

Concluding remarks. Beyond foreign language teaching: Intercultural citizenship and human rights education in practice.

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This Special Issue of *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics* has addressed the intercultural, citizenship and human rights dimensions of foreign language education. The use of the word education instead of teaching is significant and reflects a change that began in the country in the late 1990s. While in the mid-1990s and before curricular prescriptions were product-oriented (i.e. they included competence standards intended to operate as a means of standardisation), Michael Byram's (1997) concept of *intercultural competence* introduced the intercultural dimension in foreign language teaching, which proposed that its instrumental and functional vision based mainly on the acquisition of the linguistic system was no longer enough. Since then, from a theoretical perspective, the intercultural dimension is considered pedagogically and educationally relevant in foreign language education in Argentina and elsewhere.

This Special Issue has moved beyond the intercultural in language education towards citizenship and human rights perspectives. In the opening article, with Michael Byram we have argued that the aims and objectives of foreign language teaching can and should be combined with those of education for citizenship and we have referred to this as *intercultural citizenship*. In the second theoretical paper, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey have described their view of citizenship, which includes a human rights focus. The projects that follow present ideas on how to put these developments in practice in the classroom in different settings (primary and secondary education, higher education and teacher education).

The citizenship dimension of foreign language education proposes that teachers have the moral and ethical responsibility to foster a sense of citizenry in students (and this represents the educational side of language teaching) by creating the conditions in

which students can become involved with their communities. This means that students go beyond the classroom (literally) for example by designing and carrying out local civic actions in their own contexts. In the projects described here, this was achieved through:

1. Rosenberg: In the primary school context, finding similarities and differences between Romel (a Chachi Indian boy from the Ecuadorian jungle), his biome, hometown and lifestyle and the students', in order to point out that we are all different and the same; comparing and contrasting cultures, to contribute to building up children's identities; role playing an imaginary dialogue with Romel, so as to be able to have a real interaction with someone from any other place in the world; designing a leaflet or a flyer about rainforests and deforestation and handing them out both at school and in the street, to raise awareness.
2. Arcuri: In the primary school context, carrying out an exploratory task outside the school in which children walk around their neighbourhoods, together with a family member, in order to identify green crimes and green criminals, writing notes and taking photographs; carrying out an exploratory task within the school building to check out waste sorting practices (children classify waste, take notes and reflect on the school community's attitude towards waste treatment); carrying out a survey at home in order to check whether students' families know about recycling practices and to what extent sorting waste represents a common practice for them.
3. Helver: In the secondary school context, developing awareness of diversity within the school community on the basis of knowledge and participation; gaining information about the presence of different local languages and cultures in the classroom and the local community; engaging in concrete actions to integrate these languages and cultures such as cooperative projects; designing interactive group murals and timelines in order to share the relevance of knowing about ourselves, our languages and cultures; creating bilingual versions of famous English songs in order to develop an authentic sense of meshing up with the other through the universal language of music.
4. Marchel, Peluffo and Perez Roig: In the secondary school context, engaging with complex themes such as the 1976-1983 military dictatorship period in Argentina; raising awareness through different stories of how one (small) deed can change someone's reality for the

- better; collaboratively helping one another realise how important it is to fight for what one believes is fair; designing posters and PowerPoint presentations about people who have made great achievements in their lives; sharing posters and presentations with the school and the local communities.
5. Arriaga and Coscia: In higher education, in particular in ESP courses, being part of a heterogeneous group composed of both foreign and local students and students coming from different fields of study in order to foster cosmopolitan relationships; finding cultural informants outside the classroom; interviewing a cultural informant outside the classroom with the accompanying negotiation of cultural and linguistic differences from a practice-based perspective; recording the interview on video (or other means) and sharing it with the community through a presentation, blog, etc.; reflecting on the experience.
 6. Amez: In teacher education, analysing international campaigns related to violence against women; getting acquainted with online resources available locally and worldwide; making use of learning technologies to design a digital artefact; planning an awareness-raising campaign to implement in schools.
 7. Castellani, Dabove and Guzmán: In teacher education, researching about the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries fights for independence and/or freedom of abusive regimes movements and their artistic manifestations; identifying a specific social issue or problem and working with others to decide on an appropriate expression that incorporates their opinions both as individuals and as citizens within a community; identifying, analysing, interpreting and challenging anti-war and peace art and their contributions to education; designing lesson plans for the classroom within a citizenship and human rights framework; promoting peace education through art by working with children in an NGO from La Plata called *La máquina de los sueños* (The Dreams Machine).

The citizenship dimension has also been extended to include a human rights focus. This focus implies that language educators can make a contribution to promoting greater social justice and increasing a deeper understanding of otherness. In this view, human rights education (HRE) is simultaneously a universal entitlement and a tool to challenge injustice and bring about change in one's community. In the projects described here, this was achieved through:

1. Rosenberg: In the primary school context, creating water saving displays and putting them on the school walls; designing posters with tips for saving water, putting them up on different walls at school, for other classes to have the opportunity to learn from them and interact with their designers; encouraging children to raise awareness of environmental issues at home and among friends; opening a webpage or a blog for children to show their productions (poems, songs, posters, flyers); reflecting upon everyone's rights and responsibilities towards the environment and helping others reflect in this direction.
2. Arcuri: In the primary school context, analysing the video created by a group of Danish students in relation to the growing concern over water saving policies and practices in their country; designing eco-friendly adds to put up on school walls; recording a short video to express their views on waste treatment, making their voices heard not only within their local contexts but also worldwide through the use of online social networks and other online public platforms such as YouTube; informing other members of their community about the project, the results they have found and the conclusions they have arrived at so as to pass on the message and create an extended network of anonymous green heroes; planning a larger project for other schools to join in (these schools may be within the same region, in other provinces or even in other countries), including the creation of a virtual space of communication where students and teachers can interact and exchange information such as a wiki.
3. Helver: In the secondary school context, developing awareness of the existence of legislation to defend the linguistic rights of minority groups and acknowledging the relevant role of international and local organisations in this field; understanding the power of concrete actions to protect the linguistic rights of aboriginal Latin American communities such as Rigoberta Menchú's work; developing a sense responsibility for the promotion of local cultures in order to overcome social injustice; adopting an active participatory role to give visibility to all the school community's voices through collaborative projects.
4. Marchel, Peluffo and Perez Roig: Also in the secondary school context, researching about the recent past in order to engage with a sensitive topic such as the disappeared during the last military dictatorship in Argentina; taking an active role to find possible identifications with such recent past; becoming familiar with the Universal Declaration

- of Human Rights and using it in the analysis of different situations; organising group work to foster a sense of community through the development of negotiation and participation skills; creating relevant materials to raise awareness and sharing them with the local community.
5. Arriaga and Coscia: In Higher Education, in particular in ESP courses, raising awareness of different cultural behaviours, values and multiple identities in order to develop the ability to uphold one's rights and those of others; interacting with people of other cultures and developing creative and strategic negotiation skills in order to achieve a common goal; developing respect for diversity and a sense of solidarity toward the cultural informant.
 6. Amez: In teacher education, identifying forms of violence against women as a violation of human rights; perceiving themselves (teacher trainees) as citizens of a world community based on common human values; developing skills for identifying and acting on human rights concerns; becoming aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding women's rights to take a participatory stance and become agents of social change; recognising dialogue, debate and cooperation as valuable practices for the accomplishment of goals.
 7. Castellani, Dabove and Guzmán: In teacher education, becoming familiar with UNESCO's Culture of Peace and Non-violence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; approaching works of art from a human rights point of view; raising awareness of a human rights education framework in teacher trainees so that they can incorporate it in their practicum and future classes.

From the Local to the Global: the Argentine Context as Illustration

The projects described in this Special Issue are consistent with guiding principles in the new National Education Law (*Ley Nacional de Educación 26.206*) which have made the move toward citizenship and human rights education in the language classroom possible in the first place. One example is its Chapter II, Article 11 that addresses the principles of equality, educational inclusion, plurilingualism and interculturality, social cohesion and integration, and respect for and explicit acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity. This Law has redefined educational policies where conscientious and responsible citizenship is paramount.

Leonor Corradi (2014, personal communication) states that there exists a clear language policy in Argentina for foreign language teaching for formal education—primary and secondary school—and teacher education. Different federal curriculum

documents clearly state that the approach is plurilingual (although English is the most widespread foreign language taught) and intercultural. The twenty-four jurisdictions in Argentina, Corradi explains, are in the process of curricular reform along these principles both at primary and secondary school levels and at teacher education level. However, the citizenship and human rights positioning is not always straightforward in curricular documents despite the fact that the national curriculum guidelines (*Núcleos de aprendizaje prioritario, NAP*) make provisions along these lines.

At the provincial level, the 2008 English curriculum for primary school in the Province of Buenos Aires explicitly acknowledges the intercultural dimension in ELT, concerned with the development of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help children and young people to open up to the otherness pervading in increasingly diverse contexts (Beacon, Barboni & Porto, 2008). In this document, the citizenship dimension is expressed as a guiding philosophical background. Porto & Barboni (2012, p. 124) say:

this curricular document favoured a shift of focus from a conception of student learning as a product to be assessed through international exams to a view that sees English language learning in Argentina as part of a lifelong process with a deeper and longstanding aim: the discovery of what unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds, in an attempt to be as much at ease as possible with each others' languages, cultures, and individualities (DCEP, 2008, p. 223).

These are the principles of democratic citizenship.

This 2008 curricular document was revised in 2013 (Barboni, Beacon, Porto & Spoturno, forthcoming) and it purposefully adds the citizenship dimension as an inescapable dimension of ELT, on the basis of the principles of social welfare and cohesion attributed to educational policies by National Law of Education 26.206. Some of its aims are expressed as follows: “develop an intercultural perspective strengthening the children’s cultural identities and favouring processes of social integration and interaction with otherness in alignment with principles of peace and human rights”; and “develop children’s path toward democratic citizenship”. Involved here is the challenge of acknowledging the principles implicated in the concept of education for democratic citizenship. These principles are four: diversity and unity; global interconnection; experience and participation; and human rights. This last principle highlights the need to foster human rights education in practice in at least two dimensions: a) informing children, youth and adults about their own rights and those of others, and allowing for courses of action when rights are violated (education *about* human rights) and b)

developing the skills and attitudes involved in human rights such as respect for diversity, solidarity and awareness of and commitment toward increased social justice (education for human rights) (Osler 2012, 2013; Osler & Starkey, 2010).

In this sense, citizenship and human rights education belongs to all classrooms, not only the foreign language classroom, and all countries. In practice, this means that teachers in any context need to create and/or develop a *culture of human rights* and an environment that allows for human rights in the classroom and also in all the school. The classroom and the school are spaces where students can practise citizenship and human rights on a daily basis. This can take the form of experiential learning (for instance, students vote to decide which book to read in a literature or language class), collaborative work and cooperation, self-determination in learning (do I want to draw the end of the story, or do I prefer to sing it?), strategies of communication and participation (how do I take a turn?, how do I introduce a topic?) and commitment with the local community through civic actions.

It is also important to acknowledge that the role of the teacher is essential in this perspective because the right of a child, youth or adult not to be discriminated for instance crucially depends on the responsibility of the teacher to act within a framework of social justice and to protect that child, youth or adult from mistreatment. Teachers should also give students voice: learners will identify a situation (in real life, on TV or elsewhere) in which somebody's rights are violated and they will share their views in the classroom about how the injustice can be remedied. Oral narratives of this kind, individual or in groups, are tools that empower students.

To conclude, this Special Issue has provided the foundations on which citizenship and human rights education can become part of foreign language education. It has set the theoretical foundations and it has also provided illustrations. The challenge ahead is for the teacher and for teacher education and it amounts to finding ways of integrating citizenship and human rights education within daily teaching practice. In other words, the projects described in this Special Issue are a full realisation and implementation of the theory but this is not enough. Projects and innovations in this area need to become integrated into the routine work of the teacher.

A Way Forward

Looking ahead, the citizenship and human rights education framework for the (foreign) language classroom described and illustrated in this Special Issue highlights several priorities for the field. First, the need to foster an interdisciplinary focus, for instance by drawing on civics education and moral or social justice education, and to develop cooperative and interdisciplinary school cultures in which teachers of different subjects work together to develop the awareness, knowledge and skills that are necessary within

a citizenship and human rights framework.

Second, the need to improve teacher education and professional development (initial and continuous) with the aim to enable teachers and student teachers to act upon citizenship and human rights education in their specific contexts.

Third, in the Argentine context and perhaps elsewhere, the need to avoid the current fragmentation and isolation of the languages taught in the country (English, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Spanish as a Second and Foreign Language, etc.). This implies a move from “teaching languages” to “teaching Language” (Seidlhoffer, 2004, p. 227). This move has an impact on teacher education as well as pedagogy, among other areas, and has to be acknowledged in educational (linguistic) policies and then taken care of in the materiality of the classroom. A citizenship and human rights underpinning in language education would contribute to this shift.

Fourth, in the context of the Argentine system of education, which guarantees free education for all from initial to university level, and in other countries with similar characteristics, a citizenship and human rights focus highlights the need to strengthen the bond between the school/university and the community, by encouraging students to engage in some kind of civic action in their local communities simultaneously with and as a result of their foreign language lessons.

Finally, a citizenship and human rights framework contributes to seeing English as an international language that can foster intercultural bonds and citizenship and social justice objectives both locally and worldwide. This is important in contexts in which English can be seen in imperialist and hegemonic terms.

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