

**UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO**



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**División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades**

**MY MEMORIES AS A TOURIST GUIDE**

**WORKING AT THE MUSEUM OF THE MAYAN CULTURE**

**TRABAJO MONOGRÁFICO**

**Para obtener el grado de**

**LICENCIADA EN LENGUA INGLESA**

**Presenta**

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Trabajo monográfico elaborado bajo la supervisión del comité de monografía y aprobada como requisito para obtener el grado de:

## LICENCIATURA EN LENGUA INGLESA

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Chetumal, Quintana Roo, México, Marzo del 2010.

## I. Introduction.

In this final paper you will find my memories as a tour guide at the Museum of the Mayan Culture in Chetumal and my advice for the students of the English Language Major who work as tour guides at the same place. The reason to relate my memories is because I neither had the adequate training as a tour guide, nor had a good level of English when I started with this job. Therefore, there were some difficulties I faced, such as the fact that I ignored many historical aspects about Mayan culture, and that I had no information about the main characteristics of Creole English from Belize. Several groups of students who arrived at the museum willing to know about Mayan culture were from Belize so they spoke Creole English. Sometimes they did make me feel embarrassed for not understanding what they said. Besides that, I did not know how to give a speech to a group of people neither how to deal with different kind of people. However, I did know how to deal with children; eventhough they required a specific treatment. So, now I ask myself: *did I do a good job?* I honestly doubt it, although sometimes tourists left the Museum happy and grateful.

Thus, this paper has the purpose of facilitating the task of English language students working as tour guides at Mayan Museum, by analyzing the difficulties I went through while working over there as well as giving some recommendations about it.

The professional profile required to be a tourist guide seems to be not clearly defined. In Quintana Roo, if you are an English Language student or you speak English, you can be a tour guide and get some money, it does not matter if you are qualified or not to talk about a topic you have never read in your life. However, to be a tour guide requires a lot of skills. I would like to highlight that the information you give and the way you explain it to the tourists is something to be taken seriously. We want tourists leave the museums happily, well informed and generally satisfied. So, we get to the conclusion that the job of a tour guide implies a big responsibility, and in order to do that in a good way, students must develop some skills before starting working as such. Tour guides' task is to make sure about the quality of the content they are providing so as to present cultural facts correctly. So, I hope this paper will help tour guides.

There is one thing tourist guide should always keep in mind, tour guides should not improvise. I remember this expression from my partners at the moment I was accepted to work as a tour guide. They had more experience than I did since they had been working there for three to five years before me. One of their obligations was to provide new tourist guides with all the information they needed to start their guiding job. Researching for additional information was my task and once I had done it, I was prepared to be sent to the environ. There was no test to sit and no one to supervise what I was telling to the tourists and how I was doing the task. No one knew if I was giving away correct information or not.

That is why the objective of this monography is to analyze my experience as a tour guide in the Museum of the Mayan Culture in Chetumal, and to give advice and suggestions to future tour guides so that they can do a good job.

This paper covers four main topics from my experience as a tour guide. First of all, precise information about how to become a tour guide and where to study will be presented with the objective of informing all those people who are interested in it and to show that tour guides have an important role, but they must be prepared to make a good job. Otherwise, the damage caused to the state and its culture could be very harmful. At the end of this topic, some recommendations will be done in order to improve the performance of people who work as a tourist guide.

The second topic explains how to face Creole English from Belize. Chetumal city is located at the border of Mexico and Belize and even though these countries share some cultural aspects regarding languages there is a communication barrier because most Belizean people speak an English Creole Language called Belizean Creole whose main influence comes from British English. The curricula of Primary, Secondary and High Schools in Belize includes a visit to the Museum of the Mayan Culture here in Chetumal. Here it is where to be a tour guide working at the Mayan Museum becomes difficult since English Language Major students at Uqroo learn basically American English; therefore, foreign English speakers like me spend a hard time trying to understand Creole from Belize. Thus it would be useful to mention a wide variety of common expressions and characteristics of Creole English and a practical explanation of the characteristics of this variety.

According to the data I got through some interviews I made, tour guides at the museum say that Belizean people receive formal education in American English (AE). Nevertheless, their native language is not AE but Belizean Creole, thus, this is the language they use most of the times. It seems that these people are not aware of the fact that in general tour guides in Chetumal do not understand Creole. I could say that sometimes they use it to make the tour even funnier because they enjoy seeing us dealing with problems to understand them for that reason. Or just simply because that is the way they talk to their friends in a common situation in their daily lives.

If you are lucky, sometimes you can find students who speak British English to ask questions, but it could be also difficult to understand them because it is not easy for them to avoid that peculiar Creole accent. In any case, learning a little of Belizean Creole would be helpful for those who want to work as tour guides at the Mayan Museum.

The third topic deals with how to be prepared to speak to the audience and what are the aspects you have to consider so that you can offer an interesting and comprehensible explanation to the audience. This is a skill not difficult to acquire, it is just a matter of practicing and receiving good advice of what is good to tell the audience. Sometimes, being good at languages, or having an excellent fluency is not everything. The information you can give could be completely assertive, but if you have a mechanical speech with no gestures, no loud voice, no confidence, no presence at all, all the efforts you make about studying the subject will be thrown



away. As a consequence, visitors will spend a boring time and they will certainly not understand anything you say.

How to talk in front of a group is very important and the type of audience is something to be considered too. During my experience as a tour guide I observed that it is not the same to give a speech to adults than to children. And the fourth topic is precisely how to deal with children, how to present the information and help them to comprehend any topic. During the major we reviewed this topic but not in detail. From my point of view, and as tour guides, many times we had to work with children and obviously we had no idea of how to do it. In my case, I really enjoy working as a tour guide, that was the reason why I decided to do some research on it.

From my point of view and according to my professional experience as a tour guide, the qualification to perform that job must be well developed in the following order: the first step is to be knowledgeable on the topic you are exposing, in this case Mayan Culture; and secondly, to know different dialects of English that may be spoken by visitors and to know common expressions since they would be extremely important in order not to interrupt the communication.

This paper is important for all those students of the English Language Major or any kind of person who would like to be a tour guide or who is already working as such because it will help them understand that the job they are performing requires a lot of responsibility. It may also help them to be aware of the subjects they have to master in order to be well prepared for this job.

With the intention of contextualizing the place I worked at, In the Contextual framework section, I will give a brief explanation of the Museum of the Mayan Culture.

## II.CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nowadays, the Museum of the Mayan Culture is one of the departments that belongs to the *Secretaría de la Cultura* (Department of Culture) which was created in 2007.

Xacur, Lavalle, Higuera, & Vallarta, (1998, pp. 153-156) describe, the Museum of the Mayan Culture which is a unique in its gender, was founded in April 4th, 1993 in the Capital city of the State, Chetumal city. It was that day when it was the opening of the temporary gallery rooms; the auditorium and the common areas.

The area where the museum is placed now belonged to the Federal Commission of Electricity (Comisión Federal de Electricidad) and has an extension of 10,000 square meters. For a long time, it worked as a generating power station service supplying electricity to the villages of Calderitas and Hauypix.

The building, located downtown, had to be adapted for the Museum of the Mayan Culture to be built, it consists of a central garden surrounded by wide halls; the access to the temporary gallery rooms, the auditorium, bathrooms and a garden showing the way some Mayan people / communities live today.

The Permanent exhibition room / hall is basically the most important room in the museum. It is all dedicated to the description of the Mayan culture and it is the place which visitors are guided through. This room is divided in three floors that allow the visitor to enter into the Mayan world: the earthly life, the underworld and

the upperworld. These three platforms are located around the very stylized “yaxche” or the sacred ceiba tree for Maya people. The artificially-made jungle creates a realistic environment highlighted by some pieces of classical music, and sounds of nature: birds, howling monkeys or jaguars. A guided trip through this room lasts approximately one hour and a half, depending on the characteristics of the visitors and the available time they have to stay at the Museum.

The services offered are guided trips in Spanish, English and Mayan with no cost but tips are allowed. There is also an educative service office available.

The museum has a 128-seat auditorium. It is mainly used as a cinema room where documentaries, non commercial movies are shown for free on Saturdays. Nowadays, this auditorium is also used for different kind of events such as conferences or as theatre where concerts and cultural shows take place.

The area of the museum counts with four temporary art galleries available for artists to exhibit their works. They are temporary because the exhibitions change every two months. In this way the Museum helps local artists, as it is a mean to sell their own works. The types of exhibitions vary a lot, they do not have to be necessarily related to the Mayan culture. Art works such as drawings, paintings, or sculptures may be based on several topics and made by professional or children. Besides, it is relaxing to look at them and let your mind imagine their meanings and what the artist might have wanted to express.

Souvenirs at the book store are available for all those who want to cooperate for the economy of Mayan artisans.

The most important area in the museum is the Permanent Hall, and it's where we guided the visitors, it's all about Mayan culture and it's divided into many sections that I will explain in detail in the following section:

2.1 Museography. The museography is associated techniques of exposition and the practices to consider on the operation of a Museum. In this case, the permanent room is divided in eight main sections: the Mayab and its People, Trough Mountains and Sea, The Place of Thrones and Sitiales, The Men made of Corn, The Mayan Cosmogony, The Wise Old people, The Foreigners and the Decline of the Mayan World.

The Mayab and its People. To start the trip, there is a wall displaying the oldest traces, development and decline of the Mayan culture according to its geographical location. The ecological environment; the flora and fauna from the low to the high grounds of Guatemala and Chiapas are showed by videos. Then, there is another area where the physical aspect is on show in a glass box containing small figures wearing the common clothes used by Mayan people, ceramics and masks which let see their physical characteristics. At the end of this part, a large board showing the identification of the 24 varieties of Mayan language is mentioned, including Huasteco and Tenec from the North of Veracruz.

Through the Mountain and the Sea. The visitors are able to realize about the relation established between men and women with the nature and its technology through the observation of several imitations of upright inscribed stones, interactive videos, and illustrations located in this part. What immediately attracts people's attention is an enormous crystal floor under which a reproduction of the environment of Mayan cities can be observed and they also reflect aspects of Mayan culture, such as the technologic perspective and the cosmogonian order and a social structure to place their buildings.

The Place for Thrones. In this part of the museum some important Mayan sites and temples are represented in a scaled-down dimension such as Xpuhil, Sayil, Yaxchilan, Tikal and Copan. Also, there is a courtyard for the famous ball game represented in this part, which is a very important element because courtyards provide information confirming that ritual life, and the movement of celestial bodies were immersed on this mysterious practice.

The Men made of Corn. This is basically a hand painted mural showing some aspects about daily Mayan life and the objects used at the time of their existence which are related to the ways and objects they used to trade.

The Cosmogony. What predominates in this section is the Mayan Ceiba which is the sacred tree for the Mayan. They used to have a ceiba tree in most of its Mayan towns. Its importance was founded on the fact that it was supposed to be the centre of the universe.

In the Mayan culture, the universe has a structure divided in three levels: the underworld, the human world and the celestial sphere. The grand Mayan ceiba is a central point which keeps the three levels communicated. The roots of the ceiba tree go deep down to the underworld; the tree trunk belongs to the ground world, and the cope to the upperworld. The space meant to display the underworld, which is represented by a humid dark cave and it was an obligated way to pass from death to a new life. At the end of this part, there is a Mayan person buried in such a way it shows also how they used to bury dead people.

The Wise of Old People. The knowledge on astronomy, mathematics and writing are some of the influencing facts for Mayan culture to become one of the most important cultures of the prehispanic world and at this museum, these aspects are exposed by electronic and mechanical equipment. For instance, a time circle shows a certain date in the Gregorian Calendar and by moving the circle you can find that date approximate on both Mayan calendars; the solar and the ritual one. The visitor can also make mathematical operations in the twentieth Mayan system with a kind of abacus operated by computers.

The Foreigners. The economical and social relationships Mayan people had with other towns are explained by diagrams, texts, and maps. Among these contacts, those with the Teotihuacans, during Early Classic Period, the Putunes Mayas, Itzaes, Xuines which invaded the peninsula in the IX century and the Hispanic conquerors which arrived also in the XVI century, can be mentioned.

The Decline of Mayan World. This area leads to the end of the exhibition, it allows to observe some drawings which highlight the contact with Spaniards which is one of the prophecies of the "Chilám Balám". (Xacur, Lavalle, Higuera & Vallarta, 1998, p. 154)

".... Their barbs are red. They are sons of the sun. They are barbarians. They come from the West; when they arrive to this earth they will be the lords. They are white men... it will be the nightfall of the Mayan people... the earth will burn.... Words will be slaves, trees will be slaves, stoness will be slaves, men will be slaves, when they come"

At the end of this journey through this spectacular museum the visitor will find 48 monitors in a big wall projecting Mayan art.

The Museum of the Mayan Culture has become one of the most important cultural spaces of the city and also one of the landmarks that national and international tourists cannot avoid visiting because it is like a small window which gives people a general perspective of the amazing Mayan culture. So, it deserves to be well cared.



I considered as an important point in this paper to explain in detail each of its parts in order to give the reader an idea of how worthy is to preserve cultural aspects like this one. In the following part, you will find the theoretical framework which contains the development of the four topics included in this paper.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first topic I am going to explain in this paper, based on my own professional experience as a tour guide at the Mayan Museum, is how to become a tour guide. I will report to the reader about the expectations of a well-qualified tour guide and his most relevant functions to perform this role, as well as the most important characteristics that generally define the job of a tour guide.

#### 3.1. Tour guides.

Reily (2000, p. 15) finds two strands of work at the sector of tourism: tour managing and guiding. Tour managers are in charge of a group traveling on a holiday or business trip and it involves overnight stays with the group. Guides work at a site or area for hours, half day or full day but they do not have to stay with the visitors.

Anyhow, some of the skills a tour guide needs to carry out are:

- Degrees in history, art, architecture and diplomacy
- Patience and mediating skills
- Book – keeping experience
- Excellent stamina
- Fluency in five or more languages
- The ability to read maps accurately, and
- A knowledge of food and wine

And, you will enjoy any of these jobs if you:

- Like people
- Enjoy researching
- Have an insatiable curiosity about the world around you
- Are organized and able to work on your own
- Are not afraid of phoning and phoning companies to find work
- Dress smartly
- Are aged between 16 and 75
- Have lots of stamina and
- Have a clear speaking voice

Regarding the job situation, you need to be part of a company, so you also need to be adaptable and as soon as you get some experience, you will be able to decide the type of clients you want to work with depending on your stronger skills.

As a tour manager you will often cross country's borders, sometimes two or three times a day, therefore, it is always very important to have your passport and diploma with you. Tour guides should never forget their official identification or they will not be able to guide, unless they are willing to infringe the law.

Some of the more recognized degrees you can acquire are an Oxford, Cambridge and the Tour Managers Certificate issued by the International Association of Tour Managers or European Tour Operators Association.

In some areas, guides are allowed to show visitors certain sites or buildings, or even point out features unless they have the appropriate qualification.

Something interesting to mention is that it is strange but true that some people perform a good job as a tourist guide even though they are shy. Their performance quality might be because of their knowledge on the subject. Therefore, besides they frequently use to hide behind their knowledge, they are able to enthuse clients with their passion on their field. So, they have some options available for shy people, for instance, taking care of visitors in museums, galleries, national parks, etc. would be good options for shy people who do not have formal training but have been placed to the job by chance, basically because they are professional people such as architects, musicians, actors, designers, etc. who have a deep knowledge to run special tours.

The second strand of work in the tourism sector is guiding. The term *guide* is defined by dictionaries as someone who points out the way, a person who leads others on a trip or tour, and one who directs, or serves as a model for another in his conduct, career, etc.

According to Reily, (2000) a tourist guide is the person who guides visitors on the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area, this person may possess an area-specific qualification.

There are also different works for tourist guides. Some examples would be the following:

a) In house guides. This is about working in stately homes, historic houses, castles, cathedrals and important churches, factories opening to the public, distilleries, wine houses, farms, galleries and other tourist venues. Jobs are generally part time and once, these jobs were voluntary, nowadays they are no more.

b) Registered guide. This is a guide who has followed a training course to get the qualifications required and it is identified by a card with a specific number. They are allowed to make their jobs in certain historic buildings. For instance, in Britain guides are often know as “Blue Badges” from the badge color, or “Green Badges”, which indicate a regional guide in certain areas.

c) Site guides. A guide can work at monumental sites in the open air for local authorities, heritage sites, archeological digs, etc. other work may be found in museums, factories, craft workshops, etc.

d) Trail guide. National parks need people who are wildlife enthusiasts, understanding the countryside and wanting to show it off to visitors. Also, cycling, walking and riding tour operators need guides with a lot of enthusiasm and energy to accompany individuals or group in tours of a certain section.

e) Walking tour guide. They are mostly half-day tour guides, often in a village, town, city or cemetery. They are usually advertised so that diverse tourists, not a certain group, meet at a point on the city and each pays for the tour, so even if you are the only person at that place the tour operator has to provide the service.

f) Interpreter. This is a person who guides people at a certain place which could be an industry and has to interpret what a worker of that place explains.

No matter the special work you are making as a tour guide it is crucial to remark that it is essential to take a course first. You can be convinced that you can handle a visiting group but the most erudite and fluent speaker dries up if he has not been taught on how to deliver a commentary or how to keep tourists involved and interested with his explanations.

Research cannot be avoided before you start working and while you are working. You have to keep reading and reviewing the information before assisting a group, and planning your tour to make your clients feel safe and entertained.

I consider that now we have a better idea about what the job of a tour guide is and what it involves, as I said before, they do not have to improvise. On the contrary, they are required an appropriate and frequent training. As any other job, it is necessary to be updated every single day depending on the group and place of work.

One of the difficulties I had to overcome is to deal with Belize Creole English which is the following topic to be displayed. Some of the history of this variety of English and its characteristics will help us to better comprehend it.

## **3.2. Creole**

### *3.2.1. Introduction to the history of Belize.*

According to Escure, (1997, pp. 25-29) in order to understand the range and overlap of the linguistic code used in Belize, their social functions and iconic values and eventually the nature of the dialects spoken in Belize, it is vital to analyze some historical aspects of the country. In multicultural Belize, ethnic diversity is taken for granted, yet Belizean society has inherited the color-coding system of colonization.

Belize is a vibrant land of diversity with city slums and unspoiled beaches, lush jungles and deforested land turned into sugar plantations only a few miles apart from each other. This country has steeped in a violent past of invasions, clashes, migrations, exploitation, piracy and slavery. As a matter of fact, the area was the scene of conflicts which almost eliminated the Mayan civilization. It was also the setting of clashes between Spanish soldiers and British buccaneers; it was an important place for pirate landings, slave logging camps, Indian cast wars, Black Caribbean deportation and, very recently, Salvadorian refugees' immigration.

However, Belizean society offers fascinating insights into patterns of human adaptation into such an adversity of historical events and into the creativity of linguistic processes in complex communicative situations. Nowadays, literacy and education are high priorities but Belizeans are offered few opportunities at home. Thus, many of them have immigrated to the United States which has a higher Belizean population than Belize itself.

The name *Belize* was given to the independent territory of British Honduras, and the origin of the term is not very clear. It may derive from the founder of the settlement, who was a Scottish pirate named Peter Wallace, or Wallis, and who possibly was the lieutenant of Sir Walter Raleigh. The first settlement of British Honduras was founded either in 1617 or in 1638 by some eighty shipwrecked sailors led by Wallace/Wallis, and that area could be named “Wallis” or “Ballis” by the Spaniards

British Honduras self-governed became independent from the English Monarchy on September 21, 1981. This 13,000 square kilometer territory (260 km at its longest and 100 kms at its widest) is wedged between Spanish-speaking Central America (Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras) and the Caribbean Sea. The country is bordered to the north by Mexican state of Quintana Roo, and to the south and west by Guatemala.

Belize has the lowest population density of all Central American countries, with an overall population of 189,392 according to the most recent population census. Due to the few opportunities offered in this country there is a wide range of immigration, basically to the United States. Such high migration patterns seem to be confirmed by the relative youth of the Belizean population, 65% of them are under age of twenty-four, whereas the most productive segment of the population amounts to only 28% percent. Individuals over fifty-four constitute only 8% of the population. Immigration has an important influence on language because for these reasons this young population is likely to have a powerful impact on their language choice.



Connections with the United States residents may also influence language development in Belize.

On the other hand, more than 25,000 people living in Belize in the last ten years reported to be born abroad and most of those immigrants are from Guatemala and El Salvador, Mexico and Honduras. These four countries are all Spanish speaking which is also an important factor related to the language use.

### **3.2.2 Ethnolinguistic composition.**

Based on what Escure, (1997, p. 36) concluded, the diverse Belizean population is the result from several waves of immigrants usually forced to move to another land. This immigrants are basically British seamen, French and British pirates, African maroons and slaves, Mistiko Indians brought from Mistiko Coast (now Nicaragua), Black Caribs (Garifuna) deported from St. Vincent, then Honduras, Spanish and Indian refugees from Mexico, Mennonites running away from religious persecution and lastly, Salvadorans and Guatemalans escaping from political oppression. Nowadays, the contemporary population is formed by four major groups: Amerindians, Creoles, Mestizos, and Black Caribs (Garifuna), and other smaller groups.

As Lastra, (1997, pp. 106-109) explains, the country is divided in six districts: Belize, Corozal, Orange Walk, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo. Of those, Belize is the district with more Creole speakers, the 90%, and then it follows Orange Walk with the 71%. He says that in Belize there were not plantations, first of all the

English pirates arrived to create their settlements from Panama to Yucatan. Then came immigrants from Jamaica, they started exploiting the wood, some of them were slaves but it seems that they were better treated in Belize than in other parts because they created a population from where Creole was born and became one of the most significant laze.

Mayan also came back from Mexico and Guatemala trying to get away from the Cast War. Near the frontier with Guatemala there is Benque Viejo, which was founded by refugees who worked the chicle. Now they cultivate rice, sugar and cows. During the fifties a road was constructed which was settled by stores and towns. In 1959, the Mennonites settled too, they spoke German and they were accepted with the condition to produce for Belize, pay taxes and obey the law.

Several Hindus arrived most recently, one community settled in Belize, another in Corozal and the last one in Toledo. First they were servants, and then they acquired Creole. Chinese people were not the exception, but some of them went to Yucatan, and the ones who stayed in Belize were the owners of stores and hotels.

During the Colony period education was in charge of the Catholics directed by northamerican Jesuits who gave all their interest on teaching foreign cultures and values and they did not promote an authentic identity. Also, Creole people are taught British English, the one they will only use in exams but not in daily life since not all the population is able to receive formal education. This affect in some way language situations because a Standard English speaker may direct an English speaker thinking that they know the language and what Belizean People speak

English but Creole, not standard and sometimes communication can be affected. Nevertheless, acrolects, basilects and mesolects have been created to overcome this situation, and those will explain of the following part of this paper.

The complex diversity of different kind of people is showed in the table 1, which details the ethnic groups, population and languages spoken in Belize in 1980 by Escure, (1997, p. 28).

*Table 1.* ethnic groups, population and languages spoken in Belize in 1980.

<b>ETHNIC GROUP</b>	<b>POPULATION %</b>	<b>1<sup>ST</sup> LANGUAGE</b>	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> LANGUAGE</b>	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> LANGUAGE</b>
Creoles. Mixed (Afro-European)	39.7	Creole	English	Spanish*
Mestizos. Mixed (Hispanic-Indian)	33.1	Spanish	Creole	English
Garifuna (Black Caribs)	7.6	Garifuna	Creole	English
Maya	6.8	Maya Mopan	English	Creole*
Kekchi	2.7	Kekchi English	Creole**	
Whites	4.2	English	Creole	Spanish*
East Indians	2.1	Creole	English	
Chinese	0.1	Cantonese	Creole	Spanish
Other:				
Lebanese		Creole	English	
Mennonites	3.6	Low German	Creole**	
Salvadorans		Spanish		

( \* ) in some areas only ( \*\* ) rarely source.

In order to comprehend better the diversity of people who influence Creole English in Belize I will define in a general way the different ethnic groups on those times.

**Amerindians.** The Amerindian group is the most ancient ethnic group in Belize. Maya civilization flourished mainly on the Yucatan Peninsula but it was extended into Belize neighboring areas of Honduras and Guatemala, and declined in the ninth century A.D., possibly because of a rebellion against religious rulers. However, there is evidence of Mayan occupation at some Belizean sites during the fourteenth century and probably later, at the time when the British began settling in Belize in the seventeenth century. It is extraordinary to see that there is still some testimony of a lost civilization which is being forgotten, even for its descendants.

There are three groups of Mayas in Belize, each of them speaks a different language variety and live in different areas. The Mopan and Kekchi are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Belize who arrived at the area in the last nineteenth century and lived in the Toledo district, in the southern and western Belize, near the Guatemalan border. Most of the Mopan and Kekchi live in isolated villages and have had little contact with other groups until recent days. Mopan speakers have a higher status because of the fact that Mopan is the largest village of San Antonio.

On the other hand, Yucatecan Mayas came from Mexico after the Indian Caste War in 1847-1853 and lived in the northern Corozal and Orange Walk districts, near the Mexican border. Northern Mayas and Mestizos speak Spanish; however, Yucatecan Maya is still spoken in some areas perhaps the fact that Spanish is

becoming their first language because it is associated to progress and a possible movement to any touristic part from Mexico.

Therefore, a situation of identity takes place when Creole competes with Spanish. And just as Spanish-speaking people demographically dominate the northern Belizean community. In addition, the Creole group has increased in the city of Corozal and the limited Creole-Mestizo interaction allows Creole expansion into the community. And this cannot be avoided.

In the western Cayo District, Mestizo and Creole interaction is balanced because intermarriage is very common. Therefore, children in Cayo have to choose between two identities: Spanish or Creole.

### **Creoles**

The Spanish colonization of Central America in the sixteenth century took place mainly in the Gulf of Campeche but French, Dutch and British buccaneers had also some contact with Belizeans coasts, influencing its population since that time. In 1655, British settlers had brought some Jamaican lumbermen and also African slaves from some other parts of the Caribbean to Belize, due to a necessity of a large labor force. For instance, in a 1724 report, a Spanish missionary referred 300 English (living in Belize) besides Mosquito Indians and Negro slaves, these latter, having being introduced from Jamaica and Bermuda. And the Miskitos were brought from the British settlement located on the Pacific Coast to what now it is Nicaragua. Later they became allies of the British against the Spaniards and got some privileges such as the right to crown their kings in the Belize Cathedral. In

1787, British had to evacuate the Miskito Coast together with African slaves and Miskito allies to join the “Old Baymen” at the Bay of Honduras and became the Afro-Indians in Nicaragua referred as Waika.

On September 10, 1798, the Spaniards were defeated by the Old Baymen at the Battle of St. George’s Cay, commemorated as Belize’s National Day, but it was in 1862 when Honduras became a colony. In 1971, it became a crown Colony and finally slavery was abolished in 1938.

### **Garifuna (Black Caribs)**

Black Caribs are a group of Afro Indians whose native name was Garinagu. Nowadays, they are officially known as Garifunas. They are freely referred as Carib to mean their language and Carib and Black Caribs to mean the people arrived to Belize in 1803. These people came with some African maroons from St. Vincent Island when they were deported by the British to the island of Roatan in the coast of Honduras where they moved also settling in Bluefields area at the south of Nicaragua, Livingston at the south of Nicaragua, La Ceiba and Tela at the north of Guatemala and Toledo and Stann Creel districts of Belize. Stann Creek and the largest Garifuna town of Belize nowadays is Dangriga. This town was founded in 1823 by a group of losing royalist against the republican government of Honduras. Then, it came another group of Garifunas from San Juan, also for political reasons and they founded the village of Hopkins at the south of Dangriga. Now there are six communities of Garifunas in Belize: Dangriga, Punta Gorda, Barranco, Seine Bight,

Hopkins, and Georgetown but all of them share a native language which is Arawakan in structure.

### **Mestizos**

Two main kinds of Mestizos have enriched the ethnic diversity in Belize: Yucatecan Mayas and Spanish-Indians and on the other hand Mestizo-Hispanic coming from el Salvador and Guatemala. The first ones came after the Indian Caste War from 1847 to 1853 basically from Yucatan into the northern and westerns districts of Belize, Corozal and Orange Walk, and Cayo. Many of them were fishermen and were looking for islands and settled at the Ambergris Cay and Cay Caulker.

Salvadorans and Guatemalans arrived more recently, in 1980 escaping the civil war taking place at their lands and they were welcomed because of the consisting migrations of its native population to the United States which causes a necessity of agricultural workers.

This arrival has had a consequence; turning Belize into a half Spanish speaking and half English and Creole speaking community.

### **Other Groups**

There were also some other different groups which arrived to Belize looking for job opportunities such as Chinese people in 1860. Many of them had business stores in Belize; nevertheless, they still have contact with their families in China. East Indians went to Belize also in 1980 after being deported by the British because of a revolt in 1857, they were called the Sepoy and now they are very similar in their

language and costumes to the Creoles and are concentrated near Punta Gorda. Finally some merchants have chosen Belize to settle as it's the case of Lebanese people and Mennonites from Canada and Germany. The last ones decided not to interact with any other kind of people only among themselves so they conserve their Low German Dialect.

### **3.2.3 The language Situation.**

According to Lastra, (1997, pp. 106-109) English is definitively the official language of Belize, the one which is used formally for instruction at schools, however, few children speak Standard English as their native tongue and the majority speaks Belizean Creole. Some others speak Spanish, as well as Mayan tongues, garifuna, misquito and some other immigrants' languages.

Having reviewed the multiculturalism of Belize in a brief way, it can be said that it's a multilingual nation where most of the people are bilingual and some monolingual with some knowledge of some other languages. Thus, code-switching (the switch from one language into another while speaking) is a common phenomenon. Nevertheless and although Belizean Creole is the vernacular language it is not officially recognized, thus, it has a low status since English and Spanish are the ones which are widely required at jobs.

Anyhow, we cannot give less importance to Creole since it is the variety most widely spoken in Belize, being the vernacular of the Creole group formed by Afro-Europeans. It probably develops from contacts between Africans and Europeans



who immigrated to the American continent and it's also the lingua franca for most Belizeans or various ethnic origins. It has been said that Creole was created by the African slaves brought to Belize via the Miskito Coast, Jamaica or Barbados, they are said to have created the *ab ovo*, the language which later became the Belizean Creole, they might have brought a kind of English based pidgin or it's also possible that the pidgin developed from earlier contact between Africans and Europeans along the West African Coast. However, so far, it's practically impossible to state the original language sources of Belizean Creole because of the several language contact situations it has been through and taking into account that the populations has increased in a very peculiar way.

Nowadays, language situation has been changed smoothly, what is interesting is that most Belizeans speak Spanish as the mother tongue of mestizos and immigrants. So, Belice is now a member of the British Commonwealth with the mayor number of Spanish speakers.

It's also important to observe how many languages are spoken in these present days because of the growth of the diverse population as you can see in the table 2.

<i>Language</i>	<i>Native Speakers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Current Speakers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Alemán	6.783	(3,3%)	6.624	(3,2%)
Chino	1.607	(0,8%)	1.529	(0,7%)
Creole	67.527	(32,9%)	75.822	(37,0%)
Español	94.422	(46,0%)	88.121	(43,0%)
Inglés	7.946	(3,9%)	11.551	(5,6%)
Garifuna	6.929	(3,4%)	4.071	(2,0%)
Hindi	280	(0,1%)	193	(0,1%)

Maya Ketchi	10.142	(4,9%)	9.314	(4,5%)
Maya Mopán	6.909	(3,4%)	6.093	(3,0%)
Maya Yucateco	1.176	(0,6%)	613	(0,3%)
Others	1.402	(0,7%)	1.192	(0,6%)

More recent research, the census of 2003 shows us the following details, see

Table 3:

Table 3. Census of 2003

<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mestizos (descendants of Mayas and Europeans)	46.4 %
Africanos and Mulatos (descendants of Blacks and Europeans)	27.7%
Mayan Indians	10%
Garifunas (descendants of Blacks and Mayans)	6.4%
White People (ascendants of British and Spanish)	7.8%

The other population is formed by European communities, Hindus, Americans, Chinese and other nationalities.

Anyhow, what it concerns to us is to define in the most acceptable way the Belizean Creole English and its main characteristics so that the reader can be better prepared when having contact with Belizean Creole speakers for a better understanding. According to Escure (1997, p. 36), Creoles are typically embedded within complex language continua and what it refers to Belizean continuum consists of an overlapping English based varieties ranging from 1) Creole, 2)

English varies depending on 1) sociogeographical factors, 2) educational factors (the higher the education level reached, the more the likelihood that the English model is known), 3) psychological factors. Also it includes various basilects spoken as vernaculars, often unintelligible for English standard speakers. In Belize it's called as "raw" to refer to Belize City and as *da bush* to the rural areas. These varieties are different on morphology, phonology and syntax. Between these two basilects varieties and the acrolectal variety; presented as the norm or linguistic target but interpreted in widely different ways, there is another area which is called, the mesolect, with linguistic and social characteristics and are marked by morphological substitutions. The difference among these terms is that the mesolect is a useful instrument of communication in non-peer contact, so it has to be with social factors. For instance, the raw Creole is appropriate during informal and spontaneous in-group contacts and the acrolect is reserved for professional or formal situations.

In order to have a better idea about this I will present some Belizean texts explained by Escure, (1997, pp. 48-51) and their analysis which will define the basic characteristic as well as the Belizean Creole.

*Text 1: Basilect*

In the following conversation, a Creole woman (S) talks about the professional future of her son (R) to a visiting friend (E). It is an informal interaction, since the participants are long time acquaintances (R and E are childhood friends).

1. S: R. wan tek wan korespondes cos, I me wan tek it befor I kum out
2. I ME dE plan fu tek it dat da ti taim de term don, di kos don
3. a tink I se I wuda mE wan kos ina akountin.
4. E: dat expensive
5. S: I kuda mEget wan jab da Big Krik, bot dat agen da wan problem
6. E: dat da onli paat taim, do. Grif mE dE tel mi bout da ting, tu.
7. i soun laik da onli wen de banana sizan dE aan.
8. S: Yes da onli den, bot dat dE ann wan gud wail, tu.

*Translation*

1. S: R will take a correspondence course; he will have completed it before school is over.
2. He was planning to take it so that by the time the term is over the course will be over too.
3. I think he said he would have done a course in accounting.
4. That's expensive.
5. S: He could have got a job at Big Creek, but that again is a problem.
6. E: That's the only part time, though. Grif told me about that, too.
7. It sounds like that's only for the banana season.
8. S: yes. It's only then, but that lasts a good while, too.

Linguistic characteristics of the basilect represented in text 1 include:

1. The use of the Creole past or anterior morpheme *mE*, which can also combine with the continuous aspect marker *dE* for continuous past, as in *I mE de plan*, (line 2) with the future marker *wan* (*I me was tek*, line 1) or with a modal with irrealis /past conditional (*I kuda mE get*, line 5)
2. The absence of inflectional morphology, e.g., the nomarking of tense/person/number as in *I kum out*. (line 1)

3. The absence of copula (*dat expensive*, line 4; *da wan problem* line 5)
4. The use of *de* as locative or existential verb (*when de banana sizan de ann*, (literally, 'when the banana season is on' e.g., 'when the banana are ripe'; and
5. The extensive use of focusing expression with *da/dat*, which is used as a deictic pronoun, as in *da onli den* and *bot dat de aan* (both on line 8)

*Text 2: Mesolect in Creole/Carib interaction*

In this conversation, a Creole fisherman (R) from the village of Placencia talks with a Garifuna man (A) from the neighboring village of Seine Bight and a Creole/Lebanese man (L) from Belize –City:

1. R: a se, mai Bobo, we da fran, wen I kom op, I kech some gud,
2. en wen I kom op, en I kom outa di wata ina de bout,
3. di blodi stinger I bring out- gaan, sok it op pa mi breda.
4. di bon went rait in, en I kudn get ir.
5. yu no samtaim dey juk yu, I gat it gud.
- 6, L: di paizan grupa dey no kom in so kloz, do.
7. A: yu si, wat ar yu keshin en di lain aalm if yu straik dem wid a haapun
8. put di haapun aal iz, laik, stan op- jos laik bon laik
9. it iz nat di wan dat kal flain fish?
10. R: di mantare, doz ting ar ogli. Dey hav a saata haan,
11. en dey hav tu red, red bool., red aiz. Bot doz tingz ar ogli.
12. Mi breda se waz daivin out, I de wid iz hukstik, rait,
13. I lukin doun around di rak, trai huk op a krefish, rait,
14. en wen I luk op, dis big ting waz rait, rait yu ar fra mi.

*Translation*

1. I say, my Bobo, in front, when he came up, he had caught something,
2. and when he came up, when he came out of the water into the boat,
3. The bloody stingray that he brought was attached to my brother.
4. The bone (sting) had gone right in (his foot, and he couldn't get it out.
5. You know, sometimes dey stab you, it was pretty bad.
6. the poison grouper, they don't come so close, though
7. you see, what you catch with the line and all, if you strike them with a harpoon
8. the way you throw the harpoon is to stand up- just like a spear
9. Isn't it the one they call flying fish?
10. The manta rays, those things are ugly. They have a sort of horn.
11. and they have two red, red eyes. Those things are ugly.
12. my brother said that he was diving out there, he had his hook stick,
13. he was looking down around the reef, trying to hook up a lobster,
14. and when he looked up, this big thing was right there, (about as close as) yo are from me).

Mesolect are intermediate varieties, linguistically as well as socially. They often constitute a compromise between a formal speech and an inappropriately informal or friendly mode. They are divided into three subtypes:

1. First, they may include primarily neutral variants, stripped of both acrolectal and basilectal features. This implies that the mesolect speaker has knowledge of such features and controls those other marked varieties but has not to make full use of them.

2. Mesolects sometimes include a combination of basilectal and acrolectal features depending on the most appropriate choice.

3. Also it can be observed an hypercorrection of those features rather than alternation as in the second subtype, this variety is more typically found in native speakers of languages other than Creole.

Text two illustrates such sociolinguistic ambiguities. There is a social distance between A, a fifty year old Garinagu man and the two young Creole men, both in their mid-twenties, who had made schoolmates in Belize City. L, who belongs to the middle class, is visiting his friend R, a fisherman's son in Placencia. On the one hand, age demands respect for the older man, but his ethnic membership, low paying job, and lack of formal education assign him a lower status. On the other hand L brings with him a relative status of the "city-dweller". Thus, R, the first Creole speaker, initially produces a primarily unmarked mesolect (lines 1-5) of the first type, with zero marking for past tense (exception of the line 4) and zero copula but also an absence of basilectal morphemes.

The second part of this text (lines 10-14) belong to the second mesolectal type, with the coexistence of English copular forms (lines 10, 11, 13, 14, the basilectal copula/locative *de* (*I de wid iz hukstik*, line 12) and zero copula combined with progressive *-ing* for the aspectual form *I lukin* also in line 12. This apparent inconsistency may indicate an attempt at linguistic convergence, in response to A's language (lines 7-9) which includes three structured hypercorrect copular forms, such as the preposing of the auxiliary in a cleft construction in line 7, which furthermore uses a progressive English form to refer to habitual action (*wat ar yu keshin* 'what you catch') Similarly, the absence of copular contraction on line 9 (*it iz nat di wan...*) indicates an hypercorrection of English.

Throughout this sample, and in spite of the various mesolectal interpretation just discussed, the creole syntax is preserved through focusing devices such as dislocation (e.g., *mai Bobo... I kech some gud...*, line 1; *di paizan grupa dey no kum in...*, line 6 and clefting (line 7) as well as adverbial fronting (line 1, 2, 5)

*Text 3: Acrolect*

The acrolect is usually considered to represent Creole speaker's best approximation of the standard model, in this case English. An example of Anglican service in the creole village of Placencia and the speaker P, the creole "priest":

- P:
1. The Jews were expected someone to come to redeem them.
  2. But because Jesus did not fulfill their requirements,
  3. in other words, they wanted a military rula
  4. like how dey had known it in these days of Salomon and David.
  5. yes, dey expecting, how do you called it,
  6. let's call is someone who would willing to take up arms.
  7. In oda wods, de reason why I believe dad Judas betrayed Jesus,
  8. Jesus did not, you see, Judas was trying to push Jesus in da corna, right?

A religious service, and in particular a sermon with biblical references, is a situation that requires the most formal style available. However, this acrolectal sample is different from English and reveals occasional Creole interference, especially when the preacher extrapolates from biblical quotations. For example, note the absence of the auxiliary in *who would willing* (line 6), the use of progressive aspectual forms



such as *were expecting* (lines 1 and 5) and *was trying* (line 8), as well as the frequent phonological substitution of the dental stop for the interdental.

Apart from the two topics discussed before: how to become a tour guide and Belizean Creole English, I will talk about how to give a speech, which is another aspect to be considered for a successful tour guides. It is widely known that the way you talk to the audience will determine whether you get the attention or not, whether you communicate your valuable knowledge or just make them have a boring time, despite the accuracy of the information you are giving.

### **3.3 How to give a speech?**

The following part of this paper suggests speaking properly in front of a group. As García, (2001, p. 10) explains, the ability of speaking to an audience can be dominated depending on certain attitudes which will become habits. They can be natural if you are persistent as it is mentioned in the following paragraphs.

First of all, it has been widely said in order to be a good orator you have to be born with that gift, which in other words means that there are certain people who have this ability to express themselves in front of people in such a natural way that they seem to dominate any different field.

Besides that, these people look so friendly when speaking that it seems to be something very difficult of being done by a shy person.

The word is just an impulse that comes from the brain as a result of the synthesis of image and sound, what we know as oral expression. If the oral expression is performed in a natural way, it can be said that the person has expressed himself. If clarity of the content, security and sweetness are added, then we could say: this person speaks well.

Everybody, who is able to speak, can do it well in front of an audience if he or she knows how to use the body for human communication. To learn how to speak well in front of a group is just a matter of taking advantage of your best personal aptitudes and being minded to go through a personal improvement process of the areas in which you are not very good at. Throughout this process we have to consider some basic and important aspects such as: the personal image, corporal expression, voice, oral communication exigencies, and communication of thoughts.

To improve our image the first thing we have to do is to observe ourselves and be aware of our corporal conduct which has been created since childhood and it is a group of habits that determine our own behavior. Then we have to wonder whether what we see is appropriate according to the situation. If not, we will have to make the necessary changes in order to have new habits that will be reinforced by constant repetition.

Certainly, everybody has only one chance to give a first impression. There is only one chance to give a good or a bad impression. If we want people get a good impact from us, one thing to take care of is our outfit. Clothing must not be very staring. You could miss the attention since your clothing will be more interesting to

look at than your presence in general. Actually, wearing classic clothes is advisable.

A posture is a very important aspect to take care of since it expresses your character. Even if you are on your feet, sitting or walking, you should always keep a total balance of the body. This can help to develop good posture. Maybe at the beginning you will look not natural at all but little by little you will feel more comfortable and get harmony which will allow your ideas flow with less effort.

To control your breathing is really important to project a self-controlled image. A proper way of breathing will oxygenate the brain and make you liberate from all kind of tensions you might have. We can use our breathing to get calmness or to stimulate action. We use abdominal breathing to get calmness and it is performed by the nose, with the mouth closed; it's wide, slow and deep. It must not be forced and it is perceived at your stomach not at your chest. And to stimulate action we use what is called a complete breathing which is practiced in the same way than abdominal but more deeply, this time using the lungs; one to three times are sufficient.

The second point refers to a corporal harmony of expression which emphasizes an order from different facts which relate among each other to provide a good speech: word, face, body and body gestures. A helpful tip question to ask is: how do others see me?

When we speak to an audience it is important to make eye contact with the listeners as much as possible, it is advisable to look at the space between the

eyebrows of a person. Making eye contact gives the impression that you are being honest and confident.

Apart from the face, the rest of the body must be in charge of expressing itself in a natural way. Nowadays, it seems like our body movements and reactions are conditioned by the place and people around us and what results is that we are becoming superficial and express tension instead of spontaneity. The recommendation is to try being natural and do not imitate anyone, and try to move according to what you are saying; never let your body express something different or opposite to what it has been said because as a consequence you will look insecure.

Voice is also important; it must be loud and clear. Everybody must understand every word, if someone cannot hear or understands what you are saying he or she will ask his or her neighbor, thus people who are dealing to understand you will be tired at some point.

Regarding oral communication, there are important things to take into account. As you know, we expect comments and interruptions by the audience and, as a matter of fact, if they do it, it means they are paying attention and are interested in the speech, it is a clue that lets you know there is a doubt to clear up. Therefore, it will be fair to show respect to those comments or doubts, even if their points of view are different to ours. If that is the case, nothing wrong will happen; exchanging comments is a view to other ways of thinking, so there are two rules to follow here:

1. Each person is right.
2. Nobody is right.

Moreover, when someone in the audience makes comments, some orators could think that their speech is being interrupted. However, interruptions are not always a cause to break oral communication if the speaker knows how to deal with it. First of all, if the audience feels interested, respected and calmed, the guide should project commitment. Thus the audience would be more motivated to express themselves and, as a consequence, remarks will take place in the room. As we have seen, interruptions can be either useful or disturbing in a public speech, but that will depend on the way to manage the situation.

Another important consideration to keep in mind is that over talking is not correct. On the contrary, we must be clear and direct. To give a large amount of details of a certain topic would seem that you need to say as many things as possible no matter whether they are relevant or not, because there is a lack of knowledge on the content itself: this attitude is called verbal instability. Then, we must have clear thoughts before delivering them, this requires evaluating and deciding what is relevant to say and what is not necessary. To make this process of selecting the information to be provided in a proper way, I will explain certain aspects which will guide you to do so.

In order to know how to communicate our thoughts we should first know that there are three general purposes for oral exposition to an audience: move to action, communicate a research or expressing feelings. This does not mean that we have to choose only one of these but we must have our purpose or purposes clear in our minds. Then, our speech will be divided in three main parts: introduction, body content and conclusions. Each part has its own function. The introduction must

display the objective; the body content displays the arguments defending the objective; and the conclusions affirm the objective. All this is a unit that will be harmonically well integrated. Besides, the introduction has an additional function; it provokes the attitude towards which the audience will receive the following information. And the conclusion is the amazing note that the audience will take to their homes, not a resume or synthesis.

Doing research will always be necessary before giving a speech in order to have a wide knowledge of what we are going to talk about. It is common to observe how some orators seem to improvise. Indeed, we should never improvise. However, it is better to obtain the appropriate knowledge before trying to improvise in a specific situation. And besides the knowledge we need a great ability of synthesizing, a good amount of intuition and an active vocabulary to be able of choosing the exact words

All the advices mentioned before will make you have a better presence in front of the group and definitively this will determine whether your exposition is successful or not, whether you communicate or not the messages you give them. It is useful to know those kinds of things which can appear unimportant such as your breathing, for instance, and maybe at the beginning you will feel uncomfortable. Nevertheless, and as you become skillful in those aspects, your confidence and the quality of your speech will raise.

Also, we must take into account the kind of audience since some strategies may work quite well with adults but not at all with children. Dealing with children is

something we must manage being a professional of English Language. Now, I will talk about some principles to consider achieving an effective communication when the audience is formed by children.

### **3.4. How to deal with a group of children?**

At the Museum of the Mayan Culture, I had to deal with children several times. Especially in summer, courses are organized to make them know about their culture in a funny and interesting way. Also by guiding them in the Permanent Room, and by several activities related to what they had listened inside it. Fortunately, this part of the job was very successful, even though I did not know any theoretical proposal about how to deal with children. A positive aspect was that the conditions of the location itself were on my favor. However, it was not an easy task. I have to admit that while I worked with them I went through a process of the ways to adapt myself to the conditions of the group, which was my intuited technique. Now that I analyze it, I see it as a big responsibility that teachers, tour guides and all the people working with children must take. It is an important task because the treatment children receive at any moment in the childhood will determine the character and disposition in their future life. Unfortunately, there are many teachers who are not aware of this and they do not care about how they treat students. That is the reason why we suddenly deal with shy, bored or rebel children. It is a fact that we are part of the memories that will affect or benefit their

lives and, as a consequence, formal education will also influence their failure or success in their professional development.

For all that, it is extremely important to have some idea of teaching and learning principles, techniques and strategies, so that we can apply the most appropriate ones to different groups of kids.

Children are all equal, but they are all also different. In other words, there is no a better child than any other. Every child has specific and individual characteristics, so we can expect every child to react differently in a group and we should be well prepared to comprehend those different reactions and attitudes in order to help him / her and guide them through this complex process of learning during their childhood. In words of Peralta, (1996, p. 20)

Children education comes from two different concepts: education and children, and its meaning entails a certain position. If education is considered to be “a permanent perfectionism process of the human condition from the singular potential that any human has with a community” and children refers to “the life stage of the human being with its corresponding characteristics in the first six years old”, then *children education* means the particular perfectionism process that is generated from and around child, assisting his specific stage.

Children education is composed by familiar education, formal education and no conventional of any other program in which a child can be involved apart from the formal education by other instances. I mention this because anthropologists remark that some familiar and conventional practices become really formal that it will be important to consider them. As a matter of fact, it would seem necessary that each step of children’s education is well related to the others so that their education



becomes a common task because the three of them influence children development.

So, we have seen that there are three types of children education but in this paper we will focus basically on formal education, always considering that there are some practices that become formal sometimes and trying to make a connection among the three types, it is advisable to guide this complex task of children education.

First of all, I consider that the basis to deal with children is the educational principles in general. Since as you know, they cannot be treated as adults; they need special care and considerations so that there is a good connection between teacher and student, guide and child.

The word “principle” comes from *pium o primus capere*, which means, the first moment of something, the basis of something. If we apply this to education, as I said before, principles would be the specific postulates which will involve the basic basis in which education is sustained. For instance, Stoker, (1996, p. 22) said: Didactics knows, since long time ago, a series of pedagogical principles of universal value, they are orientations, nor precepts; they are directional images which in daily work guide our job. Now, we are going to identify the most common principles identified by Peralta, (1996, pp. 18-31) and could be applied to children education:

#### 3.4.1. Activity principle.

This principle can be summarized by the sentence “learning by doing”, it is supposed to be a dynamic role of the children which allows them to act, transform,

and experiment but from an integrated holistic participation of the whole being. It involves the affective, cognitive and psychomotor aspects. It is important to remark this, since several times this principle has been applied partially in a wrong way in the sense that the child only acts basically in a motor way. For instance, acting in an absolutely solved situation by an adult in all the affective and intellectual implications in which the child was supposed to be involved; definitively it changes all the meaning and purpose of this principle. What is more advisable for children is to let them act in all the possible dynamic ways which would imply feeling and thinking according to his or her possibilities of their specific stage development. For instance, if it is a two-year-old baby, his response to the activity will be according to the sensorial-motor characteristics. If it is a four-year-old child, it will be according to the expected form a pre-operational stage but in any case it will never be a partial activity.

A question that really catches my attention and I have always insisted on is how can we wish that our country becomes autonomous, that can possess the ability of decision, creativity and initiative if we, as teachers and parents, apply and allow curricula where the child is limited to act only at a certain extent and in a passive way?

From my personal point of view, teachers influence in a very strong way on people potential which is formed since childhood, and this fact can be either a disadvantage or an advantage depending on the kind of education received. For instance, if teachers act like facilitators of the learning process they will motivate students to find a way to solve problems, to find answers and to question about

things he cannot understand and find its own explanations by itself in an active way. As a result these students will be more prepared to deal with the different circumstances of the world. On the contrary, a student who has received a passive education, in which he's supposed to take all the knowledge provided by the teacher, will not have the tools to do so, because he's used to expect all from the teacher with no ability of questioning, criticizing, researching and solving. Therefore teachers must consider that some day students are supposed to leave school and go in to the school of life.

For all this, in the case of children, for instance, education must promote mental, physical and social abilities and these ones depend one from another. This means that, a child whose emotional abilities are not taken into account may lack the other ones as a result. Therefore, it is important that a child is helped to understand other people's feelings. Also, an effective way to develop mental abilities in a child is inducting him or her to think imaginatively and to use language for this purpose. Physical development must be encouraged by active and fun play; a healthy alimentation will be useful for this purpose. Then, social learning will come when the child is able and enjoy interacting with others. Finally to success on this, these abilities must be worked out by the teacher by placing the child in a meaningful environment.

As a conclusion, this would be a very effective beginning of active education since childhood will position the human being in a situation of advantage, will also allow him / her to deal with life conditions in the present and future and to question social problems so as to find a way to contribute to solve them.

### 3.4.2. Liberty principle.

The liberty principle is the other side of Activity Principle since as I have explained children must have a dynamic role in which they are supposed to take decisions and choose the most convenient alternatives according to their possibilities. So, this principle can be summarized as the children real possibility of exercising the capability of electing in learning situations. It requires from the teacher the fact of trusting on the capabilities of the child who is also able to have mistakes as any other person. But what it doesn't mean in any case that the child possesses an unlimited liberty, since his or her liberty ends when his or her classmate liberty begins, and the limit barrier is respect to others liberty.

As Peralta, (1996, p. 25) identified what are the reasons for which liberty must exist:

- The respect to other persons' liberty.
- The limits that the development stage carry on.
- The value of the community in which the child forms part.

An application of this principle since the first months or life in a child would be for instance to place the children in a room with several types of materials available in some recipients in a not very high place with the purpose of creating a beginning point which will allow the baby to make an effort to take what he or she decides is more interesting and that it's found funny to play with.

Working with older children, this principle can be applied by using "free activities" as the complementary side of the main activity, probably a "controlled" one. The

purpose of the lesson with both kinds of activities is to balance liberty so that children do not feel lost and have clear instructions about what they are expected to do. Finally, it is important to summarize that liberty is essential in classrooms but it must be practiced together with the value of respect to other people in order to receive the same from them; and make the child comprehend that it is possible to create successful relationships among human beings.

### 3.4.3. Individuality principle.

Caldwell, (1996, p.26) is particularly right when he mentions: "Each child is similar in some way to all other children, to some children and to any children". It is difficult to comprehend what he is, and then what the educator is supposed to do. Let us explain as follows: every human being has the characteristic of "singularity" and what educators must do is to respect that singularity. Children require that the educator generates educational situations considering diversity, this is due to the fact that each child is different and that each aspect influences any learning situation. Some of these aspects are interest, motivation, abilities, learning styles, etc. so that they can respond to the specific situation in which they are inserted.

For instance, Montessori, (1996, p.26) affirms that: "each child has an individual life; thus, education is the required assistance for children normal life expansion and it must go directly to those individuals who must be observed one by one". Also Decroly (1996, p. 27) remarks: "one child is no other one; there are big differences among them even if they are brothers or sisters educated by the same condition". So, he created what is called: "individual exercises". They were, with no

discussion, right because if we think about it, we can say that each child comes from an individualized place which is their homes, and their adaptation and participation will depend on the fact that they continue receiving specific and individualized attention from educators. So, our task is to take into account individualized activities which will help to improve self esteem of children but at the same time create an environment of interaction among children that motivates good relationships also and as a consequence it will take us to the next principle which is socialization.

#### 3.4.4. Socialization principle.

This principle places the child in a sociable being position inside a community. In general, every educational experience must be considered as provoking the relationship of the child with others. To do so, sometimes the individual needs not to consider his or her personal characteristics but take into account other peoples' characteristics, or to postpone his or her own interests. This fact should not be taken as a conflictive situation and Mounier, (1996, p. 28) explains it this way:

...the person appears then, as a presence directed to the world and other people, with no limits, mixed with them, in a universal perspective. Other people do not limit her, but make her being and develop. She does not exist alone, she exists by the others; she does not know her, the others make her to know herself; she does not find herself, just by the others

So, the development on singularity in the child is possible by interaction with others. As singularity and socialization are produced in a harmonic way, each person will give the best for the others benefit as for itself. An advantage of this principle is that the social development allows every person to adjust the

consideration for others, which means a growth apart from the individual perspective. For all this, individualization and socialization are not opposite, but complementary.

#### 3.4.5. Autonomy principle.

Autonomy principle is much closer to Activity, Liberty and Singularity principles. It is directed to keep going in the domination of itself which is a development that the child will obtain while he or she acts with liberty. It means to be conscious of being a subject by the exercise of the willingness and capabilities. What is going to result from that practice is a necessary independency and, at the same time, it is important to help the child become aware of the consequences, implications and responsibilities of that autonomy as a must of this right.

#### 3.4.6. Reality principle.

It is correctly postulated as the “interest” principle because it says that every educational experience must have a meaning to the child which is taken from the daily life in order to be interesting. It is all the opposite of artificiality and the closest to reality and even more in childhood education because here is when children have their first participation experiences outside their families. Children are able to learn a lot of new and interesting things from life the very first time they face different situations in such a natural and concrete way. How many times we have listened that children are like sponges and how surprising they are with their constant learning along their first life years. Then, from this view, those extremely formal curricula are not acceptable because they lose all kind of naturalism and

richness that those activities that children find in their environment, from which they can extract multiple situations of all kind of new learning with the help and guide of an adequate facilitator. That is the purpose of this principle.

Many times teachers say that they do not have enough material to use in the classroom so there is not possibility to make interesting activities. Outside the classroom there is a lot of natural and beautiful places in this country where they can find the best environment to create interesting learning situations. They could find stones, seeds, different kinds of woods, etc., and working this way, education will have a special style.

#### 3.4.7. Game principle.

Apart from interesting, children activities must be funny. It was Froebel, (1996, p. 31) who postulated this principle as "*the characteristic methodological principle*" which is not easy for educators because it is not all only about being fun but also about offering learning experiences which must not lose that natural and spontaneous character that games offer to children. It is similar to reality, children must be involved in games because they are supposed to be part of their daily life and activities which seem to be like a tough obligation must be avoid as much as possible.

As a conclusion, it is important to point out that a principle is an assumption of what it is expected to be but we should not decrease its importance because of the wide application experience for which a principle was postulated. So, my



recommendation for educators is to practice them and apply the most convenient one.

## THE MEMORY

In this section, I will talk about the main activities I did as a tourist guide in the Museum of the Mayan Culture. I will explain the problems that I faced and the strategies used to overcome them, finally I will analyze based on the results the appropriate and non appropriate strategies with the main purpose of better helping new English Language major students perform a job as tourist guides.

The main activity I was paid for was to guide groups of people at the Museum of the Mayan Culture which sometimes I did in Spanish and many others in English. Basically my task was to provide people with all the information I knew about Mayan lifestyle and conceptions of death. After or during my explanation visitors were expected to ask for details that called their attention and I was always expected to have an answer prepared. There was one recommendation that I received during my preparation course: never affirm anything, you better say: it was supposed that. I thought that was perfectly right because I was not sure about the things I said. But now, I would say that if I could not affirm anything at least I could have mentioned some authors and quotations. Visitors will have their own opinion based on the good quality content I could have provided.

So, the first problem I faced was that I had no the adequate preparation to provide information about something that I ignored and did not know that I had to do like being informed so I could quote trusty resources. Five tourist guides gave me their versions about certain topics and my task was to create my own one out of those. They did not tell me about books, authors or any other information I could read in

order to be better prepared. I could even realize of the differences among their versions which made me feel a high lack of confidence the first time I guided. The reason why I felt this way was the fact they did not have the same version among themselves, they told me different things and I did not know which version was the correct one, so at the moment I faced a group I felt unsteady about my information.

Anyhow, that lack of confidence, which is part of my own personality, helped me sometimes because when I do not feel qualified enough to do any kind of task that I cannot avoid doing, I look for help on my own in that area. So, I started to love reading, which is the most helpful ability to develop when you are a tourist guide. There is too much reading to do and this will definitely help you to have something valuable to share with the tourists, I will give some recommendations on books and readings that may help other tourist guides. As I said before, this way the visitors will be able to make up their own points of view about the content, based on the information you give them.

Another problem I faced was keeping a conversation in Belizean Creole. It was difficult for me to understand their questions, I felt I was speaking another language different from theirs, so many times I felt so embarrassed I just thought I was not the correct person to be in front of those people. Tourists were very cruel because they took advantage of my lack of knowledge of their language and started making questions I could not understand. Because of that, sometimes I took a group with anger, ready to face them with force. My intention was to make them feel embarrassed because I decided to give the explanation and I was going to ask the questions so that I realized whether they were paying attention or not.

Obviously I needed to be more familiarized with Belizean Creole; I have to accept that I was weak in that area. I started to dislike Belizean Creole until the point that I developed more the speaking English ability than listening because to listen and understand was more difficult, so I avoided having contact with people as much as possible. Now I think what I must have done was to research about some of the most common expressions of Belizean Creole, maybe If I had suddenly said one in front of a students group, they would have laughed because they would realize I was not very familiarized with Creole but I tried, maybe that could have helped me a lot not to be afraid and to gain confidence, It could have helped forget about the authoritarian role I intend to play. Unfortunately, I decided to avoid Belizean Creole speakers which affected me a lot, there was a time when I did not want to watch a movie without subtitles, even if this movie was not Creole because I was sure I was not going to understand anything. Now I know that my attitude should had been all the opposite.

Later on, my experience taught me that self confidence was very important, maybe at the same level of my qualifications. After that, I discover that I could not lose control of the group and that I could not let them control me. My temperament had to be strong at the beginning so that I represented an authority, not to manage them, just to have enough presence to catch their attention and to let them know that they had to pay attention and also try to make an effort to understand me. This attitude changed their responses in general. My strategy for not being the authoritarian figure was that after they saw my effort I made jokes related to the topic so that they felt more interested. But, it is important to remark that those jokes

had to be said as fast as possible, otherwise, I could lose their attention and respect to my explanation. As a result I did catch people's attention when an explanation was being given.

Fortunately, while I was dealing with those difficult groups I was also taking *Práctica Docente* at the university. The main objective of this signature is to provide the students with tools, strategies, techniques to manage groups in the classroom depending on the different characteristics of the group.

So this subject helped me confirm that I was using the appropriate strategies at work. I remember something that I will never forget: a teacher told us, something that became one of the most helpful principles: "If you feel weak, they will see you weak, if you feel strong, they will see you strong, but if you feel you cannot do it, if you do not believe that you can do it, you better forget it. If you stand up in front of that group with that attitude they will destroy your profession as a tourist guide, as a professional, as a teacher, as an employee, or as a person, etc. People always have an impression of you, the one you want to project. So you better take a deep breath and give the best impression you can, you really have to believe that you can do it and that you are prepared to do it. You have already read, you can speak that language, maybe not in a perfect way but you have a notion of that language and if you feel confident you will find the way to express your thoughts. You just believe it and you will succeed. If you are studying to be a teacher it is very important that since now you believe that you are a teacher, that is your profession, do not feel afraid, the audience always catch your fear or your confidence on yourself. Do never forget that."

It was at this time when I decided to improve even more my own personal presence, my image what I wanted to project to my audience, in this case the visitors. My literature varied from Mayan culture topic content to my image. I needed to know how to talk in front of a group and as time went by, I realized it was not very difficult to deal with groups of students, I imagined myself in front of a group of teachers and thought that this situation would be more scaring. There are a lot of details we have to consider and which are quite simple and if you try to have a little bit of discipline in this aspect, it will come a time when you forget to pay attention to all those details and without noticing you would have dealt with those details, then it would have become a habit.

Another activity I did and also enjoyed a lot was working with children. Many times I welcomed groups of children from Chetumal Primary Schools which were taken to know a little bit of the Mayan Culture because as everybody knows it is part of education to know about our own culture. Anyhow, I enjoyed this activity very much, but that does not mean that it was easy to do. At the beginning I did it without preparation and knowledge of what it required but then I realized that in order to succeed with children I had to do a guiding plan too.

“Practica Docente” helped me once again to include games in my guiding. One of the things I learned from this class was considering that the time to spend with children in each part of the Permanent Hall should not take more than 5 minutes, otherwise I stayed speaking alone and children would go to the next point willing to know what was coming after. There is something important to be considered, which is an advantage for us as tourist guides. There is a difference when working

with children and teenagers. Children arrived at the Museum desperate to get in the Hall and discover what it is in there. Teenagers are more easily distracted and when coming to the Museum they usually are thinking of a wide variety of things and not only about the Permanent Hall or the Mayan Culture. That is why the guiding must almost encourage them to pay attention at first glance, after that; you can gain them by some other strategies like providing some fun so that they feel identified and comfortable. On the other hand, regarding to children having funny activities is easier because they usually are motivated, full of energy, thus our task is to keep that energy and enthusiasm from the beginning till the end.

## CONCLUSIONS

After reconsidering my experience as a tourist guide in the Museum of the Mayan Culture if I have to grade myself I would say that I was able to manage some aspects of that job but I was definitively weak at some others. For instance, I could manage working with children and I also enjoyed it a lot. So, what I conclude about this is that I was qualified to do so because of the major I studied and the signatures which were guiding me. Also, after some time I achieved managing my personality in front of a group, I learnt how to do it, basically because I had to do it, I could not avoid it. The main reason to achieve on this is because speaking in front of a group was something that had not ever represented a difficulty to me. What is very strange because it is difficult for me to speak in front of only one person, I mean I consider myself as shy.

On the other hand, I have to admit that I did not succeed on dealing with Creole English. This happened because I did not prepare myself on this field and because since ever listening ability has been a difficulty to me.

So now that I can take a look to my experience I came to several conclusions. The most important one is that if you are prepared, you succeed. Preparation is the only tool that can provide you with all the confidence needed to achieve on an exposition. If you know your field, nervousness can appear at the beginning but then when you even do not notice it, you will be immersed in the exposition itself capturing everybody's attention.



It is quite normal that a person who is not a tourist guide is not totally qualified to perform the job, but the first thing to do is to look for information on the content working on those areas you probably feel weak. While researching you will notice that information varies a lot from one author to another, but it does not matter because your task will not be to convince the audience to any specific perception since finally who is going to have their own judge is the tourist. Then, what is this about is to interchanging information with tourists, if we refer to foreign people we have to remember that they use to read a lot, so they probably bring a lot of knowledge on the field, this is why preparation is crucially important to have like a chat with them. Without noticing the tourist guide will increase their knowledge by storing experiences which will make him or her an expert.

In the aspect of working with children, preparation is once again quite important to succeed, in my case, as I said before, the guidance of the some signatures of English Language Mayor helped me a lot. I considered I was prepared to do so. In other cases, if the person is not prepared, there are some things to consider such as being an energetic person, making funny activities, always consider children get bored quite easy. Activities will teach them something if they are able to take decisions, respect their classmates and interact among them. Do never solve them everything, better let them discover by themselves so the learning process is significant to them.

I wish my experience with children would have been a nice memory as well as Creole English but unfortunately it wasn't. Basically because I never get enough preparation on the field, nobody told me I had to do it and I reused to do it when I

noticed it. One of the reasons is because listening ability has been always one of my difficulties but now if I had to perform that job again I think the first thing I would do is to travel to Belize in order to have some contact with the Creole, I don't consider it so difficult and practice solves almost everything.

But one important thing I learnt is that the way you approach to a foreign language person, no matter if it is Creole or American English will determine whether you succeed communicating or not. It is another language, different than yours, so first of all, try to feel relaxed, calm, take a breath, smile, be ready to understand and you will notice how your body get prepared to do it, it's just like your listening ability awakes. Remember your mind, control your body. No pressure at all. We can do it. A negative approach to understand what you listen is to think, there it comes for instance, a Belizean, he will surely try to talk to me, and it will be embarrassing that I will not understand a word, people will be observing me and I could not say a word. If these thoughts are in your mind, you're lost because even if you don't understand ask questions, discover what the person wants to tell you. You'll do. Your attitude determines.

In front of a group was a little bit different, surely the pressure was worse, but I could have had another attitude. Trying to be that authoritarian figure such as the teacher who brought them could have helped me. Maybe at the beginning an authoritarian attitude could helped but little by little I could have tried to be an integrant more of the group and they maybe could even try to helped me understanding their questions and not attacking me as they used to do.

Speaking in front of a group is not easy; thankfully it was for me but only when I started to feel more prepared on the field. If you are prepared you feel ready. And the way you feel is the last consideration I ask you to think about. People always perceive your weaknesses and strengths as well as your attitude. Always remember the details to consider to perform well, such as your posture, image, and voice from the other side of being prepared regarding on the knowledge.

My advices for tourist guides in the Museum of the Mayan Culture are a self challenge to overcome since the only requisite to get the job is to speak English as in any other archeological places. Anyhow, considering that we are professionals, it's our task and responsibility to do a good job because it will bring us valuable experiences.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Having worked at the Museum of Mayan Culture in Chetumal has been an important experience in my professional life, and according to this experience I would like to mention some suggestions to be considered by those who wish to become tourist guides and by authorities in charge of museums, galleries or archeological sites where a tour guide might be needed. I suggest that tourist guides of archeological places, museums, or galleries must receive a preparation course before start guiding with the main objective of helping them avoid the difficulties they could face and make them aware of them so that they work on them as a self challenge to overcome. Above all, one thing is to have knowledge on Mayan Culture but something very different is to have individual vision experience on working in front of groups.

It is also important that any person to work as guides in any archeological sites prove that he or she had taken courses on the field, since their task is of big responsibility because of the information given to tourists.

Finally, with this paper I also intend to make a suggestion to the curricula of the English Language Major. Including a subject about Mayan Culture would be an assert. It is impossible to comprehend other cultures if you can not understand your own. Any professional must know his culture and be proud of it. This feeling is very important, even more for tourist guides. Another assert would be to include Creole English as part of the curricula too since we are neighbors of Belize and many times our first contact to an English native speaker is a Belizean.

I hope that with the help of this paper, the responsible people for the job of tourist guides be conscious and ask themselves if they are really taking that responsibility seriously. Updating is essential in any field; to get more tools day by day is important to perform a job better. There is something I would like to remark, many visitors come to the museum without knowing anything about the Mayan Culture while some others already know something about but want to know more. So it would be a shame that, in some cases, visitors are better informed about our own culture than us. I can tell this because in some moment I felt insecure about the information I was given and how I was doing it. I agree, self improvement and research is a personal responsibility but support from the responsible people is necessary too.

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