Promoting Empathy Skills through the Creation and Discussion of Comics: A Look into Multigrade Classroom

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Abstract

The present paper reports on the results of a descriptive case study carried out in a multigrade classroom in the southern of Bogota. The project aimed to illustrate the insights into the use of comic creation and discussion based on empathy in a collaborative environment, to analyze the way in which students reflected and building their perception as empathic being concerning their own world, answering the main question: How did students of a multigrade classroom perceive themselves as empathic being in a collaborative environment based on comics’ creation and discussion? Qualitative research and the grounded theory were used in order the analysis of the phenomena in its natural setting, where the instruments used for the triangulation process (students’ artifacts, interviews and questionnaires) revealed how they build social notions in order to describe themselves and their social environment in terms of empathy. From data, the category Social notions as representations of empathy understandings Relationships among socio-cognitive agents in empathy self-perception emerged to illustrate which cognitive and social aspects are taken into consideration in order to build a original notion of what empathy mean.

Key Words: Empathy Skill, Social Skills, Social Capabilities, Comics Creation.
NOTE OF ACCEPTANCE
Acknowledgment

First at all, I would like to thank God for the opportunity to be in this university and support during this long way full of meaningful experiences. My greatest gratitude also for my family which supported and loves me, even during the most difficult moments, without them this goal would not be possible. I hope one they to return all the thing they did for me.
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Chapter One

Introduction

During my experience as a pre-service EFL teacher in a multigrade school (defined as those educational contexts in which special characteristics and needs require students from different grades and ages take classes in the same classroom, however the content is adapted in accordance with students characteristics, (UNESCO, 2001) for six months, where I gave two hour class in an eight grade and the topics were assigned by the home-teacher in accordance with the school English curriculum; diverse situations related to classroom management and students interaction emerged; especially verbal aggressions among students. In this path, a necessity to understand how the social factors present in the classroom and students' perception towards those factors influence students social capacities. This inquiry attempts to understand how students may build their own perception as empathic individual influenced by environmental factors in the classroom and socio-cognitive student’s processes.

EDUFAM is a private educational institution located in the southern part of Bogota and its institutional objective is to foster student’s awareness about social skills and values which allow them to interact correctly with their families, school, and social environment. The educational project of the institution is based on religious values and beliefs, this institution applies an integral education in which family are included and performs an important role in children educational processes. This fact is an advantage to applying the intervention which builds an environment where those abilities were promoted.
Regarding the population in which this research project was carried out, there are 20 students in this multigrade classroom and this group is characterized by diversity in ages (children ages between 5 to 14 years) and cognitive stages of cognitive and social development. However, the participants of the intervention were 10 students and the population for the research analysis was 5 of them between 9-14 years. The criteria for students selection were: participation of most of the activities commitment and interest in the intervention and pertinence of given answers. Despite students use to not implement physical aggression for solving a conflict; they have a tendency to use verbal aggression over their classmates, it is an important social characteristic of this group.

Empathy is an important social skill to look for constructive social relationships. Empathy capacity is defined as this social skill which helps in the understanding of another person’s emotion and thoughts (Cooper, 2009; Gorostiaga, Balluerka, & Soroa, 2014; Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008) which is teachable and influenced by social factors (Sánchez-Queija, Oliva, & Parra, 2006; Vygotsky, 1995) and personal issues. Having adequate empathy skill levels is possible to encourage prosocial attitudes during controversial situations and the opportunity to receive a reciprocal empathic responses increase (Perinat, 2002); also the participants of the struggle are conscious of the influence of their empathic actions over their partner.

It is important to promote student’s empathy capacities in order to promote their reflection about the impact of their performance over other students and people around them. Some
experimental research, such as those carried out by Muraa (2010), Sahin (2011) and Oruc (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of training programs over the student’s level of empathy.

Other research studies such as Tunce (2010) and Teymuroglu (2011) studies presented the outcomes of using alternative materials like comics and cartoon as a tool to teach abstract concepts and notions, also to change attitudes towards specific situations. The aforementioned researches showed a curriculum which includes contents of empathy skills for problem solving as a possible strategy to encourage student’s self-consciousness as empathic beings. Additionally, the creation of comics will be used as an artistic tool to foster student’s communication, discussion, and awareness about the importance of this skill.

The possible limitations faced during the study are related to the short time to contemplate other factors which intervene in children empathy development, such as the parent and other members influence. Also, some obstacles to assign students extra-class task and homework reduce the data collection to ins classroom activities

This section presents the context reason and justification of the importance of this research project to understand how students build their empathy skills. Additionally, it presents the context and the participants involved in the research project and the statement of the problem.
Justification

In heterogeneous groups of the student when conflict situations are frequent and constructive solutions do not appear, a pedagogical intervention from the teacher is required in order to understand the reason for those behaviors. The fostering of empathy is important to understand themselves from the other`s perspective, learn new attitudes, express emphatically ideas and feeling, and acquire consciousness about the meaning of looking for the best solution. Additionally, inside the classroom is important to give opportunities to discuss and practice those skills in a collaborative environment.

For this reason, to understand this complex situation in the classroom, and take advantage of those situations as a way to improve student’s relationships and classroom`s environment; this research tried to build and apply an inquiry for social factors to understand students empathy building using as an instrument the collaborative comic’s creation and discussion. Comics (Angoloti, 1990) is conceived as an artistic tool to tell stories about common conflict experiences in students real contexts, and comics reading circles (Daniel, 2002) as a way to show their embroiled ideas on the comics and discuss the other`s creations. Additionally, this proposal is based on Valles (1996) proposal about the importance of building a collaborative learning curriculum where contents about problem-solving are included; and Martinez (2005) arguments about the use of conflict-solution programs as a way to prevent aggression in the classroom.

The expected impact of this project over the problematic situations is to build an atmosphere when students may perceive themselves as empathic individuals who are influenced by social
factors. Additionally, this environment may promote empathic consciousness of this skill as a tool to improve partners` relationships. The impact on the institution where this research is carried out is to show the importance to include an emphasis on contents related to social skills, not only in subjects related to social science. Finally, for my social development, this project has a special importance because it gives a new understanding of how to manage conflictive situation among students from the perspective of students as empathic being.
Problem Statement

In mainstream schools, most of the students affirmed to be an active part in a conflict situation and non-accurate ways to solve peer conflicts is shown through frequent events of verbal aggression. This fact manifests a necessity to capitalize and increases student’s actual social skills for problem-solving, mainly those skills related with communication of ideas in a respectful, tolerant and conscious way. In addition, the development and inclusion of social skills in the curriculum are required in order to become aware of the importance of perceiving themselves as empathic individuals and looking for a solution which helps to transform a problem into an opportunity of improve relationships and learn something new.

During a pedagogical practicing for 6 months as an English teacher in this multigrade classroom, was possible to observe and register in journals, some conflicting situation and common behaviors during those situations. When a conflict-situation happen during English classes, students use to express their opinion about other people involved in the conflict without taking into account how those commentaries affect their partner’s emotions. To illustrate, during the 9 session of the pedagogical practicum, an unexpected situating among three students emerged, they had a discussion because one of them lost a school tool and the second said that he had stolen it; the third student was gossiping about the situation and at the same time deteriorating the second student image, as a result, the feeling and the reputation of the second student were affected.

Students have a tendency of looking for a solution which benefits one part of the conflict, they did not matter about the consequences of the solution over their partners and how the other thing about this fact. For this reason, students use to assault verbally their classmates to obtain
the satisfaction of winning the fight. As a result, the conflict situation was perceived as the relationship ending. Many problems of communication, such as gossiping, verbal aggression and the use of pejorative nicknames to deride their partners are frequent during these situations.

Despite the physical aggression is not the first option to solve a conflict, verbal aggression between learners are a constant behavior and pattern among student, The individuals involved in a conflict sometimes showed a performance in such they are not totally conscious of the effects of their words on their partners.

Based on Morchanov (2014) research findings, there is a significant relationship between empathy skill and strategies used to solve a problem and establish pro-social relationships. Subjects with higher levels of affective empathy tend to use care strategies thinking about the position of others, and implement a way to solve the dilemma in accordance with their context and the participants. Additionally, Muraa et al (2010) research showed students with a positive judgment of their classmates and high level of empathy are those who are willing to adopt constructive handling strategies.

**Research Question**

How did students of a multigrade classroom perceive themselves as empathic being in a collaborative environment based on comics’ creation and discussion?

What do characteristics of empathy from students in a multigrade classroom emerge in a collaborative environment based on comics’ creation and discussion?
Research Sub question

What do social factors affect students' own perception of empathy in a collaborative environment?

What do personal factors affect students building of themselves as empathic beings?

General Objective

To analyze how students structure their empathic perception during the application of an empathy inquiry-based on the creation and reading of comics.

Specific Objectives

To identify the possible influence of environmental and personal factor over the student’s empathic perception

To describe the perception of student’s self empathy notions and the factors which directly influence it
Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to present a discussion about the phenomena between empathy`s social and cognitive manifestations and how their represents their world related to the empathic situation. First, a discussion about the nature of empathy and the importance of integrating the social and cognitive perspective in order to understand the construction of this skill in an educational context. Establishing the nature of empathy it is important to discuss the notion of empathy as the social and cognitive construction of this skill and its relationships. After that, how those perspectives are part of the way that a child represents their social world and construct social notions. Finally, an explanation of the use of narratives as a word representation instruments to understand empathic manifestations, and how it is mediated by language (as a means to interact, interpret and represent a social reality) which helps to understand how students build their empathy perceptions based on both perspectives.

Nature of Empathy: Social and Cognitive Perspectives

In order to understand the phenomena of empathy development inside the classroom is important to understand that social skills are mainly bidimensional (Davis, 2000, pp 50. Trianes, Muños and Jimenez, pp 36 and Garaigordobil 2007, pp 10) and empathy is composed by a social and a cognitive perspective, which is manifested simultaneously in the classroom. This
position was assumed because different situations in the classroom reveal that both perspectives have a bidirectional and reciprocal relationship in empathy building.

The constant interaction among students helps them to build social relationships, and the social nature of empathy is manifested because most of the situations in which a student are involved required an implementation of social capacities (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008; Sánchez-Queija, Oliva, & Parra, 2006). In educational contexts, interaction among students and teacher are inevitable, Trianes, Muños and Jimenez (2000, pp 16) states that almost child behavior is naturally social, taking into account those activities which imply social adaptation. For this reason, rules and patterns of behavior and communication (Fernandez et al, 1987 and Perinat, 2002) are established or assumed, and social notions (Ramirez & Gomez, 2000) for particular circumstances are assumed.

One of the notions adopted and assumed in the classroom refers to empathy, Research carried out by Garaigordobil (2007, pp2) Garaigordobil and Maganto (2011, pp 5), and Garaigordobil (2007, pp. 6) refers to this notion as a capacity to give and pertinent answer through making a discrimination between myself and people around; Bjorkist et al. (2000) also states that empathy is the behavior shared of the perceived emotions of others. On the other hand, Trianes et al (2000, pp 23) understand this concept as an emotion which allow the possibility to take an appropriate perspective in order to benefit all the members of specific situations. In this path, empathy is defined as the capacity to respond congruently to other`s emotions and feelings; it is possible if the individual establishes a gap between his/her own feeling and the emotion of the people involved in the situation, facilitating perspective taking.
Even though, social agreements among the members are not always accomplished, leading to stressful and problematic situations. Members of the classroom recounted to have been present or involved in that kind of circumstances and they feel directly or indirectly affected. In consequence, they performed a role when those situations occur, suggesting an empathic attitude towards other partners involved over there. The stressful and problematic situation is not only the social circumstances in which empathic perception of the students are manifested. There are situations in which a member of the classroom is involved in personal problems or a challenging situation which allows other students to assume a role and a position.

However, individuals which are commonly involved in the same social context showed assume singular roles and show different empathy manifestations. Student’s cognitive and psychological characteristics have an inference over the personal position when an empathic attitude is required. This fact led to reflect on personal characteristics of each student which influence the development of empathy. Trianes et al (2000, pp 16) state that there are social differences among children in order to perform social activities such as look for friends, solve conflicts, establish conversations or playing.

In this path, the nature of empathy in an educational context is mediated by social and also cognitive characteristics, Trianes et al (2000, pp 38) state that social competences are mediated by internal and external processes. Taking into account empathy is a social capacity which is manifested by being in contact with others and changes in accordance with a specific context (Ruiz, López, & Pérez, 2009; Segal, Wagaman, & Gerdes, 2012, Fiorenza and Nardone, 2004.); but the individual develops a personal empathy capacities and manifestation, and choose empathic manifestations based on personal characteristics, which are defined by previous insights and experiences (Hoffman, 2000).
Comparing the different reaction of each person to common or problematic situations, it is possible to find an authentic and singular reaction. In the classroom, it is reflected when a situation different to the habitual occurs to one of the members of the course and an empathic attitude is required in accordance with the context exigencies. Each student assumes a different position, and their reactions are based on the role they are performing.

However, it is important to understand the genesis of this position and the differences of student’s reaction towards the same circumstances. Self-perception is a cognitive feature which influences students’ empathic attitudes. The differences among individuals behaviors are based on the idea that self-perception change taking into account the specific situation in which he/she is involved and the other individuals who are present in the circumstances. (Robinson & Harary, 2008). In addition, there are bidirectional relationships between the context (a social characteristic of empathy) and self-perception (psychological characteristic of empathy), the context in which the individual is involved affects the inner perception, and this perception affects the context through the empathic reaction of each student toward the situation, Trianes et al (2000, pp 26) state that empathy is possible due to the multiple interactions of factors. In this way, cognitive and social characteristics give to empathy a multidimensional frame due to the interaction of dependent factors, similar to reciprocal determinism proposed by Bandura in which subject, behavior, and environment establish bidirectional relationships.

In conclusion, empathy must be understood as a social and cognitive, as multidimensional social skills, taking into account cognitive and affective aspects (Garaigordobil 2007, pp2, Garaigordobil and Maganto 2011, pp 5, and, Garaigordobil 2007 pp 6, Garcia, 2004, pp 10). First, the social nature of empathy is manifested because social skills and notions emerge in the classroom because it is a social environments and interaction among participants are inevitable;
also researchers and authors which work around this skills, understand empathy as a social facts taking into account the inclusion of the other and the context in its definitions. Complementing both theories of world representation it is possible to talk In this path, the following sections try to explain both empathy`s perspectives proposed and how they are reciprocally related.

**Empathy and Self-perception, a Cognitive Perspective**

It is important to not separate the inner part of empathy building and the influence of the context of its development, due to empathy capacities is integrated to cognitive process and simultaneously influenced by the context. A group of the individual must not be perceived as a mass of people which is equally influenced by the same contextual factors because they singularly assimilates and accommodate contextual influences. For this reason there are a personal component in empathy building and manifestations which are defined by cognitive processes which explain the singularity of responses towards the same social situation The purpose of this part is to discuss the influence of individual self-concept, identity, and emotional management, as cognitive agents, overall empathy skill building, and how the context is constantly present in those cognitive factors.

Individual observation of students who were involved in more than two stressful situations showed that they did not have the same patterns of behavior in both equal circumstances and even in similar situations. The situation when they showed an empathic attitude to help someone into troubles with particular supportive behaviors; on the other hand, there are situations which the students are involved in a struggle with another partner leads a different empathy attitude separated to the expected behavior.
One of the cognitive factors which influence empathy scaffolding is related to self-concept understood as those beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about us, the information about those items are hierarchically organized in categories (Meece, 2000 and Shalfer, 2007). There are not many published studies about the direct influence of self-perception and empathy development. Qualitative researches and studies in psychology (Marquez et al, 1987; Ciaramicoli 2000) about the development of this capacity which is related to the building of personality in children and adults, which did not reveals information about empathy building in educational contexts. On the other hand, the research carried out by Garaigordobil (2007) and Garaigordobil and Maganto (2011) reveal the influence of self-concepts over empathy development, their findings show that individual with high positive self-concept tends to have high levels of empathy skills.

However, Robinson and Harary (2008) theory of self-perception and personality propose some basis about the cognitive component of empathy, including aspects of social development and interaction; and it can be applied to analyze the influence of this individual characteristic over students’ empathy self-perception. The authors proposed that individual self-perception changes taking into account the specific situation in which he/she is involved and other people who are present in the circumstances. (Robinson & Harary, 2008, pp 50), Trianes et al (2008, pp 56) propose that child’s objectives to achieve in different situations influences self-perception, objectives define the response toward the situation and a more or less empathic performance. In addition, there is a correlation between self-perception and the context in which the individual is involved; because their self-perception directly affects the way which other people perceive and react to them (Trianes et al, 2008), as well as their belief and individual’s values, objectives and hopes; and reciprocally this fact affects the way they perceive other people around.
One of the contextual factors which affect individual’s self-concept is related to the external recognition (Trianes et al, 2008. pp 48), acceptance from parents and peers increase the positive self-perception and efficacy to face a certain social situation. It is related to the theory of child development proposed by Erickson, when the author states that children must acquire a *basic sense of trust* (Erickson, 1971, cited in Meece, 2000 and Shaffer, 2007) in order to overcome doubts about their environment and have the initiative to face new social challenges.

In addition, another cognitive factor which affects empathy development is identity, understood as the self-information about which I am, the value and destiny of my life and those convictions, values, and roles I accepted (Erickson, 1971, cited in Meece, 2000 and Shaffer, 2007). Individuals have different roles and identities which allow them to accomplish with the exigencies of a specific context, they build the roles of empathy in accordance with their personal interpretation of the context. Those interpretations of the context occurs through processes of accommodation and assimilation of new knowledge and by personal experiences, which are the strongest influences in social skills building, they are cognitively structured and become in *implicit or naive theories* (Piaget, 1987), which are implemented to face a specific social situation. (Trianes et al, 2008).

The role assumed over social situations carries out the use of more or less empathic attitudes in accordance with the exigencies of the circumstances (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Robinson & Harary, 2008). The identities assumed in each context are related to the common patterns and differences among them, *uniform role identity* are those assumed identities which have constant patterns in different situations, in contrast to *specialized role identity* are present in those people who feel a different person in each situation (Robinson & Harary, 2008); according to Trianes et al (2008, pp 20) this identity changing happens because
the diversity of contexts faced, labeling into strong for certain characteristic situation and weak for others. Integrating this proposal to empathy manifestations, there are individuals which show the same emphatic attitudes and levels are influenced by uniform role identity; on the other hand there are individual who show different contradictory attitudes of empathy at school or home, with relatives or friends; the interpretation of this behavior is based on the specialized role identity theory.

Join to self-perception and identity, there are third cognitive factors linked to empathy building, emotional managements. Erickson (1971, cited in Meece, 2000) gave an important role to feelings and expectation in cognitive development, and consequently in the manner in which people assume and respond to troubles. Trianes et al (2000, pp 46) states that emotions during social situations are processes controlled by the subject which help to social learning processes and decision making; those decisions and interpretations of the situation are mediated by the individual’s objectives, a child can avoid personal objectives and desires defined by impulsive and egocentric feelings in order to achieve long-term objectives such as preserve social relationships. An individual with an emotional intelligence target to long-term objectives and learning processes such as control moods and anguish, also learn to persevere in failure and objectively evaluate their performance.

There are researches about conflict managements, social skill, and emotional managements which explain the relationship between this factor and empathy; Garcia (1998) carried out a researcher related to empathy and conflict managements, the findings reveal that the way in which an individual reflect and control the emotions which emerge from a social conflict is related to the empathic responses to achieve an objective. Recently Stan and Galea (2014) in their research about emotional management and strategies for conflict solving found that the
development of emotional intelligence supports social skills, such as empathy, to deal with those conflictive events, emotional skills like resilience, emotional rationalization and stress management help to avoid negative emotions and increase positive social behavior characterized by empathy and values such as nonentity enthusiasm and cooperation.

Concluding, empathy skill has a cognitive component taking into account individual responses to the social situation, those responses are influenced by self-concept which defines the role they assume in social situations; and this cognitive factor is influenced by recognition from other, a contextual factor. Also, identity assumed defines the kind of responses produced by a subject, they are mainly uniform to the entire situation or specialized. Finally, emotional management influences empathic outcomes, individuals who control and rationalize negative feeling looking for long-term objectives use to show positive empathic responses. However, those cognitive factors are better perceived in an interactional environment, taking into account the social nature of empathy.

**Empathy and Context – A Social Perspective**

The other component which influences empathy development in related to the context around children. As mentioned before, there is a relationship between the cognitive buildings of social competence, such as empathy, taking into account the individual differences facing conflicting situations. On the other hand, specific contextual factors in the environment around the individual, which have own demands and expectation from the subject, perform important roles over empathy development, taking into account the aforementioned statement about the bidirectional relationships between cognition and social interaction in the construction of social
The purpose of this section is to discuss the theoretical foundation of the context of social development, taking theories from psychology development (Piaget, Vygotsky and Erickson) and highlight the statements about contextual agents; additionally to establish the influence of family and peers over empathy developments and how they build the background of cognitive agents.

Taking into account developmental psychology theories, which give a basis for the building of method and paradigms in education, is possible to affirm that cognitive development does not occur in isolation. Piagetian theory related to cognitive development in childhood (despite he did not give a transcendental role to social interaction among individuals) states that the context around children affects directly the manner in which they create cognitive schemes and world representation. In addition, social behavior in childhood, such as playing among peers, contributes to overcoming stages of cognitive development (Piaget, 1987 cited in Shaffer et al 2007).

On the other hand, developmental theories which emphasize the role of social interaction states that cognitive development is naturally a social fact and it is impossible to overcome context exigencies without the assistance of a model from the society, relationships and expectations about them intervene in the manner which individuals respond to the social environment. (Erickson, 1971, cited in Meece, 2000).

According to Vygotskian theory, Children learn to solve problems around them, and even problem with their peer and models, in conformity to the rules and values, taking into account that society transforms elemental function of cognition to superior ones due to the interaction among more experimented member of their environment through behavior modeling (Vigotsky,
1975 and Vygotsky 1975 cited in Shaffer, 2007 and Meece, 2000). Trianes et al (2002, pp 15) reaffirm that social context strongly influences social development because there are a set of learning processes which happen during social interaction, such as approving, driving and representing correct social behaviors.

In this path, there are agents which contribute to the social development of skills in context around children. Erickson in his theory of personality development propose some stages during childhood to adolescence, each stage includes the agents who are necessary to overcome each stage, in this path is possible to observe the social intervention over a cognitive process. Parents are the most important agent in early childhood, other members of the family acquire a role between 3-6 ages. When the child starts his schooling, teacher and peers appear and important agents of his development and later between 12-20 ages, peers become the most important behavior regulator. Those factors also intervene in social development, specifically in empathy.

Researches about social and empathy development conclude that the role of social and contextual factors directly influences how they improve or decrease their skills and the way that others influences in social relationships. Arellano (2012, pp 12) in his research states that companion around children who influences educational process must have high social skills level, otherwise they will not have the adequate model in order to acquire the correctly social skill to manage future situations.

One of those factors is related to family environment and breeding; the author states that family contributes to social and cognitive development in children, taking into account that they are the first social environment in which each individual is enrolled, parents at the beginning of the childhood and then others relatives later control their social relationships enable contact with
peers different to school, and build the basis of necessary competencies for future social relationships, such as empathy (Arellano, 2012). Also, family is a secure context in which children develop without any pressure or preoccupation; in this atmosphere take place processes such as positive attachments and behavior modeling, which contribute to social skills development in children; and those acquired skills are transferred to other contexts, such as school (Trianes et al, 2000, pp 115).

Additionally, researches about individual relationships among individual conclude that differences in gender, which influences cognitive factors such as self-concept, identity and emotion management, are present during empathy development. There are a set of researches about empathy developments that found that girl use to have high scores in empathy skills test (Garaigodobil, 2000; Arellano, 2012, Stan and Galea, 2014). This individual difference could be explained by the way in which children grow; (Garaigodobil, 2000) states that empathy would be a characteristic associated with the female role which is influenced by the family.

In addition, parents and adults around children are considered firsthand agents because they acquire a privileged position to evaluate social behaviors; and the feedback given to their actions affects self concept because they perceive their own image in parents assessment, like a mirror, and construct positive and negative theories about themselves (Trianes et al, 2000, pp 161). In this path, the individual difference related to gender and self-concept have a bidirectional relationship to a contextual factor such as family.

On the other hand, peers appear as a social factor which influence the development of social skills later on in individual`s childhood. Relationships among peers are conceived as an essay of social roles learned in their family, and a social environment with possibilities for learning
new social skills; children's social relations are the perfect scenario when their acquire and strengthen a multiplicity of social skills because it introduces individual learning without authority supervision (Trianes et al, pp 117).

Arellano (2012) in his research about the social development of children in educational context states that peers are a factor which significantly contributes to an adequate social development. Experiences among peers at school help to build children’s social identity. The modeling and interaction among them have a strong influence later in children socialization processes. In this environment, they learn to regulate social patterns in order to accomplish their goals and the new requirements from the new context.

Additionally, they learn that acceptance from peers must be gained, commonly family accepts their members without any effort to convince, now they must convince to others and sometimes anticipate and accept a possible exclusion (Arellano, 2012). The research carried out by Garaigordobil (2007) found that acceptance among children influences empathy building; when a child gain peers `acceptance, they have a more positive orientation towards others and strong sensitivity to the distress of others, and that children have higher empathy levels than either bully. The interaction among peers influences emotional training during social skill scaffolding. Trianes et al (2002) state that abilities for emotional understanding require processes such as recognize the verbal and nonverbal signal, also make a hypothesis about causes and consequences of the feeling, give a suitable response; high-level processes which keep a relationship with social acceptance among peers.

In conclusion, it is important to take into account that contextual factor which influences empathy skill development, family and peers are agents who have a strong influence over the
social skills acquired and practiced by children. On one side, family is the first social
environment that a child face, and the interaction among parents and relatives gave them the first
skills which they transfer to other context; also the evaluation and feedback of social
performance influence children`s self-concept. Besides, peers influence social skills `s scaffolding
because it gives a new context to individually learn skills, influencing emotional management.
However, in educational context, those cognitive and social aspects are perceived through the
way that an individual represents a situation

The Notion of Empathy and World Representation

Knowledge building about the world is both cognitive and social, because the representation
we create our context needs the cognitive part of the individual to react and interpret the input
from it, but also the interpretation and creations need to be linked with the social part in order to
not be arbitrary and irrelevant in a specific context. Each individual carries out a building and
signification of the social events which take place in their life. The influence of the context is not
the only limitation, but it is an incorporation of new knowledge to previous filters and scheme
that the individual acquired and built. Individual`s self-perception, identity and emotional
influence and filters the signification of social events, and this process result in a decision about
the characteristic of empathy manifestation showed and narrated. The purpose of this section is
to discuss the Vygotskian and Piagetian postulates about world representation, and how they
mutually complement. Then to explain the concept of empathy notion as a result of the link
between the previous theories discussed
Studies about world representation issues adopted a cognitive perspective based on the studies of meaning building carried out by Piaget (1978), on the other hand, there are studies which argue the supremacy of the social over the individual being, from the fields of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1995). However, as aforementioned both theories converge in the fact that world representation does not occur in isolation.

Piaget (1978 and Piaget (1997) cited by Shaffer, 2007) proposed that children are active thinkers who build their representation of the world based on previous experiences, this process happens because they appeal to previous cognitive schemes to understand their personal experience. Children have processes to interpret and build a representation of a new social experience, the first process which occurs in world representation is *assimilation*, when a child tries to understand a new reality with previous cognitive schemes; then occurs a moment of *imbalance* in which She/he realize that the previous schemes are not accurate to this reality, and finally *assimilation* when the previous schemes are checked and change in order to fit them with the new situation.

Additionally, the Piagetian theory is based on the different cognitive process that an individual carries out along their life, and how they evolve into the superior process in accordance with new realities and previous schemes. *Preoperational egocentric stage* of world representation is related to the unique individual perspective to interpret and recreate the world without taking into account the perspective of other; in contrast to *operational stage* in which an individual consider their context as a variable to represent a reality, in this stage processes like rationings about real and unreal situation, hypothesis generations and interpretation of psychological and emotional characteristics of people around and the causes of their behavior.
The statements proposed by the author are directly related to empathy development, when a new situation happens, in which an empathic manifestation is required in order to accomplish to context expectations, a child resorts to the previous schemes which were a previously acquired by a set of similar situation or modeled behavior, after this assimilation process the child may find an imbalance if those schemes do not correspond to context and self-expectation, sometimes context expectation are not linked to child’s objective, the role of the child is interpret the situation in order to accomplish with one or both. Finally, an accommodation and representation of the situation appear producing a response and a position. Choosing the self or context objectives and expectation defines the quality of empathic response, it can be egocentric or operational

Otherwise, Vygotskian theory about world representation states that children are not individual explorers of their reality because the cognitive development of world representation is mediated by the context, it is affected by values, beliefs taught by experienced members of a society. Those transmitted elements provide children with instruments of intellectual adaptation, understood as those methods and strategies to solve a problem from a new reality and the way to represent it. This perspective of world representation complements the previous discussed because it gives a social origin of previous schemes about empathy proposed by Piaget from the society and experimented members in it.

Complementing both theories of world representation it is possible to talk about social notions. The relationships established between the individuals and the society results in the construction of social notions, which are understood as the building of meaning concepts for specific context (Ramirez & Gomez, 2000). They allow the individual to build their own
representation of the world, it is a cognitive process influenced by contextual agents about specifics manners and tool for reality signification. Expanding the concept proposed by the author based on other theories about empathy as a social and cognitive construction, it is possible to propose the concept of empathy notion, as all meaningful concepts related to empathy manifestation and situation which help to build and interpretation of the reality and a world representation, taking into account social and cognitive influences.

In conclusion, world representation in children is defined by cognitive processes such as assimilation, unbalance and accommodation of previous schemes and those schemes are originated by social processes. When the social and cognitive processes are linked is possible to talk about social empathy notions, as those world representation related to social situation in which empathy is required. However, in an educational context is difficult to recognize those aspects in order to understand the nature of empathy constructions and manifestation, for these reasons narratives work as a means to be aware, identify, categorize and analyze the influence of contextual and cognitive agents.

**Narratives as World Representations**

Taking into account the symbolic and social, and the cognitive and individual faces of the world representations; it is important to think about this knowledge about the reality as a way of expression, the amplification, and differentiation of perspectives about a phenomena or problem.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the importance of narrative as tool to understand the nature of empathy in educational contexts. First how it is framed in a pragmatic perspective of language, then how narratives is also related to the aforementioned theories of world

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1 The concept representation of the world is understood as the representation of the inner part and the context which the individual makes to deal with the reality
representation based on Bruner`s statements. Finally how comics are considered narratives to understand the phenomenon of empathy building.

The representation of the world is mainly mediated by language, since a pragmatic perspective (Brunner, 1992), as a means to represent and signify their reality, integrating cognitive and interactional elements which take place to create a representation of their social world. In this perspective speakers use more than linguistic competence to understand fragments of social situations, they use general knowledge and inferential abilities, and this means that information from a variety of sources and formats must be integrated during the process of the interpretation (Stanton, 2006), taking into account that word reading is just one of the human activities related to language, we are constantly decrypting and integrating symbols (Wolf, 1997).

In this path, the narrative thinking (Bruner, 1992) is a way to understand the influence of language over an individual perspective, understanding, and description of a situation or social event (Ramirez & Gomez, 2000). Bruner, (1992) and Burke (1962), combining and complementing the cognitive theory of Piaget and the sociological aspect of Vygotsky theories, the authors states that narratives have an important role over knowledge’s building of the world, they are representations of the world and reality significance which make sense through agents or characters, environments, scenarios, intentionality, relationships and facts (social and psychological aspects, similar to the SPEAKING speech acts proposal made by Hymes).

The narratives give a meaning to the reality in which the individual is involved, and works as a means between the canonic world the culture and the idiosyncratic and personal world; even they help to convey personal ideas, messages, and possibilities about a specific situation. They
reflect psychological processes, beliefs, representations and interpretations of knowledge, and how all these components make sense through cultural guidelines.

In this order, an issue which appears is what tools and manners are used by the individual in order to show their world representations about empathy notions from a pragmatic perspective of language. Grazco (1994) states that comics are defined as the graphic art and literary narrative (lexicographic) which uses language and paralanguage devices create semantic and narrative conventions.

Additionally, comics have also cognitive and social components which allow the signification of situations of realities. A comic tries to explain story since the creation of a new world in which arguments and ideas of the author are included; even though the final purpose of a comics is the exposition and easy understanding for the reader (Eisner, 2007; Rodriguez 1940), this means an interchange of common and different notions and representations (Bruner, 1992) and a connection with cultural pattern and imagination to avoid arbitrariness. In this path, comics are narrative tools to express individual’s world representation taking into account the free creation and different language sources used to show their own perception of a problem. Also, the connection of comics, as a narrative instrument, with the cognitive and social part of the author allows expressing accurately the empathy notions.
Chapter Three

Research Design

In this section, it is possible to find the research design and the criteria for data analysis in which this study was based on, as well as the profile of the participants and the ethical issues of carrying out the intervention. This research design is mainly based on the statements of Creswell (2002) to develop qualitative and descriptive research studies.

This case study research is rooted in the qualitative paradigm. It will attempt to explore a central issue, such as the building of self-empathy in students, and develop the understanding of the issue through gathering data registering and analyzing through interpretation of the new data's meaning (Creswell, 2002, Nunnan, 1992, Merriam, 2002).

Based on Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2002) statements about research design, the appropriate method to develop this research study is case study; the purpose of the project will be a depth-understanding of the way in which students construct their empathy and acquire consciousness of its importance. The collection and analysis of data from the pedagogical implementation are an important part of the study. Additionally, this research is descriptive in nature; it will aim to examine which factors intervene in empathy construction through the interpretation of students’ narratives (Best, 1982).

This case study will use qualitative methods of data collection to explore and analyze the factors and the possible effects over student’s empathy attitudes. This paradigm was selected because it locates researchers and participants in the classroom, making the problem visible to
interpret their social reality; also it allows a description, classification, and analysis of the classroom context (Nunnan, 1992).

**Setting**

The school where the pedagogical implementation takes place is located in the southeastern part of Bogota. One of the school objectives is to foster the student’s cognitive, affective and moral abilities taking into account religious insights. There are The age’s scale is between 5 to 12 years old. The intervention will take place during EFL classes in charge of a teacher of Second Languages. The academic subject matter is denominated as “Lengua Extranjera-Ingles”; it is part of the humanities area in the school curriculum.

**Participants Profile**

The profiles of students were constructed based on some observations taken during one month before the intervention started; also a need analysis related to empathy skills introduction was applied in order to cross-reference both instruments.

According to the results, there are three profiles of students in relation to the used of empathy skills for conflict solving. One of them is those students who use verbal aggression in order to obtain and advantage over the situation. Second, those students who used to gossip and comment about frequent conflict situations. And finally, in a minor scale, students who use physical aggression as a way of conflict resolution. Students with those profiles seem not to be conscious of the effects of their aggression over the other.

The participant’s selection methods are taken from Hernandez (2006) about sampling instruments in qualitative research. First, the *Muestra Homogenia sampling method* was used in
order to select students with similar profile and characteristics, it was selected the tenth grade in order to accomplish with this criteria; this sampling method guarantees the generalization of the findings over the group. Second, the Muestra Tipo Caso method was applied in order to select students who provide meaningful and rich data to the study during the piloting and data collection.

Data Collection

Instruments piloting: The implementation of some worksheets was used as a way to pilot the research instruments as well as the material of the instructional design used in this study. Some change results from the two worksheets application in order to gather meaningful data from these students, such as the use other narratives in order to elicit students' previous experiences which facilitates the creative process and the construction of a criteria for comics creation in order to frame information and resources which frame the data given by the students.

Surveys. Hernandez (2006) states that through the survey is possible to assess attitudes of participants, especially this one which implements Likert Scale. Bryant Empathy Scale will be adapted (Calderon. 2011) will be used in order to assess student level of empathy at the beginning. This scale will be applied at the beginning of the process in order to get a previous schema of students’ levels of empathy.

Students Artifacts. Students embody on the comics their ideas about the importance of empathy skills for problem resolution on, due to comics are used by students to represent their reality. The analysis of students' ideas through the comics is important in order to gain information with an instrument which students are familiarized. The analysis of comics is an
instrument to obtain information about other factors that are not possible to observe in the classroom. This instrument has a double function in this research study; narratives were used to look for student factors which influence empathic skill development as well as the way to assess student’s performance during the pedagogical intervention.

**Focus Group Interviews.** A semi structured interview with each collaborative group will be used in order to understand in-depth the possible factors which affect student’s empathy abilities during the creation and reading processes. Those interviews will take place after culminating the activities of creation and reading, selecting the participants in accordance with some criteria such as participation during the whole intervention, significant data about empathy construction on the comics and disposition to participate

Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar and collaborative with each other (Cresswell, 2002). Through this instrument data related to students' self-perception as empathic individuals will be collected.

**Data Analysis**

Based on the qualitative nature of the data will be gathered in the interviews and the documents. The categorization of the date given by the students is one of the main instruments for analysis. For the focus group interviews, transcription of the narratives will be done. The analysis of each transcription is important in order to identify the patterns of the involved factors and the effect of an intervention based on the results obtained in the comics.
The importance of triangulation in qualitative research studies, this instrument will be used in order to compare and contrast the different research instruments used: narratives and interviews. Additionally, the results will be cross-referenced with previous theories and studies about this issue.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research study is the insights about the empathetic perception of themselves. In the data analysis stage, words and statement in the narratives and the comics, used as artifacts, about notions of empathy, empathy attitudes, empathic position towards the situation in their context, empathy, and self-perception and empathy and environmental factors were taken into account.

Those units were constructed taking into account the different theories about the development of empathy skills, discussed during the lit review in order to understand how students construct their empathy perceptions.

Ethics

It was necessary to obtain a permission from the school and the home-teacher in order to include the program as additional activities because in this school the EFL curriculum topics are well defined and scheduled.

To guarantee participants and their responsibilities will be aware of the nature of the study, they received a letter about the academic purpose of the research and how the data collected will be used. Additionally the privacy and confidentiality of the student`s information.
Students will be informed that they are volunteers of being participants of the study, and also to withdraw when they consider it has negative effects on them. The parents and the participant signed the permission and the compromises the study entails.

**Validity and Reliability**

According to Nunnan (1992) and Best (1984) in case study research is important to guarantee two kinds of validity, external and internal validity. In this research study, internal validity is guaranteed by using different instruments for gathering data to assertions made by the research, in order to avoid misinterpretation of the data from the researchers.

On the other hand, external reliability is guaranteed by framing the application of the research finding to a specific context; the finding has only application over the population involved in the research.
Chapter Four

Instructional Design

In this section the theoretical foundation on which it is based; as well as the instructional objective and its relationship with the research purpose. Also, this part contains the thematic development, the teaching methodology and evaluation criteria. Finally, the timetable of each activity during the intervention.

Pedagogical Intervention

This pedagogical intervention is framed in the Vygotskian Socio-constructivist pedagogical approach. The principle that rules both the design and implementation of this pedagogical experience in this study is that students connect previous knowledge and new knowledge, which results in engaging students to be active constructors of their social context (Vygotsky, 1978). Such principle also has implications in the research experience, particularly in data management, taking into account the characteristics of the narratives, this instrument for gathering data have a dual purpose in this study, for research purposes those creative expressions reveal the manner and factor which influenced students' empathy skill, but also it works for pedagogical purposes taking into account a criteria to assess students' processes during the pedagogical intervention.

Complementing the aforementioned principle, Irwin and Doyle (1992) state that knowledge is built through the individual’s interaction with his environment. In this path, since a socio-constructivism perspective, language is perceived as a social practice that allowed students to interact with their peers in order to build meaning of their close context (Vygotsky, 1978), language is conceived as actions which allow to individual assume position in front of a
specific situation (Cubero, 2005). In addition, reading and writing processes are developed and practiced in society, regarding the Vygotskian statements about the superior processes, such as reading and writing, which are acquired by scald folding those processes.

The classroom is defined as an environment of collaborative construction of knowledge that allows interaction among students-students and student-teacher in order to express previous and well-structured theories about reality and change concepts through meaningful contents (Cubero, 2005). Interaction lets student approach to zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in which the distance between the previous and new knowledge is closest if individuals are exposed to the necessary resources provided by interaction.

The expression of the previous and new knowledge is allowed by language understood as a communicative act. Interaction in the classroom creates new understanding by asking questions, giving opinions, respecting and listening to each other and making reflections, due to it allow activities such as verbalization and argumentation of ideas.

**Relationship with The Research Project**

The intention of this intervention is to build an environment where student is able to perceive themselves as empathic individuals. This pedagogical intervention is a way to gather and register data about the student`s building of empathy skills through the different proposed activities. In addition, for eliciting information about the possible factors that influence students` perceptions related to empathy abilities. Also, the narrative is connected to this stage of the study because it works a way to carry out activities which promote objectives achievement in this pedagogical intervention.
**Instructional Objectives**

To contrast concepts about empathy and indifference

To understand how to take a position toward a situation in which empathy is required

To understand the feelings involved in conflicting and difficult situation in their context

To explore different situation and analyze them based on empathy/indifference concepts

**Learning Objectives**

To interact with texts for understanding and proposing own creative texts

To verbalize alternatives of empathy or indifference as a result of interaction with texts

To create own creative texts, comics, based on previous life experiences

To manage and implement concepts related to efficient creation of comics

To use evenly linguistic (texts) and paralinguistic (symbols and images) resources in the comics in order to show clear ideas about empathy situation

**Thematic Development**

The topics in the intervention will focus on conflict situation when empathy attitudes are required. The topics will be organized in a deductive way, from the general to the particular knowledge about empathy and conflict resolution. The intention of this organization is the students understand during the process, the importance of empathy abilities for promoting better classmates relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Topics</th>
<th>Particular Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The important thing is</td>
<td>Reaction Towards People in Complex Situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to take the place of others (Lo importante es ponerse en el lugar de otros)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Assuming Towards the Situation: Empathy or Indifference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings Interpretation of Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Think about other: We are different (Piensa en el Otro)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts involved in a conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking differences among people/groups of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic/Indifference relationships and actions among parts of a conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching Methodology- Collaborative Learning**

The methodology selected for the pedagogical intervention is collaborative learning and teaching, due to it entails students working together to achieve common learning goals (Slavin, 1983 cited by Nunan 1992), additionally it is an alternative way to organize teaching and learning in which teachers, learners, and researchers learn in an equitable way (Nunnan, 1992). Taking into account that knowledge is naturally social and they learn to interact with their partners, due to the communication and reception of knowledge from the participants (Vigostky 1978).

Since the social-constructivism perspective, which works on a principle of collaborative learning due to it has a huge influence over this approach (Nunnan, 1992). Gross (2008) argues that the collaborative class design is supported by constructivist theories of learning, which allow explaining the processes of innovation and ideas changing in student’s groups. Gersen (1994, cited by Cubero, 2005) argue that the importance of activities’ incorporation which promotes students interaction among them; classroom collaboration and discussion is an important issue in learning and teaching processes.
There are principles related to learning and knowledge attached to this methodology. Experiential learning has a direct link to collaborative methodologies, due to interaction is a significant experience in the classroom which allows the discovery and construction of new understanding.

In this path, Kohoen (1987) proposes the role of the aforementioned issues taking into account collaborative learning as an opportunity to create experiences; learning is understood as a transformation of previous ideas and experiences which allow the discovery of new ideas about a certain issue, and knowledge is constructed from the previous concepts and schemas and the ideas shared by their partners while they identify problems on a set of situations.

Collaborative groups have advantages related to opportunities to peers ideas showing at the same time without falling in a competence, promotion of social and academic skills and building of confident environment (Dirección de Investigación y Desarrollo Educativo, 2009) Garcia and Gomez (2001) states that students’ learnings are possible through the constant dialog among them, it allows processes of asking, comparing, confronting and sharing ideas.

Through the lesson of this intervention, students have the opportunity to work collaboratively, show their ideas and experiences about the main topic of concern and have space when they can practice their new knowledge about empathy abilities and its importance in social relationships.

Based on the research carried out by Saiz Sanchez, Fernandez Rivas, & Olivares Moral (2014) about the improvement of collaborative strategies in students through the implementation of critical thinking strategies and Matheson, Wilkinson, & Gilhooly (2012) which states the importance of critical thinking and collaborative environments in groups discussion; the lesson
and worksheets are divided, taking into account Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) of critical thinking levels, into:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Components</th>
<th>Critical Thinking Levels Involved in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let’s talk about empathy (hablemos sobre empatia)</td>
<td>Knowing and Remembering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation analysis (analisis de situaciones)</td>
<td>Understanding, Describing and Explaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative expression (expresion colaborativa)</td>
<td>Applying and Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing my ideas</td>
<td>Evaluation and Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher Role**

The role of the teacher in the intervention is monitoring and clarifying doubts of students when they are working collaboratively in the creation of the comic. In the discussion session, teacher paper changes to monitoring and leading the discussion also provide guidelines about which issues will be taking into account in the creation and the discussion.

**Students Role**

Taking into account collaborative learning requires a distribution of student’s roles in order to achieve a goal, each student will perform a different task in the teamwork. Students will have a different role in the creation and discussion session. There will be two kinds of roles, the artist who is the students in charge of the graphic design and the writers who are the designers of the script and dialogue.
Material Role

This intervention is based on comics as an artistic and familiar way to foment students' awareness of empathetic beings. In addition, for eliciting information about student's perception, the use of comics is fundamental. The worksheet, which includes the creation of a comic, has an important role in this intervention due to they allow students to express clearly their ideas.
about the topic using a set of linguistic and paralinguistic resources. Additionally, the ideas given in the worksheets were taken into account for the discussion.

Additional material used in the intervention are stories and videos which show positive and negative position in situations in which empathy is required, this material is used to allow student’s interaction with other texts and elicit information about previous knowledge.

**Evaluation Criteria**

To assess students’ process, this intervention uses the competence criteria implemented by the institution. A student must accomplish with the correspondent goal to obtain a score and approve the course. The student will be evaluated at the final of each session.

Taking into account the purpose of this intervention, *Saber Ser* criteria have an important percentage of student final score, and this rubric will be evaluated by themselves and their peers. *Saber Ser* criteria check student use and implementation of concepts related to empathy and comics creation during the activities.

*Saber Hacker* criteria will be evaluated based on the students ‘work on the comics creation, students will accomplish the goal if the students follow the rubrics and instruction given by the teacher about how to create a comic. In this path, the rubrics are composed of *representation*, *cohesion*, and *expression*.

*Representation* is related to the use of comics `graphics resources given by the teacher (number of vignettes, characters, scenes, script creation) and also the balanced use of linguistic and paralinguistic resources to show the ideas in the comic. *Cohesion criteria* are about the way that students organize their narratives logically to comment about a situation, a linear or not-linear sequences of scenes or events which make the story understandable: Finally,
Expressiveness is the quality of the pictures and image used in the comic creation, they must include the use of paralinguistic resources to express feeling and reactions in the characters and scenarios.

Finally, Saber criteria will be evaluated by the teacher, and it is related to the student’s performance during the discussion. Students will demonstrate the knowledge about their own comic and their partners’ comic. This evaluation will carry out by the teacher based on the final paper they must give at the final of the discussion class.
Chapter Five

Data Analysis

Data Management Procedures

The data analysis exposed in this section is based on the principles of grounded theory, stated by Strauss (1990). This method for data analysis was selected due to it allows building an understanding about empathy as social skill underlying to a human being and the relationship between social and cognitive processes in its ceaseless construction. This chapter was dedicated to pointing out an account of the data found along a whole pedagogical intervention, additionally the procedures and strategies used for data management, analysis, and deep understanding.

The intention of this chapter was the construction of suited and common categories taken from the experiences of the participants and instruments, which disclose an understanding to the research question *How did students of a multi-grade classroom perceive themselves as empathic being in a collaborative environment based on comics’ creation and discussion?*. Whence, the most pertinent and enriching literature review was taken into account, in order to understand the phenomenon in the discussion, to shape relationships between the data and the assumptions found, producing as an outcome a new theory about the construction of the empathic being in educational contexts.

Therefore, the theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin for data management and analysis was implemented in this research because it helps to create a new conception of a phenomenon based on data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For this purpose, they proposed three processes of analysis, *open coding* refers to generate an overview of the data previously collected and create initial
ideas about crucial issues in concern. In this part of the analysis, the researcher takes into account issues about social and cognitive dimension which was explicit in empathy building of the participants. The introductory finding in this process was the direct influence of a specific contextual issue over a cognitive agent.

Secondly, Axial Coding was the step in which the researcher builds and link the important and repetitive concepts among the set of topics which previously appeared. The concepts were put into a higher conceptual group in order to obtain a better understanding about their insight about empathy during the intervention and how the context around the individuals enhance or affects cognitive processes required for the building of empathic perception. In this process allowed creating intricate connections in order to justify new conceptions, behaviors, and ideas that participants acquire after the implementation of the program.

The current link and concepts which appeared in the instruments for data gathering were labeled by using different codes and colors in order to highlight the characteristics of each category, taking into consideration understating and ideas, behaviors, consequences, and agents. First, the teacher used blue in order to highlight factors which intervene in empathy development, orange to refer ideas about empathic or non-empathic behaviors, and finally yellow to find the situations in which those factors and ideas emerged.

Finally, the conclusive step was Selective Coding; the purpose of this process was formalizing the relationship building in the previous steps into a new core category. The core category was a means to develop all the parts that compose this complex process of promoting empathic beings and found the answer to the main research question. Through the implementation and creation of narratives and comics, with the purpose of promoting reflection about the importance of social capabilities needed to carry on a meaningful learning process,
was possible realize and describe how students are aware of their own values and understanding about empathy.

**Pedagogical and Gathering Data Process**

The purpose of this section is to get a better understanding of the research project from the intervention’s experience by a detailed explanation of the process of comic’s creation and discussion. According to Rodriguez (1991, pp 5), it is important to build a process of comic creation in order to direct the classes towards a pedagogical process rather than just make drawings and stories without purpose.

Also, Hall et al (2012, pp 6) state a scaffolding process of comics’ creation in order to promote reflection in an educational context; the stages of creation are; creation of the character, creation of the plot, identification of the setting, graphic expression, storyboard and final product. The authors argue that a reflection about the topic in concern follow each stage of the creation.

Regarding those statements, the stages proposed for the creation of a comic with a reflective purpose were adapted in order to achieve the objective of this research project; awareness of students as empathic beings. Meanwhile, students follow the stages, they carry out workshops in order to attempt this awareness about empathy skill; in this path, the final product was an accurate product related to empathy. The following chart illustrates how they were adapted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshops</th>
<th>Comic Creation’s Stages (Hall et al, 2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the intervention. An approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to empathy concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy Una Persona Empática</td>
<td>Character creation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creación De Personajes</td>
<td>Empathic and Non-Empathic People</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the intervention was possible to learn that the process of building empathic consciousness is special and even unique, and it is not possible to impose a straight way to acquire this skill. Despite the lessons were planned in order to learn a specific aspect of empathy, the workshops and even the interaction among them reveal unexpected aspects of how they are constantly learning and owning.

When the data analysis was carried out, it was not possible to establish a rigorous way to get the target of the project, because data about one specific aspect of their perception as empathic being emerged from different instruments, and even the data were from the same instruments, but it did not correspond to the same stage proposed for the intervention.

It is an important learning from the experience of this project, all the activities which have the clear purpose of social skill’s promotion work as guides for an autonomous and independent ways, the most unexpected and amazing learning and experiences appear when a freedom of learning processes as the core of classroom social dynamics.

**Findings**

In this regard, the core category which allowed understanding deeply the construction of their perception as empathic beings was social conceptions as representations of empathy understandings, meticulously exploring the role of this bidirectional composition which allows
the construction of this social skill. Additionally, the subcategories were social notions as representations of empathy understandings and relationships among socio-cognitive. Those agents support how the creation and discussion of comics related to a social situation (when the presence or absence of empathic attitudes was the commonality) encourage them to reflect the importance of this skill and additionally the language itself to represent their social surroundings. To wrap up, in the present project the understanding of this bidirectional component of empathy building was the occasion to obtain an understanding the social values about empathy, analyzing the relationship between empathy understandings and the socio-cognitive agents which complement the educational process based on this perspective on social skills promotion.

Finally, an important amount of information came from research instruments which were, students’ questionnaires, artifacts, and group interviews. This data was repeatedly and meticulously analyzed but only after the process of data collection was finished. The organization and codification of data started in order to describe an appropriate category to answer the research question:

The following chart depicts a general overview of the findings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Main category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General research question: How did students of a multi-grade classroom perceive themselves as empathic beings in a collaborative environment based on comics’ creation and discussion?</td>
<td>Social notions as representations of empathy understandings</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Knowledge about individuals and the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lack of knowledge about individual and the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Lack of sociability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Supportive and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taking into consideration the purpose of the project, which portrayed how students build and become aware of the practice of empathy skill in EFL classroom, we can establish the main category social notions as representations of empathy understandings as the main possibility to analyze students’ perceptions about empathy and how learners became aware of its practice within the classroom. But also it was possible to identify what social insights are discovered through the implementation and creation of stories and how those were evidenced in the development of the process. In this case, the main category introduces the analysis of the data gathered and the relationship among social notion to explain empathy skill, cognitive and social agents present in the construction of the concepts.

In the next section, the last ideas showing evidence the way how students’ practice empathic attitudes in the implementation of English classes, where the main duty was enhanced a social education based on social skills.

The purpose of this section is to describe and explain the process of building of the categories through some sub categories which support them. First an explanation of the category from the

<table>
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meditative behavior in stressful situations (proactivity)
1.1 Situation to Support partners
2. Violent and aggressive responses (reactivity).
2.1 Situations of Diversity
2.2 Situations of Bullying
researcher narratives obtained during the research data, then the theoretical construct from authors who support those statements, and finally samples from different instruments for gathering data which illustrates and gives reasons for the constructions of this category instead of another.

**Social Notions as Representations of Empathy Understandings**

This category refers to those instruments which are used to represent understandings about empathy, farther than a punctual definition of this social skill. The intention of the research study was not to impose commonly accepted concepts of empathy, it was to highlight the previous concepts about this skills and how they were affected by the development of activities. During the experience of the intervention was possible to find that students did not attempt to explain empathy through those accorded meaning by teachers and students, but they explained their understanding of this skill through concepts which are pertinent to them in a specific situation.

Creativity from students emerge during each section in order to explain this concept, even jokes such as “empathy es la habilidad de sentir lo mismo que su tía” (section 1 and 3), however, it is not a canonic concept, it shows how they build a unique understanding of those concepts, a funny way which they assimilate the meaning of empathy was assumed as a motivation for me, because they start to build their own concept and apply it.

Notions such as sociability and proactively were related by students as qualities of an empathic being. Consequently, the opposite notions such as lack of sociability and reactive behaviors were features of a non-empathy individual. After those notions were building, they implemented them to depict themselves and people around as empathic or not.
About the idea of empathy notion, Ramirez & Gomez, (2000) states that the relationships established between the individuals and the society result in the construction of social notions, which are understood as a building of meaning concepts for a specific context. This argument goes beyond straight and punctual concepts of empathy because individuals use previous concepts and schemes in order to represent an abstract idea. The arguments about social notions are supported by theories of social and cognitive developments in children, such as Piagetian theory which states that there are processes of assimilation and accommodation of new concepts through the use of schemes acquired by previous experiences. However, the notion of empathy build by the individual is not totally incongruent with the reality, taking into account Vygotskian theory of social development, the author states that beliefs and values transmitted by the society influenced directly the construction of empathy notions.

Workshop #1. February 5th

Material #1 sample 1
The following samples taken from the data collection instruments provided support of this category. The first sample is taken from a workshop from the stage of character creation of a comics, the purpose of this activity was to identify characteristics of people from a set of videos about the social situation when and the empathic response is present or not. Students showed an especial interest to those videos due to those are not originally made for the purpose of promoting social skills.

Additionally, a special video about a situation of a sick child and his family have an emotive response from the students, taking into account that the multigrade classroom has a student with a diverse situation (special educative need related to cognitive processes). However, one of the remarkable video about an injustice situation with a violent response lead to a discussion about what is an empathic response; at the beginning they had the belief that the intention of the action is more important than the action itself, during the debate was possible to discuss that it is important to not take impulsive decision in order to benefit everybody involved in the social situation. The described situations lead to the building of this category and the following selection and analysis of data.
The purpose of this workshop carried out at the beginning of the intervention was to recognize some characteristic of individuals in different social situations, such as helping people and stressful situation management. The outcome was the relationships among positive social characteristics with empathic behaviors.

For instance, proactive behavior in an empathic being is recognized in this workshop through the identification of the feelings of people in troubles, the importance given to those feeling and the decision to help. On the other hand, the non-empathic behavior was identified through reactive actions through those uncommon situations when the implementation of this skills was required, as partners in troubles and conflicts inside the group. In this workshop was possible to discover that students did not make a direct relationship to a build definition of empathy discussed before to start the workshop, but also the appeal to previous schemes of a social situation to identify an empathic behavior.

Artifact #1 March 5th

The intention of this workshop was the creation of an empathic character in groups. This activity represents a social challenge form students because they did not use to work in large groups in order to achieve a common learning objective, for this reason, collaborative strategies were required. The size of the paper was 160 x 70 cm, so they need to organize the instruments
and assign roles and shifts, taking into account that one of the conditions was the whole participation of the group.

During this workshop emerged a conflictive situation between two partners and another student showed a remarkable empathic response in order to solve the problem, this situation leads an unexpected talk about what should be the characteristics of our empathic character. It is important to highlight how difficult situation inside the classroom could be turned into an advantage in order to foster social skills.

From the outcomes of this activity, it is important to highlight the expression used to describe him, such as “amigable, cariñoso” and “ayuda a los demás”. Those qualities give keys to identify characteristics of an empathic being which are linked to sociability. Also, they describe some social actions which are currently in an empathic being, such as playing and helping. They appealed to a previous scheme of someone which is an example of an empathic being, a father.

Those samples of workshop taken from the research data give an overview of the notions used by the students in order to describe empathic or non-empathic beings and behaviors. In this path, the next part of this section tries to describe and explain in depth two main notions found during the intervention, such as sociability and proactivity. This kind of instrument for gathering that was an enriching way to get a personal understanding of the phenomenon of empathy building, be in touch with personal experiences of them open a new understanding of what they understand as empathy, and the real reasons of empathic or not empathic responses inside the classroom; interviews were an exceptional tool to understand in deep how they build their empathy skills. Students were more confident and revealed meaningful experiences, for this reason, is important to recommend all people involved in children learning and developing a
process the use of interviews and shorts talk in order to understand the complex dynamics of the classroom and individual characteristics of each one.

Interview #1 Fragment min 12-18

- ¿Por qué no reacciona violeantamente? ¿Por qué cuando tiene ira con su mama ya y le pega? ¿Por qué no grita a su mama o a su hermana?

Porque me pegan,

- A sus compañeros también los grita?

A veces

- Cuando?

Cuando me sacan la piedra.

- Entonces cree que ese es un comportamiento empatico con lo que hemos visto en clase?

No porque ellos se sienten mal cuando los grito, tengo que ser más amable.

In this sample of data from an interview carried out at the end of the interventions was possible to find another component of sociability and reactiveness in order to describe empathic behaviors. In this fragment, the participant describes a behavior during stressful situations and then he realizes that it is a non-empathic one, violent response towards their partners and family is a characteristic of a lack of this skill. On the other hand, the use the word “amable” as a characteristic of an empathic person, it leads to understanding that kindness is a component of sociability to explain what he needs in order to achieve an empathic behavior, a lack of this quality means a lack of empathy skills and a necessity to change.

**Sociability.** This subcategory tries to brunch the concepts related to the relationships between an empathic being and the social relationships with people around. One of the current ideas found in the data analysis was the knowledge of an individual about the people and the social situations which surround him, the pertinent knowledge is gained by good social relationships, taking into account that previous knowledge of the social world leads to build
schemes which are used in future situations. On the other hand, there are ideas which are defined as the opposite of sociability notions about empathy, lack of knowledge about the individuals and context is currently related to nonempathic behavior. The contrast and opposition of concepts were an instrument in order to understand why sociability is an accurate category to explain why it is used in order to define their empathy notions.

The importance of this notion to represent empathy skill born from the nature of this skills, Trianes, Muños and Jimenez (2000, pp 16) states that almost child behavior is naturally social, taking into account those activities which imply social adaptation. There are social differences among children in order to perform social activities such as look for friends, solve conflicts, establish conversations or playing. Additionally, an instrument for empathy measuring includes sociability as a component in empathy building, Davis (1983) found in his text that high levels of this notion are related to high overall scores. The recent test includes sociability scales as a parameter to measure the multidimensional nature of empathy building (Klein-Tasman and Mervis, 2003, pp 279; Blanca et al, 2006, pp, 15). Those theoretical constructs help to explain the reason of the emerging ideas about this notion as a way to explain students understanding about empathy.

In this path, the following samples of data will illustrate what relevant ideas from the participants supports the construction of this item as an important notion of empathy building. The first one is a sample taken from the stage “setting identification and plot creation”, the origin of this date is important because a hypothesis at the beginning of the research project was to find information about sociability at character creation stage. However, students reveal during the activities and discussions that they became conscious about the features of a social person by self-reflection of their qualities and what to behave. The experience is this intervention taught
that it is important to not assume any hypothesis before being in touch with the reality, real immersion and confidence with students will reveal the complex social dynamics inside the classroom.

Survey-Workshop # 1 Sample 2

In this sample of data obtained during the development of a workshop about what expression of empathy are possible to find in our context; this idea of sociability emerged. The highlighted response shows the importance of the knowledge about other condition and the situation in which people around are. Phrases such as “mirar” and “no decir nada malo” is a response to this understanding of the social context in which an individual is involved, and this understanding was gained through the ability to socialize their partners and family. A child performs an appropriate action in accordance with empathy principles when they know what is happening around, people which achieve this level of context understanding use to have a clear overview of the situation and carry out activities to solve a problematic situation.

However, in the same sample is possible to evidence the opposite situation, a lack of knowledge of the individuals and the context around. This kind of action such as “decir cosas feas” is a sample of shortage in empathy development, taking into account that an individual
which does not have any consideration about that is happening to people in a classroom, has de
tendency to damage them in any manners.

Workshop-survey #2 sample 1

This activity was one of the most remarkable tasks that students carried out, more than just
give data about how they become aware of his empathic attitudes, but also the recognition of
other students characteristics encourage to build better social relationships among partners. The
activity consisted of describing their partners; first, they write some qualities about themselves
and then a partner write some characteristics without seeing the previous ones.
This activity encouraged empathic attitudes because they need to think about other in order to accomplish the task. Before the intervention students did not use to talk about their partners, however, students showed a great commitment and received an important feedback. Some students did not expect some positive commentaries from their partner and the group did not recognize them before another student mention it; also they received negative commentaries about their empathic attitudes but they assumed it as constructive feedback and an opportunity to improve.

In those samples of data is possible to evidence features of sociability related to empathy notion building. In this case, a quality of kindness is present in the description of an empathic person, taking into account that children used to identify an empathic behavior as a social fact. They recognize the necessity of social qualities such as “amable” and “amigable” in order to achieve a correct level of sociability. Kindness is required for that social action which happens inside the classroom, such as playing and working collaboratively. In addition, an individual with this quality has the ability to establish better social relationships and achieve better outcomes during a problematic situation. A kind response is an empathic attitude because they have consideration of the people, situation, and feelings around.

In contrast, there is an opposite side of kindness, the lack of this capacity which defines an empathic being entailed to responses without empathy consideration, not only with rude and violent responses is action with a lack of empathy. Passive lack of kindness relates to those individuals who ignore their partners and assume a passive response to problematic situations, and this characteristic is associated to non-empathic beings.
Proactivity. The second notion which explains the construction of empathy notion in an educational context is related to the student's responses to the unusual and remarkable situation, that situation requires that they take a position in order to mediate and look for a solution, the response could benefit only him or the whole actors in accordance with the level of empathy. Concepts such as supportive behaviors to other are directly related to an empathic being. On the other hand, intolerant and violent reactions are linked to lack of this skill. For this purpose, two concepts were assigned to a group and describe this notion: proactivity as those empathic responses to stressful situations and reactivity to violent and intolerant responses, the occurrence of both are mediated by a different situation which students face inside the classroom.

There are theoretical constructs which support this notion of empathy. Garcia (1998) carried out a researcher related to empathy and conflict managements, the findings reveal that the way in which an individual reflect and control the emotions which emerge from a social conflict is related to the empathic responses to achieve an objective. Recently Stan and Galea (2014) in their research about emotional management and strategies for conflict solving found that the development of emotional intelligence supports social skills, such as empathy, to deal with those conflictive events, emotional skills like resilience, emotional rationalization and stress management help to avoid negative emotions and increase positive social behavior characterized by empathy and values such as nonentity, enthusiasm, and cooperation. Having adequate empathy skill levels is possible to encourage prosocial attitudes during controversial situations and the opportunity to receive a reciprocal empathic responses increase (Perinat, 2002); also the participants of the struggle are conscious of the influence of their empathic actions over their partner.
Artifact #2 Sample 1

The information for this notion of empathy is a workshop from the final stage of the intervention, comic product. Those comics were created in groups when collaborative skill and the application of empathy attitudes were required in order to satisfactorily accomplish the task. They must apply all the concepts learned before about comic’s creation and empathy, the outcome was gratifying, not just for the comic itself but also the process of creation. The comics created has a lot of graphic and narratives resources such as a clear plot and setting, well-shaped characters, use of different kind of frames and onomatopoeias. In addition, during the creation was possible to observe positive empathic attitudes such as proactively and sociability, in this stage of the intervention most of the difficulties presented in the last activities were satisfactorily overcome. Finally, the quality of the final outcome was possible because the commitment of the groups, the use of a didactic tool which is constantly present in student’s context and significant objectives lead to meaningful learning.

A remarkable fact happened during the presentation of the comic, the groups of the comics exposed commented that the plot was taken from a real situation of one of the students, also they told that it did not an accurate ending but they think that if they had applied the learned
concepts about empathy, the situation would have a “happy ending” such the proposed on the comic.

In the data gathered during the intervention, was possible to identify a situation in which proactive and reactive performances are applied in order to achieve individual or social objectives. First, the proactive reaction is mainly described as a supportive behavior when a partner is involved in a stressful situation. In this sample is possible to evidence the intention of helping in order to avoid a problem for their partners, an expression such as “es muy duro pero te vamos a ayudar” suggest this idea. Despite they are not directly affected by the problem, they seem to feel the anguish of the partner and assume a proactive reaction in order to achieve a common objective.

Artifact #5 Sample 2

The purpose of this exercise was to identify both kind of character, an empathic and nonempathic in the same context. In this sample of data is possible to find both component of this notions; first the students establish a conflict situation which leads to a reactive reaction of people involved, then a mediator appeared in order to look for a common solution for both groups, at the end the mediator achieve his objective and solve the conflictive situation. Actions
such as aggression and verbal violence were linked to non-empathic actions; on the other side, the meditative reaction was a characteristic attributed to an empathic being. In this artifact was possible to identify both situations, one of intolerance when a reactive actions emerge, and a conflictive situation when an empathic attitude appeared.
Relationships among socio-cognitive agents in empathy self-perception

The purpose of this category is to explain how individuals build their empathic perception of themselves through the relationships among their previous social schemes and ideas and the current context influences. This research study and pedagogical intervention were based on the premise about the bidirectional relationships between cognitive and contextual agents in the construction of an empathy notions. However, there was not enough perspicuity about which of the mentioned factors were present in this specific context, such as a multi-grade classroom. On the other hand, there was an intention to find and understand a current link between a context and a cognitive agent for this population. In this path, the currents factors found through the data analysis were self-concept and emotional managements; and also those factors found a direct relationship to a social factor, well be to improve decrease them for empathy building. The family found a direct relationship with the construction of self-concept and peers with emotional management.

Taking into account the fact that individual has different empathy manifestation during social situations, there are theoretical constructs which support the idea that the individual develops a personal empathy capacities and manifestation, and those are based on personal characteristics, which are defined by previous insights and experiences (Hoffman, 2000). Complementing this statement, empathy is a social capacity which is manifested by being in contact with others and changes in accordance with a specific context (Ruiz, López, & Pérez, 2009; Segal, Wagaman, & Gerdes, 2012, Fiorenza and Nardone, 2004.)

Those samples of data give an overview of the relationships found in this intervention:

Workshop # 2 Sample 1
This sample of data was taken from feeling understanding and graphic expression, during the intervention was possible to observe a bounce of positive and negative expression of feeling which influences classroom convivence. Negative expression leads a reflexion about how this aspect is taken into account by teachers due to emotions and emotional management influences each aspect in students learning processes.

During the intervention, when a lesson attempts to children´s emotions, a better outcome was possible; For instance, at the beginning of activity students showed some difficulties due to a lack of confidence about talking about their feeling. It was necessary to show them that there is not a negative feeling, but the manner they manage their emotions should be adequate in order to show an empathic response towards their partners. After that, the participation in the task improved because it became in a self-reflection about emotional management instead of an assessment or judgement of correct and incorrect feeling.

Another remarkable aspect was the articulation of the component of the lessons, empathic emotional management was linked to the graphic expression for comic creation. Rodriguez (1991) states that a comic is a bounce of feelings which are graphically expressed in order to
engage either the readers or the creators. Through kinetic languages and onomatopoeias they were able to express feeling meanwhile they were recognizing the differences among them.

In this sample of data is possible to evidence the influence of two contextual agents over cognitive agents, both of them are components in the constructions of empathy notions. the relationships among people of their social context and feelings suggest a relationship to emotional managements; negative feelings such as sadness and wrath are directly related to people from his school. A phrase such as “me siento triste cuando estoy en el colegio” explain the link between a social and a context factor, and those feelings are crucial during conflictive social situations.

Workshop #3 Sample 3

Additionally, this sample of data illustrates the relationship among empathy building and context agents, most of the models of a correct empathic being are members of his family, specifically those people from their close family. In contrast, members out of the group are commonly perceived as a bad model of empathy, such as friends and teachers and friends.

**Family and Self-Concept.** This category has the purpose of explaining how those previous social schemes which are brought to the classroom; the close social context that during
this period of their growing is their family. They have a privileged and important role before they start the school and teach their first social ideas. In this path, it is supposed that student’s first notions about empathy are influenced by parents, brothers and other close siblings. The first social ideas that children built about themselves are influenced by the interaction with their family, and it influences their ideas about the importance of empathy in further relationships with teacher and peers.

There are theoretical constructs between the relationships between family environment and breeding and the developments of empathy. Arellano (2012) states that family contributes to social and cognitive development in children, taking into account that they are the first social environment in which each individual is enrolled, parents at the beginning of the childhood and then others relatives later control their social relationships enable contact with peers different to school, and build the basis of necessary competencies for future social relationships, such as empathy. Also, family is a secure context in which children develop without any pressure or preoccupation; in this atmosphere take place processes such as positive attachments and behavior modeling, which contribute to social skills development in children; and those acquired skills are transferred to other contexts, such as school (Triunes et al, 2000, pp 115). Researchers carried out by Sanchez Queija, Parra and Oliva (2006, pp 207) states that there a correlation between family variables and pro-social behaviors about empathy.

This sample of data was selected in order to explain and describe the relationships among those agents:

Artifact 5 Sample # 1
This activity has two important aspects to highlight, the use of digital resources for learning engagement and the role of the family in the learning process, especially in empathy building. First, this new generation of multitasking students who born in a digital era needs a different kind of stimuli in order to engage them in new ways of learning. As mentioned before, the use of comics made students feel an attraction towards the man topic, empathy; the use of digital resources also motivated them to participate and apply the previous knowledge about social skills and comic graphic representation. They felt excited and describe the creation of comics by using Bitstrips (a free online software for story board and comic creation) such as an amusing task. Finally, the outcomes of the task were excellent in terms of graphic expression and empathy concepts application.

Second, the role of the family in all learning process is an aspect which must not be refused, neither in academic and social processes. During the intervention, students showed ideas about parents and siblings and models of social behavior. Despite most of the student states that their parents are the most remarkable example of an empathic being, a few amount of them students
expressed that sibling and teachers sometimes performed non-empathic behaviors and responses. This fact is a calling for all people involved in children learning the process and developing, we need to perform as better as possible and constantly improving our social skills in order to not give any excuse for a bad behavior. Parent and teachers do not know how our action will influence positively or negatively the social development of them.

In this sample is possible to evidence the influence of agents from his context, like his mom, and the development of empathy attitudes. The highlighted vignettes illustrate the direct influence of their mother over the supportive behavior showed by the boy. In the first one, the phrase “muy amable y le enseñaba muchas cosas” illustrates the social background given by this agent; in this case, the taught ideas positively scaffold their empathic attitude. The word “amable” to describe mom´s nature is directly related to the notion of kindness and leads to thinking that inside his family there is a model of empathy.

In the second vignette, there is a manifestation of sociability expressed in the phrase “su mama lo miro vio que estaba triste”; taking into account that the knowledge of the people around lead to understanding when an empathic attitude to support someone is required. Also in the situation, there is a confrontation of objectives between helping and playing with his friends, and her mom helps to assume an empathic position which influences his self-perception after the advice he started to perceive himself as an empathic being and recognize the importance of that manifestation.
Workshop 2 Samples 1-2-3

This sample of data was taken from character building stage and its purpose was the self-recognition as an empathic being through ideas about their self-concept. The outcome of this activity reveals that the knowledge about themselves are supported by their family, the answers
to the third question in both workshops lead to the idea about the direct influence of their family and students self-concept. Despite the short words to explain this relationship, the frequency of this answer gives reliability to this idea. A remarkable fact of this activity was that they fell more comfortable reflecting about themselves than performing other task before. They were carrying different task out about the same thematic and reflections and also know how their parters perceive them. In consequence, they started to fell more confidence about show their opinion and self reflection because they expect a empathic attitude from the teacher and partners.

In addition, the individual who answers positively to the answer about the quality of their knowledge about them has congruent relationship with the influence of their family over their self-concept. On the other hand, there is not a direct relationship between this cognitive agent and peers. Those ideas lead to highlight the positive influence of the family over this factor, which contributes to the development of empathic perception.

**Peers and Emotional Management.** The second subcategory of relationships among socio-cognitive agents in empathy self-perception is related to the influence of people inside their educational context, specifically their peers. Despite that the influence of the family has been discussed in this research study, people with the same social and cognitive level of development take an important role in the building of further social notions. Interaction among peers provides opportunities to acquire and practice social skills which are not possible to acquire with their families, children face difficult social situations at school in which they need to build strategies for emotional management. Additionally, the interaction among students is the close possibility for teachers to witness, understand and even intervene the building of empathy notions and perceptions. The influence of this contextual agent has an influence over all
cognitive agents; however, there is the remarkable influence of peers over the cognitive factor in the development of the empathic perception.

There are authors which support the influence of peers over empathy development. Arellano (2012) in his research about the social development of children in educational context states that peers are a factor which significantly contributes to an adequate social development. Experiences among peers at school help to build children’s social identity. The modeling and interaction among them have a strong influence later in children socialization processes. In this environment, they learn to regulate social patterns in order to accomplish their goals and the new requirements from the new context. Complementing this statement, the research carried out by Garaigordobil (2007) found that acceptance among children influences empathy building; when a child gain peers’ acceptance, they have a more positive orientation towards others and strong sensitivity to the distress of others, and that children have higher empathy levels than either bully.

This sample of data describes and explains the ideas aforementioned

**Interview # 2 Part 0:00-2:59**

1 Vamos a hablar de empatía y de los gestos de empatía a nuestro alrededor. En su casa o en su colegio en otro lugar quien es una persona empática?

2 - Algunos compañeros

3 - ¿Y por qué ellos son empáticos? ¿Por qué ayudan a los demás? ¿Por qué saben

5 - cuando estoy triste? A quién conoce que haga eso?

6 - ¿Tengo que decir el nombre?

7 - Si quiere, pero tiene que decirme quién es?
8 - Juan David
9 - ¿Y quien es él?
10 - ¿Un compañero
11 - ¿Y por qué él es empático?
12 - El si me ayuda, y a veces a un compañero le hacen bullying y le digo cálmese y después habla
13 - ¿Y él lo ayuda?
14 - Si y ayuda a los demás

In this sample from an interview carried out to one participant of the intervention is possible to evidence the influence of a partner over the development of emotional management of another partner. In the first part of the interview, the participant mention one partners as a model of empathy, he recognizes them through some social notion linked to empathic attitudes. Later on, he recognizes a supportive behavior in his partner, line #14 when the participant said: “ayuda a los demás”. Those ideas lead to think about the direct influence of peers over the development of empathy notion in order to realize when, where and who has this social skill.

In the second part of the interview, the participant mentions his influence over the strategies for emotional management of his partner. Despite he is labeled as an empathic partner and supportive behaviors are linked to him, some negative feelings emerge in situations of bullying where other partners are involved. The advice of the participant helps to build a strategy to change those feeling into positive one; when he said in the lines 12 “calmese y despues habla” lead a think that a strategy of reflection before taking an action for helping could carry to a better empathic response and obtain an accurate social objectives.
Artifact 5 Sample #2

In this sample from the comic made by two participants of the intervention is possible to evidence the relationships between empathic behaviors and emotional management. The plot of the story is a situation of bullying for a different condition of one member of the school community; along the story emerge feeling of sadness and repentance from both side of the story, the bully and the affected. That kind of situation requires the implementation of empathic attitudes in order to solve accurately the conflictive situation.

There are two vignettes which illustrate strategies for empathic management in favor a empathic response. In the first one, a behavior of sociability and proactivity is evident, in the expression “so mejor amiga le preguntó por qué estaba triste” express a previous knowledge of his partner in order to know that something was wrong. Later on, an expression of proactivity emerged when she tried to solve the problem by nagging her partner. Also, there is a manifestation of an effective emotional management strategy, they are not always over our feeling, an empathic response requires the management of emotions from the other, and the way we react to that emotion is a signal of how we manage ours. The kind response without mention his condition is the strategy applied in order to look for a solution.
In addition, the second highlighted vignette illustrates another emotional management which attempts to an empathic response. In the phrases “se dio cuenta como se sentia” and “recordo como se sentia” is possible to evidence that the characters make a scanning of the feeling of the boy, this action is a part of the notion of sociability which describes an empathic response. On the other hand, the second phrase illustrates the use of their previous schemes about a similar situation in order to understand feeling from other people and execute an action that she would like other people to make in the same situation. The presence of those strategies in this context is a sample of how the social nitration inside the school and the influence of peers contribute to the development and practice of them.
Chapter Six

Conclusions

Before the intervention students showed some inadequate attitudes related to empathy as a social skill, conflict among partners which led mostly to verbal aggression was evident during the assessment and piloting stage of the research project. Additionally, they showed some difficulties for working together and show personal ideas because empathic responses were not expected from their classmates, as aforementioned described situations.

Taking into account the described situation, the first step to carry out the intervention was to apply the concepts developed by the social-constructivism approach, especially those related to how students build their social word since their previous experiences, schemas and also the environmental stimuli. The purpose of choosing this theory of learning as to avoid a standard understanding of what is empathy and its importance, but create a meaningful learning which could be applied in their particular social challenges inside the classroom. Additionally, in order to achieve this meaningful learning, comic’s creation and discussion and the use of particular situation from the close social context were chosen.

The main objective of this research project was to recognize and understand student’s building of empathic perception during collaborative activities based on the creation of comics as a tool for social world representation. After the intervention, students were able to build some social notions in order to describe themselves and people around as empathic beings. Most of the activities showed that they implicitly use the notion as a tool to describe those empathic attitudes
characterized by kindness and implementation of knowledge from their social context. In addition, students used ideas for describing those empathic behaviors and beings which have a supportive behavior when an individual or group problem emerged.

Additionally, another conclusion which emerged from this study was the characterization of relationships among social and cognitive agents in empathy building. Congruent correlations between family and self-concept demonstrate the importance of these agents when an individual appeals to his perceptions as empathic being when a social situation in which this skill is required. The previous knowledge from this first interaction influences the building of empathy and its further implementations. At the same time, peers as contextual agents found a direct relationship with emotional management, interactions with partners inside the classroom provide opportunities to improve those strategies through the influence of people who have already acquire them; and also the conflictive situation is a chance to learn and improve emotions of other in favor of an empathic response.

However the main purpose of the intervention was not a direct change in the social dynamics of the multigrade classroom, it was possible to evidence some changes among students. During other classes different to intervention was possible to observe they apply concepts of self-reflection and emotional management in order to perform an empathic attitude when they were in a problematic situation. Also, some students assume the role of conflict resolution leaders when they remembered to their partners the concepts seen during the intervention.

Finally, taking into account the contribution for those programs focused on encourage social skills, it is possible to conclude that empathy development in an educational context is not only the acquisition of a definition which is applied in any social situation; it means the intervention
of social and cognitive agents which are expressed through action and manifestations full of meaning, taking into account that students showed different responses to the same social situation.
Pedagogical Implications

As teacher, I can conclude that it is important to create learning environments based on the promotions of social skills because it provides opportunities to reflect and put into practice skills such as empathy. And also, the application of that kind of interventions allows students go further and become aware of the social schemes that they have been acquiring during their whole life.

Additionally, the use of collaborative working taking into account the bidimensional nature of social skills building was an important opportunity to understand the importance of authentic programs for encouraging those skills. There is not a unique method or a perfect program to deal with this issue because students do not equally response to the same social environment and do not have the same social ideas; every student is a huge universe and teacher must attempt to understand the best way to improve their social skills.

Finally, the use of comics for the pedagogical intervention give guides of the way to foster social skills. Working with material and activities which are close to them and work, and also help to improve other skills such as narrative and artistic one, become the reflection of social skills a more enjoyable task. Taking into account those activities are opportunities to imagine, create and express creatively their ideas about current social situations and agents.
References


Interaccion entre el Significado, la Interaccion y el Discurso (p.p. 37-97). Barcelona, Ba:

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http://www.madeira-edu.pt/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Fgm4GJWVTRe%3D&tabid=3004
Annexes

Material of the Implementation
Como Desarrollar Mi Empatía

Es la capacidad que tiene el ser humano para conectarse a otra persona y responder adecuadamente a las necesidades del otro, a compartir sus sentimientos, e ideas de tal manera que logra que el otro se sienta muy bien con el

1 ESCUCHA
No se trata de concentrarte en lo que harás luego, sino de realmente asimilar lo que la otra persona dice.

2 SÉ EXPONTANEO
Abirte emocionalmente es algo increíblemente difícil y valiente, pero profundizará en la conexión con otra persona

3 AFECTIVIDAD
Si conoces bien a una persona, dale un abrazo, coloca tu brazo alrededor de sus hombros o una mano en su brazo

4 EVITA EL PREJUICIO
Intenta lograr un entendimiento más profundo de la perspectiva de alguien más sin decir inmediatamente que es malo o bueno.

Practica tu curiosidad con los demás

Ofrece como voluntario y ayuda a los demás

Desafía tus propios prejuicios

Usa tu imaginación

Intenta estar en la situación difícil de alguien mas

Trata a las personas como seres importantes
Abdul el tutor de Karim, lo vió desde lejos y se acercó.
- Hola Karim ¿Qué te ha dicho Ali?
- Se río de mí.
- ¿Todas?
- Sí, es por mi culpa. Tengo esta enfermedad que me hace parecer imbécil.

El maestro Abdul le apretó el hombro con su mano y le invitó a acompañarle a su clase.

Al día siguiente Abdul entró en clase con su abrigo y su gorra. Saludó a los chicos como hacía todas las mañanas.

Karim no tiene pelo
Karim lloraba sentado en el lugar más apartado del patio del colegio de Marivan. Su cabeza rapada asomaba entre sus brazos y piernas mientras permanecía acurrucado deseando que terminara el día cuanto antes.

Un compañero de clase pasó cerca de él y le gritó:
- ¡No llanes cabeza-bola!, Pareces una niña.

Todos le devolvieron el saludo con respeto.
De forma lenta y pausada el señor Abdul se quitó la gorra y mostró su cabeza completamente afeitada.
Se hizo un silencio en la clase que paralizó cualquier pensamiento.
Los chicos estaban conmocionados.
El maestro se sentó al lado de Karim y pidió a uno de sus alumnos que le sacara una foto.

- Mahmud toma mi móvil y saca una foto. Vamos a decir al mundo que apoyamos a Karim en su enfermedad.

Durante toda una hora Abdul les habló sobre cómo se sentía Karim y sobre el daño que le habían hecho.
Sobre cómo la enfermedad les podía haber elegido a cualquiera de ellos en vez de a Karim.
Lo que les hubiera gustado escuchar de sus compañeros en ese caso.
Todos escucharon conmocionados.
PROMOTING EMPATHY SKILLS THROUGH THE CREATION AND DISCUSSION OF COMICS: A LOOK INTO 10TH GRADE CLASSROOM

EN LA NOCHE

LLEGÓ MUY TARDE A CLASE HOY

SABÍAS QUE NO HABÍA ABRIR LA PUERTA CON UN BLOQUE O LA CORTE CON UNA Llama Y QUE TU Y ÉSOS TENÍANOS MANDO 

LA VIDA ES UNA TOTAL IDIOCRACIA. LA GENTE NO ES LO QUE ESPEÑAS

POR FIN TE FIJS

MALAS AMBIENTAC

BANG

EN LA HABITACIÓN

ALMAAA

OH POR DIOS YO ES MUY TARDE

 Hoy muy tarde para clase, horribles en la noche cuando vuelvo, que triste soy yo

Es porque soy más inteligente que tú y lo sabes

¿Qué es lo que esperas con lo que siempre has soñado ser un hombre perfecto, todo lo que está tu futuro, lo que pueda hacer porque siempre puedo recibir hoy en tu arma

ESTO ME RECUEDE A NINIZQ, CUANDO JUGABA CON MIS HERMANOS, QUE TRISTE QUE ESA PELEA ENTRE AMIGOS TERMINARA CON TURBO, ESTABA A MI FRENTE, PESE HOY QUE SIGUE ESTUDIANDO
Workshops
¿Soy una persona empática?

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<td>Soy empático</td>
<td>Soy empático</td>
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Reflexiona
1. ¿Sé cómo soy?

3. ¿Alguien cerca de ti te dice si eres lo que ecribirte sobre ti mismo?

2. ¿Coincide lo que escribí con lo que mis compañeros escribieron?

3. Después de leer lo que mis compañeros escribieron, ¿debo cambiar algo de lo que escribí? ¿debo cambiar algo de mi forma de ser?

¿Entiendo las emociones de los demás?

1. Dibuja la emoción correspondiente en cada dibujo. Luego cuéntanos cuando te sientes así

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<th>Ira</th>
<th>Tristeza</th>
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2. Interpreta las emociones que creas que expresan las siguientes imágenes

3. ¿Cómo sabes cómo se siente alguien y si necesita un gesto de empatía de tu parte?

4. Controlas tus emociones negativas para ser más empático ¿por qué?
Empatía a mi alrededor y cuando ser empático

1. ¿Quién es la persona más empática que conozco? ¿Por qué?
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________

¿Quiénes son ejemplos para seguir si quiero ser empático?

- Mis papás
- Mis hermanos
- Mi profesor
- Mis amigos
- Mis abuelos
- Mis tíos
- Otros ___________ Quién ___________

2. ¿Cuándo soy una persona empática? ¿Por qué?
   ______________
   ______________

¿Cuándo NO soy una persona empática? ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Qué dicen las personas a mi alrededor cuando soy empático?
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________

4. Si debemos ser empáticos con todos ¿Por qué a veces es difícil serlo?
   ______________
   ______________

Personaje | Empático | Le importa cuando alguien está triste | Sabe cuando una persona se siente mal | Se siente mal cuando alguien está en problemas | Entiende los sentimientos de los demás aunque no los conozca | Grita o golpea a los demás cuando hay situaciones difíciles | La gente se siente feliz cuando alguien entiende sus sentimientos | Sigue las normas que las personas a su alrededor le dicen
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---

|      | Sí | No | Si | No | Si | No | Si | No |
Cuestionario De Empatía

A continuación te pedimos que respondas a las siguientes preguntas calificando con qué frecuencia tú haces este tipo de cosas. Por favor marca con una X encima de la opción que consideres más cercana a tu situación personal. No dejes ninguna pregunta sin contestar.
Utiliza la siguiente tabla para contestar:

1. Nunca
2. Casi Nunca
3. Casi Siempre
4. Siempre.

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Comic Creation
En la mañana

Tienes que ponerle
una pila a tu libro

Y qué hará
para no poner

Tienes que
preguntar todo

¡Ay, Juan me toca mucho!

¡Todo está sin trabajar!

Ayer vi un juego
pero no veo a ayudarme

Gracias amigos,
Venid a mi casa

En la tarde

Gracias amigos,
Venid a mi casa

¡Venid a jugar!

¡Vamos a jugar!

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1. La niña con piojos

**Beginning En la ruta**

Había una vez dos niños que estaban discutiendo porque el niño molestaba a la niña y no la dejaba en paz porque había tubo piojos.

**Details Antes de entrar a clase**

Todos los niños del colegio sabían que ella tenía piojos porque el niño le contó a todos y se burlaban de ella y ella estaba muy triste.

**Details Antes de entrar a clase**

La niña estaba muy triste y se acostó en el piso a llorar. Entonces su mejor amiga le preguntó porque estaba triste y ella le contó todo.

**Details Despues de las clases**

La amiga de la niña le ayudó y regañó al niño que le había dicho a todos porque no sabía que la niña había sentido mal que estaba muy triste.

**Details Despues de las clases**

El niño se dio cuenta que había hecho cosas malas y le pidió disculpas a la niña cuando estaban en el parque. La niña no quería aceptar sus disculpas.

**Ending Despues de las clases**

La niña se dio cuenta que el niño se sentía mal por lo que había hecho y recordó como ella se sintió y deje disculpar del niño después de les contó a la niña un helado.
PROMOTING EMPATHY SKILLS THROUGH THE CREATION AND DISCUSSION OF COMICS: A LOOK INTO 10TH GRADE CLASSROOM

Comic 2 - El niño y el anciano

Beginning

Había una vez un niño llamado Pepe y su mamá era muy amable con él y le enseñaba buenas cosas

Details

un día saliendo de su casa para jugar con sus amigos fútbol, Pepe vio a un viejito en el suelo recogiendo cosas, el penso que se sentía mal porque tenía lagrimas en sus ojos

Details

entonces Pepe lo ayudo a levantarse y a recoger sus cosas porque su mamá le dijo que hiciera eso si alguien estaba triste

Details

cuando llegó al parque se le habia hecho tarde y sus amigos se habian ido

Ending

cuando llegó a su casa estaba triste porque ayudo al viejito y no pudo jugar fútbol.

su mamá lo vio triste y le dijo que lo felicitaba porque habia hecho algo bueno por el viejito y que el partido no importaba porque mañana podría ir a jugar y su mamá le dijo un...