because I thought it was a really good idea to give an objective view of the candidates proposals considering the prejudice and lies around every single candidate.*

These comments demonstrate that these student-participants saw their involvement in a project of this nature as a way of informing not only themselves but also those around them about relevant policy stances ahead of what was seen as a crucial election process in their country. This conscious focus on active citizenship and civic responsibility was further elaborated on by the participants who partook in the semi-structured interviews. Two of the three interviewees commented explicitly on the significance of this being their first voting experience and their desire to be well informed:

*This is my first time voting for the presidential elections, so it was like really important to me to be involved in all this process, and also getting to know the candidates in this way, like in an objective way... so it really helped me, also, to make my choice regarding the elections and the candidate I want to vote for. —Clara*

*Well, that's one point because there is the election, but also because this year was the first time I vote and that is, I think, special for everyone, and also because my partner and I think that politics is important for us, and I think that voting is important because of all the things that are involved in the process. —Pedro*

Furthermore, all three interviewees explained the importance of their involvement in the project to help engage others about the key issues ahead of such a momentous election:

*... but I think it was worth it, because of what we were doing... like it was really important to try to show people this idea... and this new proposal... about the proposals of the candidates. —Clara*

*I think yeah, because, for example, we could show the videos to people who... people who are not too... they don't believe too much in those topics... or the person that is behind the video, so it could make the video more like, unbiased, and for example for example for my mom and my family, they liked the video, and they were always asking me to show the videos. —Dora*

*Yes, and also the information that we got here was important, and we can use that information when we are talking to other people in Spanish because a lot of, most of the time we are not used to talk about it, especially like, the proposals... we just talk about the name of the candidate, and we don't talk about the proposals, and also with that information, can help to us to have extra information to discuss about the topics that we... about the candidate that we want to talk about. —Pedro*

### **Benefits of exploring critical issues in a second language**

The three participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews were also asked to give their opinion on discussing such relevant political topics from the Colombian context in English compared to talking about such topics in Spanish. While one of the respondents, “Dora,” referenced that she found such a task a novelty given they are topics typically discussed in Spanish, both “Clara” and “Pedro” provided more expansive responses about how speaking about such issues in English helped them focus principally on the information being communicated:

*Well... It depends because of... sometimes the language has influenced... because in English, you try to be like... more objective like I don't know... but in Spanish because it's your it's your native language you usually are more biased... for example when you speak with friends. So, I think in English it was very different. I feel weird at the beginning, talking about politics, about Colombian politics in English, but it was an interesting experience because I could see it from another point of view. —Clara*

*Yes, I really liked that, because it was a very (unintelligible), in a professional way, to talk about the elections, because when we used to talk, as we speak Spanish as our mother language, and we used to speak, like with anger, so we can't just like separate things when we talk about politics. It was different because, like in that way, we could hear the*



proposals of each candidate being objective, not the stereotypes or the things the politician has done in his term. And also, we could find the proposals for the candidates for each topic. —Pedro

Well, one difference is that when we talk about it in Spanish, we used to relate the candidates to case of corruption, the case that they had open. For example, when we talk about Duque, we relation [sic] him with Uribe and that stuff, and with Petro, we relate him to the guerrillas, and I don't know, when we talk about the other candidates, it's the same because, in Spanish, we tend to label the candidates for the things that they have done, or the things that they want, one, one part of the spectrum, wants us, wants us to believe, and in that way, we couldn't hear the real proposals that each candidate has, and we just vote for the things that we heard, but we didn't; we're not sure about it. —Pedro

It is significant that both “Clara” and “Pedro” suggested that speaking about these issues allowed them to discuss the policies more neutrally and objectively.

### **The challenges and benefits of performing in front of a camera**

The final theme to emerge from the research data was the apparent significance the participants attached to the challenges of being part of the web series and working in front of the camera. This theme was referenced in the responses to five of the eight survey questions.

When asked about their general experience of working on the project, two of the eight respondents referenced the camera factor:

*Moreover, I learnt about how to talk in front of a camera without looking so nervous.*

*It was a very nice experience. It was the first time I do something like this, and being on camera, talking about the proposals of the candidates regardless their curriculums was very interesting.*

When asked why they wanted to participate in the project, two of the eight respondents specifically referenced the challenge of working in front of a camera:

*I wanted to try something different, and I always wanted to try being in front of a camera.*

Also because it helps to develop oral skills, and **improve the performance while we speak in English.**

When asked what they had found most rewarding about their participation, two participants referenced their experience in front of the camera:

*It helped me gain more confidence in myself, and it **made me a bit less camera shy.***

*For me the fact that it was a project in English was really rewarding because I enjoy speaking in English and in a more personal view it **was rewarding that I could work in the project in front of a camera (not an easy job for me).***

When asked what they had found most challenging about their participation in the project, there was a near-unanimous agreement with seven respondents pinpointing the task of working in front of a camera:

*Dealing with **my fear of messing up**, and making things more difficult for the people working with me.*

*Maybe **being able to articulate all the information in a clear and simple way in front of a camera.***

*I'm kinda shy about talking in front of a crowd public and cameras so it **was pretty challenging for me.***

*The fact that I **don't have previous experiences talking in front of the cameras or recording this kind of shows** and also that we didn't have much time to study the scripts before the recording sessions.*

*As I already said, **being in front of a camera because my experience has not been the best.** But I handled it.*

*I'm not a camera fan, mostly, because I got a little stage fright. However, this project help me to deal with it.*

***Being on camera, talking in English, because of the lack of practice and the level of mind focus that is needed to perform in a good way.***

***Having to speak and read in frontier (sic) of a camera. Made me very nervous.***

Finally, when the participants were asked what they had learned from the experience, six respondents referenced the challenge of performing publicly in front of the camera:

*Being confident and more open to try new things.*

*I learned how to be organized and how to work as a team in order to deliver a message and obtain good results.*

*I learn new abilities and strategies for talking in public and about working in groups.*

*It helped me to enhance my abilities to work under pressure due to the little time we had to prepare for the recording, also how to inform people with objective information and it helped me to face a big challenge in front of the cameras!*

*I learnt how to speak in front of a camera without getting so nervous.*

*This project helped a lot to lose fears being in front of the cameras speaking in English.*

## Discussion

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Discussion of this data will focus on the related topics of critical thinking and active citizenship before exploring the importance of this project as a source of authentic and contextually relevant educational materials. Then, the benefits of exploring essential themes in L2 and the significance for the participants of performing in front of a camera will be discussed and reflected upon.

### Critical thinking/awareness and active citizenship

It was evident from several of the teacher responses that the materials allowed them to encourage reflection, and the debate among their students regarding the upcoming elections was a matter of some significance. These teachers highlighted that the videos engaged their learners, who were surprised by some of the proposals put forth by the candidates, which could indicate that the students had become

better informed by having a distinctive insight into the candidates and their proposals. The focus on the local context inherent in this video project is significant about critical thinking/awareness, keeping in mind what Breuing (2011) stated regarding the need for a focus on their immediate context. Similarly, the provocation of lively discussions can indicate the potential of materials such as these to encourage genuine dialogue within the classroom. These responses suggest that for these teachers, the materials offered an opportunity for actual dialogical action (Freire, 1972) within their classrooms, whereby students could thoroughly discuss the information presented in the materials to become better-informed citizens.

This focus on becoming better-informed citizens links together the themes of critical thinking/awareness and active citizenship. Giroux (2010) wrote of the potential for CP to be used in conjunction with the ideals of active citizenship within classrooms to ensure an informed citizenry capable of making informed decisions. As outlined above, the teachers highlighted this factor as a motive for using the materials and as a most valued factor in the materials. In addition to the teacher responses, the student-participants also emphasised the importance of their participation in the project in terms of active citizenship and civic responsibility. Many of the students referenced that this civic engagement was a critical factor in why they participated in the project and cited their involvement as being hugely relevant to them based on the fact it allowed them to know more about the policies being proposed by all the candidates. Several of the responses referred to how their participation in the project allowed them to know more about the candidates and make a more informed decision in the presidential election, which represented the first opportunity to vote for most participants. These students saw their participation as a way to become better informed ahead of this momentous election.

Furthermore, several of the student responses elaborated that they saw their participation as a way to inform themselves in order to vote on an informed basis and as a useful exercise when it came to talking to friends, peers, and family members about the election. Indeed, some of the interviewees spoke about how they saw their involvement as a way to be better informed and discuss these matters in the most objective way possible, hugely important given the political polarisation

experienced in Colombia and worldwide. The student-participant responses that focused on active citizenship appear to embody Broom's (2015) call for empowered students capable of benefiting themselves and society.

### **Importance of authentic and relevant materials**

The other dominant theme that emerged from the data, particularly from the teacher responses, was the appreciation for having authentic materials focused on the local context. As outlined in the literature review, Pinner (2016) argued that authenticity was about having materials and activities which are relevant and meaningful to learners in order to provide a genuine reason for using the language. As can be seen from the teacher responses, it was felt that the relevance of the materials, coming as they did during the election campaign, provided a high level of interest and motivation to the students. These videos succeeded in engaging the students by focusing on issues of the utmost local and national importance.

It is also relevant to highlight that several of the teacher responses emphasised the importance for their students of seeing their peers use their English language skills to explore such vital themes. On this point, it is also timely to refer back to Gilmore's (2007) work, where the potential of authentic materials, particularly audiovisual materials, was highlighted as an essential base on which communicative competencies could be developed, as well as potentially being a source of motivation for learners. While the same author stated that causality between authenticity and learner motivation is not an easy connection to prove, the teacher responses expressed a desire for more materials tackling critical local issues to engage and motivate learners in this context. It must also be noted that student responses also included reference to the appeal of authentic and relevant materials, albeit to a lesser extent than the teachers. Such an aspect could be explained by the fact that the teachers were explicitly asked about using videos as educational material.

## Exploring essential themes in L2

As seen above in the results section, the three interviewees were asked particularly about the significance of exploring these political issues in English rather than Spanish. Two of the three respondents provided responses that appear to align with research findings (Dylman & Barta, 2019; Keysar et al., 2012) that suggest that speaking about delicate or controversial subjects in L2 can lower the emotional impact of the content and perhaps even allow topics to be explored more neutrally. “Clara” specifically mentioned that she felt that bias was more likely to be demonstrated when speaking about political issues in Spanish than in her experience discussing these issues in English as part of the series. “Pedro,” for his part, mentioned that speaking about politics or political figures in Spanish produced more anger than speaking about the same topics in English, which he felt encouraged a more objective conversation. While these responses appear to support the lowering effect on emotions of speaking about specific issues in L2 rather than L1, there are a couple of important caveats to include. First, these two responses were the only two respondents to elaborate on this issue. Second, since these student-participants had been involved in the project from the beginning, they were aware that part of the rationale of this project was to lower the emotional tone of political debate to allow viewers, teachers, and students to explore the content of the proposals, something which was partly achieved via the use of English rather than Spanish. This awareness on behalf of the interviewees means that their responses may have been influenced by prior knowledge.

## Performing in front of a camera

Perhaps the most surprising aspect to emerge from this research data is the significance attached by the student-participants to the fact that they were required to talk in front of a video camera to produce the series. As mentioned earlier in the text, the videos were created with the assistance of the CEDU, which enabled a professional level of production. Participants were not merely performing in front of their peers as they are accustomed to in a classroom environment but also the camera crew and others in the area used for recording. While a smaller

number of participants cited the issue of performing in front of cameras as being one of the motivations for taking part in the series and what they had found most rewarding about the experience, a majority of respondents highlighted this fact when asked what they had found most challenging and what they had learned from the experience. It suggests that even though such tasks may provoke discomfort among students performing in the second language, it had helped to show that they are capable of rising to the challenge.

## Conclusions

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Despite the apparent limitations of the study, it is felt that this research paper could still be informative and of assistance to teachers and researchers for several reasons. To begin, the web series demonstrates the potential for learners of English to contribute as materials or input creators. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, it may be difficult for CLIL teachers to have sufficient time to work on material creation (Ball, 2018). However, the benefits of working with students on creating materials applicable and relevant to the local context offers the potential to include local voices and compensate for *the lack of responsiveness from traditional guidebooks to local contexts* (Bane-gas, 2017). In addition, it is felt that through this example of student involvement in the creation of input appropriate for CLIL materials, teachers and researchers elsewhere may feel empowered to explore such a route, enabling students and teachers to co-create their context-sensitive CLIL materials (Banegas & Del Pozo Beamud, 2020).

Despite its small sample size, this research should offer further encouragement to those in education who wish to incorporate authentic and contextually relevant materials into their language learning environment. While student participants referenced the importance of this aspect, it was the teachers who used the materials that emphasised their impact in terms of learner engagement and motivation. The context where the research was conducted, at the university level with International Relations students and a high level of English proficiency, meant that it was possible to produce informative content

with a sophisticated level of language. However, such projects could be created on any topic and with language learners of different proficiencies, engaging and empowering students. The challenge for teachers and material creators elsewhere will be related to the issues of what input material is most relevant given the content focus of the course and the language level and needs of the students. Furthermore, it will be of the utmost importance to create input and materials appropriate given the learning outcomes established in each context, with constructive alignment always to the fore.

Creating authentic, locally relevant input for materials around key issues also provides educators and students alike with an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, encourage traits of active citizenship, and develop other 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in learners. The student-participants in this study saw their involvement in this project as a way for them to become better informed and to inform others about vital policy information ahead of a presidential election; students and teachers elsewhere may even adapt a similar project ahead of elections or other significant events in their regions and countries. The teachers who used these videos in class and responded to the survey questions saw these materials as an excellent way to engage their students and have them explore, evaluate, and discuss the candidates' policies, something all citizens should do before such important events like elections. Traditional materials such as guidebooks can encourage this type of thinking among learners, but as has been seen above, the focus on the local context makes topics accessible and relevant to the students. By being spurred to discuss these issues in class, learners are offered an opportunity to not only improve their language skills, but also encouraged to think critically and take their citizenry seriously.

Finally, this project demonstrates how by working on such initiatives, students can not only empower themselves to be more responsible citizens, capable of making a positive impact on society, but also empower themselves by becoming more comfortable using their language skills and their voice in front of a camera. With the COVID-19 pandemic, education was forced to adapt to a virtual world in which learners and teachers adapted to environments consisting of keyboards, microphones, and video calls. This dramatic change meant traditional speaking assessments such as presentations and discussions had to be



recorded. The student participants' responses indicated that they recognised and experienced the challenges and benefits of performing in front of a camera. In a world set to be increasingly dependent on virtual meetings, presentations, and conferences, such performance-based projects may help to strengthen learner confidence.

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## Appendix A: Survey and Interview data

### Teacher Perception Responses

Connecting/Expanding core content

Critical Thinking / Critical awareness

Authentic / Contextually based

Active Citizenship

Critical thinking/Awareness

Being on Camera

Identity English Perception

Why did you decide to use the videos in class?

I wanted to relate the material of the election to the themes covered in the book and units from class, especially the environment and careers and economy. I also want the students to see all points of view in a neutral way. I think it is very motivating to hear the motives and goals of each candidate with out saying the name and students hear it from students like themselves in English.

My students are very invested in the upcoming elections and love to talk about the candidates but don't necessarily know all the details of their proposals. I wanted to see if they could match the proposals to the candidates.

The main reason was that it was in English but about something Colombian, and further that that "something Colombian" was very timely and relevant. In English class, materials in English are not often about the students' own culture, but it doesn't have to be like that. The videos provided a really nice way to use English and also learn about something they cared about.

Because of the upcoming elections and the interest my older students had in the process.

Because they were related to nowadays news and learners need to work on supporting opinions.

To encourage my students to get informed about the election  
Because we were doing a debate on the political candidates  
To help students realize that they possibly had bias towards one candidate or to help them recognize their candidate better.

How did you use the videos in class? What activities did you do with them?

I had them guess the candidates at the middle and do pros and cons then relate the themes to the book units for level 4. I had students in groups of 3 debate which candidates would be best based on the goals they have and what we learned in class. They also had to give their opinions about which candidate can achieve which goals the best.

Typically, I played the videos and then paused to see if students could guess the candidate being discussed. Then we had a class discussion afterward.

I put them in random groups in had them taken notes throughout, then work together to guess who was who. I always paused the video for some dicussion time in English, then hit play so students could see which group did the best. I also asked students to try to choose a candidate number that they agreed with prior to watching the end of the video.

We watched and trid to guess which candidates were behind the policies.

I showed the videos. Ss should choose one of the proposal and defending their point of view. It was something they could prepared before speaking.

There wasn't much time so I just played the video, paused after each student explained a candidate, asked for questions about vocab, and asked students to guess which candidate they were talking about

We watched, paused after each set of propositions and then guessed and then checked our answers.

How did your students respond to the materials?

They really enjoyed seeing students talk about the candidates in English and had a debate themselves about which candidate is whom. They got a bit heated at moments when deciding who is the best candidate but I think hearing all perspectives was very helpful.

Students loved the videos! For one, they knew some of the students in the videos, and they enjoyed seeing their friends do them. They

guessed some of the candidates' proposals easily, but for some they were very surprised, and I think they enjoyed that sense of surprise.

Many of them were extremely interested, and others weren't as much. I think everyone appreciated something in English that related to them as Colombians. They were quick to ask about words or pronunciation they didn't understand so that was a good way for them to be exposed to English from another angle.

The older group responded well, and they videos sparked some lively discussions. The younger group were fairly indifferent.

They had some conceptions about the candidates and their proposals, but they prepared some arguments and they defend their point of view.

They were interested, generally, and impressed by the English level of the student participants :)

They were a little skeptical at first, but then they were very competitive.

Would you like to have more materials like that to work with? Why or why not?

Yes, because it is authentic and relevant to their lives and provides an opportunity to hear opinions expressed in English. I really like how you set it up to be a guess at the end!! CEDU is amazing with what they do in the classroom and opportunities for teachers to bring the world to the classroom. I definitely recommend more videos with students expressing ideas about current events not only in politics or Colombia but also world events.

Absolutely! These were highly motivating videos because they were so topical and relevant to what my students care about. Also, students are always asking for ways to bring in current affairs, and these videos are a really engaging way to do that.

Yes! As I said, I think it's important to make the content relate to the students when we can and it was undeniably timely and useful. The videos were very useful inside the classroom and also something they could take and use outside as well to be better citizens. They were also nice because they helped show you can learn English from other English learners.

Yes, because the themes are intrinsically interesting and important.

Yes. It is fantastic. Learners feel they are part of the process of learning and they find it accessible. They also have the opportunity to talk about reality in context.

YES! It was awesome to have high quality academic material on a local political issue, timely and relevant... Also it's great that I could give my level 7 students models of excellent, intelligent, politically informed peers

Oh yes. It's great for students to hear their peers use English and the "guessing aspect" grew on them. I also appreciated that the videos were factual and unbiased.

### **Student Perception Survey**

Active Citizenship

Critical thinking/Awareness

Being on Camera

Benefits of authentic contextually relevant materials

How was your experience working on the election project (Candidates' Cards on the Table)?

It was an amazing experience that helped me get more in touch with my country's political procedure.

It was a really fulfilling experience and I learned a lot by talking to other students about election times in my country since we all had to do a lot of research about the topic.

It was pretty satisfactory and exciting how we got to work together on such an interesting topic.

It was a very nice experience where I learned a lot about politics in my country. It makes me happy to make part of this kind of projects where I can contribute to help people make a smart choice when voting.

It was a new experience for me and helped me to get into a political project again since a long time that I was not active in projects. For that reason I felt really happy because I like politics.

It was really good. I learnt a lot about the candidates proposals, more than I would have if I hadn't participated in the project, so not

only did I got well informed but also could talk to my friends and family about the proposals as well. Moreover, I learnt about how to talk in front of a camera without looking so nervous.

It was really exciting. I've never work in this kind of project before. I learned a lot.

It was a very nice experience. It was te first time I do something like this, and being on camera, talking about the proposals of the candidates regardless their curriculum was very interesting.

Why did you want to be involved in making the videos?

I wanted to try something different, and I always wanted to try being in front of a camera.

To have the experience. Also I am always very interested in topics related to politics.

I think it's an enjoyable project and its an entertaining way of teaching and learning.

Because I wanted to be updated with all the presidential candidates proposals and also be able to create my own opinion about them.

I wanted to be involved because for me, being an spectator of the actual political environment, it was necessary to know better the proposals of each candidate but also help other people to understand them, taking a position based on the real proposals.

Because I thought it was a really good idea to give an objective view of the candidates proposals considering the prejudice and lies around every single candidate.

Because the main goal of the project cares me a lot. I had serious problem to arguee with people about political stuff, because usually people dont matter or just know little about candidates proposal, so I saw an oportunity and I took it.

first of all, to inform, because we were talking about the proposals of the candidates who was running for the presidency, and also because it helps to develop oral skills, and improve the performance while we speak in english.

What did you find rewarding about the experience?

It helped me gain more confidence in myself, and it made me a bit less camera shy.

All the learning I achieved since I had to do a lot of research about the candidates so I could know what we were talking about and being sure we were giving trustworthy information.

I've never been on a project like this one so I find rewarding the new knowledge that I got

I enjoyed being an active part of the political discussion with other international relations students. Also the fact that I could create my own opinion/point of view about the candidates and that it might be helpful for other students to become informed about politics in our country.

For me the fact that it was a project in english was really rewarding because I enjoy speaking in english and in a more personal view it was rewarding that I could work in the project in front of a camera (not an easy job for me). It was also important for me that people actually watched the videos and like them.

Seeing that there were people on the internet actually enjoying them and therefore, getting informed objectively.

That people can use true facts as base to vote.

That many people despite the fact the couldn't participate, they wanted to be involved when we talk about the project with them.

What was the most challenging or difficult thing about being involved in the project?

Dealing with my fear of messing up, and making things more difficult for the people working with me.

Maybe being able to articulate all the information in a clear and simple way in front of a camera.

I'm kinda shy about talking in front of a crowd public and cameras so it was pretty challenging for me.

The fact that I don't have previous experiences talking in front of the cameras or recording this kind of shows and also that we didn't have much time to study the scripts before the recording sessions.

As I already said, being in front of a camera because my experience has not been the best. But I handled it.

Im not a camera fan, mostly, because I got a little stage fright. However, this project help me to deal with it.

Being on camera, talking in english, because of the lack of practice and the level of mind focus that is needed to perform in a good way.

Having to speak and read in frontier of a camera. Made me very nervous.



What impact do you think your work had at an educational level for teachers and students?

It was a good way to make everyone aware of Colombia's political situation, and maybe help people to make a better choice during election time.

I'd say that at an educational level for teachers and students it impact as a new and interesting way of learning the language and also learning about different topics.

A lot. I think it's very useful to have short videos speaking about relevant topics for teachers and students alike.

I think the impact has been positive since many friends have told me they've watched the videos in class and that it helped them to know about the candidate's proposals in an objective way.

This project help some professors not only to have more content for their classes but also to know the proposals of the candidates and contribute to pass the information to their students. So I think it is like a domino effect.

I think the project encourages young people, mostly, to get involved in colombia's politic area, which is very important. And it also could inspire teachers to start thinking about how they can motivate their students to participate, be well informed, and share accurate information about the country's politics.

Huge, because the project shows how can you learn from different ways, not only the traditional one.

I think it had and it will be having a positive impact for educations because this project can be use as example to develop new things in class and to try different things with the students, also it can generate good expectation for students to get involved in different things that can help them to improve their skills.

What impact do you think your work had in the broader community?

I hope it made people really think about what they want for this country and what different options they had

Citizens will be able to obtain quick and trustworthy information about candidates without having to do a lot of research by themselves.

I think it helped people to know a little more about the elections in our country and the candidates.

Many people watched the videos through social media and liked them alleging it was a creative and new way to inform people. Some people who's from other countries and aren't native speakers also saw them and we're able to understand what was going on in our country regarding the elections.

Even though people liked the videos, not all could have access to watch them because of a lack of divulgation or massification of the videos, but to those that had the opportunity, I know they felt good seeing that we not only give them the proposals but also negative and positive points.

We got to inform people objectively, leaving emotions and personal thoughts aside, so we showed the good and bad did of their proposals based on academic foundations. That's such a important thing to do in Colombia because of the polarization there is.

Positive, because world is connected now. It's not necessary born in a country to get interested on it. So if other people can understand what happening here, can perfectly see the videos.

I think that the videos helped to inform in a good way to many people who were hesitating for the candidate to vote, also can generate a positive impact to watch young people involved in this topics and promoting them.

What did you learn from being involved in the project?

Being confident and more open to try new things

I learned how to be organized and how to work as a team in order to deliver a message and obtain good results.

I learn new abilities and strategies for talking in public and about working in groups.

It helped me to enhance my abilities to work under pressure due to the little time we had to prepare for the recording, also how to inform people with objective information and it helped me to face a big challenge in front of the cameras!

I learned that it is always interesting to participate in this kind of projects because we can improve our knowledge about certain topic, In this case, a really important one. I learned more about my candidates proposals and could have a better view of what I was sure I like of his proposals and what I was not completely agree.

I learnt how to speak in front of a camera without getting so nervous and also about the pro and cons of each candidates proposals this project helped a lot to lose fears being in front of the cameras speaking in english. Also the team work and compromise was positive thing that come out for the project.

What effect (if any) did your involvement in the project have on your perception of the election and the candidates?

A very big one, since its was hard to see a lot of information that could be simple to understand in the general media outlets, which led to a lot of misunderstandings regarding the different candidates.

I became more aware of the other candidates ideas and proposals. It helped to know better the candidates and its proposals and therefore it helped me to chose one.

It helped me to reaffirm what I thought about the candidate I voted for and also to be able to understand why I shouldn't choose the other candidates or why I wouldn't agree with their proposals.

I was more able to speak with other people about each candidates proposals, and for me it is always important to talk about what we know.

Since I got to read and learn the good and bad sides of each candidates proposals, it helped me choose between two candidates i was indecisive about.

A huge effect, help me to realize the weakness of my candidate and be far from stereotype the rest of them.

It helped to be sure about the candidate I wanted to vote, and also to look the differences and similarities that they have regardless their backgrounds and issues.

### Student Perception Interviews

C: Well I am glad to be part of this project, because it's something different and a different proposal. I've never been part of that before. So I.. This is my first time voting for the presidential elections, so it was like really important to me to be involved in all this process, and also getting to know the candidates in this way, like in an objective way...so it really helped me, also, to make my choice regarding the elections and the candidate I want to vote for. And I think also it was like a teamwork.

And it was like very important because there was like, support between the participants, and even though we didn't have a lot of time, some time, there were the other people, or the other members of the project helping each other and supporting it..

C: Yes I really liked that. And also I've never had an experience in front of the camera, or like, it was very professional.

C: [laughs] I was nervous. I was really nervous because I think I'm really shy for that kind of things, but I think it was worth it, because of what we were doing...like it was really important to try to show people this idea...and this new proposal...about the proposals of the candidates.

C: Well...It depends because of...sometimes the language has influence...because in English, you try to be like...more objective like I don't know... but in Spanish because it's your it's your native language you usually are more biased...for example when you speak with friends. So I think in English it was very different. I feel weird at the beginning, talking about politics, about Colombian politics in English, but it was an interesting experience, because I could see it from another point of view.

D: Well, it was really interesting because as a International Relations student I also need to be able to understand some topics of the eh internal situation of the country so uh I like the fact that we could uh get more involved in the process of the election. The fact that we could understand better the proposals of the candidates, and not only focusing on the, on the like the candidate that you're interested in. And well, we could have the opportunity to look into the other candidates and not only the candidate that you like.

D: I think yeah, because for example we could show the videos to people who...people who are not too...they don't believe too much in those topics...or the person that is behind the video, so it could make the video more like, unbiased, and for example for example for my mom and my family, they liked the video and they were always asking me to show the videos.

D: I mean they liked them...even though they are biased with a candidate...but uh they liked the fact that they could understand other...other positions...because it was...also for me it was like... all the time it's like we are focused on the fact some candidates are not good

or something like that and it changed our minds, you could say that. And the fact that it was in English was really interesting because it's the first time that I have seen videos that are in English, I mean on that topic... so it was interesting and different.

P: Well I was working on Absentee, uh abstention (voter abstention) in young people here in the elections. I think what I learned is that uh, the rate of abstention in young people is high, I mean like 6 out of 10 young people or young adults are not interested in voting, and that's shocking, because we are studying International Relations and we tend to think that the young people are more interested in the political context, but doing research, we can found that's not it. I found that many young people are apathic (apathetic) to it and when you try to talk to them about it, they prefer not to talk, and talk about other things like, I don't know, football, girls and something like that.

P: Well that's one point because there is the election, but also because this year was the first time I vote. and that is, I think, special for everyone, and also because my partner and I think that politics is important for us, and I think that voting is important because of all the things that are involved in the process.

P: Yes, I really liked that, because it was a very (unintelligible), in a professional way, to talk about the elections, because when we used to talk, as we speak Spanish as our mother language, and we used to speak, like with anger, so we can't just like separate things, when we talk about politics. It was different because, like in that way we could hear the proposals of each candidate being objective, not the stereotypes, or the things the politician has done in his term. And also we could find the proposals for the candidates for each topic.

P: Well, one difference is that when we talk about it in Spanish, we used to relate the candidates to case of corruption, the case that they had open. For example when we talk about Duque, we relation [sic] him with Uribe and that stuff, and with Petro, we relate him to the guerrillas, and I don't know, when we talk about the other candidates it's the same, because in Spanish we tend to label the candidates for the things that they have done, or the things that they want, one, one part of the spectrum, wants us, wants us to believe, and in that way, we couldn't hear the real proposals that each candidate has and we just vote for the things that we heard, but we didn't, we're not sure about it.

P: Yes, and also the information that we got here was important and we can use that information when we are talking to other people in Spanish, because a lot of, most of the time we are not used to talk about it, especially like, the proposals...we just talk about the name of the candidate and we don't talk about the proposals, and also with that information, can help to us to have extra information to discuss about the topics that we...about the candidate that we want to talk about.