

We are the world and the world is our home: Learning about the environment and taking care of it in the primary classroom

Ethel Rosa Rosenberg*

Escuela Graduada Joaquín V. González (Universidad Nacional de La Plata), Argentina

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Abstract

Intercultural and human rights education should be always present in every lesson plan, since it is from there that the concepts of inclusion and diversity can be really experienced. This project intends to raise awareness on environmental issues such as water saving and deforestation, through language learning, comparison and contrast between two cultures, and an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities we all have as cosmopolitan citizens.

Keywords: intercultural and human rights education; inclusion; diversity; environment.

Resumen

La interculturalidad y los derechos humanos deberían estar siempre presentes en todo plan de clase, ya que es desde ahí que los conceptos de inclusión y diversidad pueden ser realmente vividos en carne propia. Este proyecto propone tomar conciencia respecto de cuestiones medioambientales tales como el cuidado del agua y la deforestación, a través del aprendizaje de una lengua, la comparación y contraste entre dos culturas, y un énfasis en los derechos y obligaciones que nos atañen a todos como ciudadanos cosmopolitas.

Palabras clave: educación intercultural y para los derechos humanos; inclusión; diversidad; medioambiente.

Preview

Level: Primary school

Language competence: A1–A2 (Common European Framework of Reference)

Age of students: 10–13

Type of project: CLIL

Theme: Biomes–Water–Deforestation

Estimated time: 8 lessons (80 minutes each)

Summary

Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people.

The teaching of languages has aims which are convergent with those of education for democratic citizenship: both are concerned with intercultural interaction and communication, the promotion of mutual understanding and the development of individual responsibility (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 18; Osler & Starkey, 2014).

This project is framed within this conceptualisation of language education. It addresses the topic of biomes and how some are being affected by human action, with the aim to raise awareness and take action to protect the environment. The project is intended to be developed in eight lessons in which students will compare and contrast their culture with others as regards the use of water and deforestation through different techniques such as brainstorming, discussion, role-play, simulation, inquiry, investigative approach, conflict resolution, value clarification and analysis, independent research, interviewing, cooperative and collaborative learning, games and case study.

Following the principles of Human Rights education, students will have the chance to connect every issue or topic to relevant articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, analyse how it manifests itself at home and abroad, emphasise on the belief that the individual can make a difference, and be provided with opportunities to act on their beliefs and habits. These actions will address problems both at home and in other cultures, with methods and activities that will reflect a variety of perspectives such as gender, race, religion, and tradition, demonstrating respect for justice and human dignity, and relating students' lived experiences directly to abstract concepts dealt with in Human Rights education.

From Theory to Practice

“Citizenship is changing as citizens have greater opportunities to act in new international contexts” (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 8). From this perspective, citizenship in a globalised world can be considered cosmopolitan. Education for cosmopolitan citizenship admits the reality of complex and multiple identities and allows space for the exploration of identity. “A cosmopolitan perspective, based on human rights as universal principles, uses communication to help citizens make connections and comparisons between cultures and communities” (Osler & Starkey, 2014). Language education from an intercultural perspective shares this view.

Osler & Starkey (2005) suggest that educated cosmopolitan citizens will be confident in their own identities and will work to achieve peace, human rights and democracy within their local communities and at a global level, by accepting personal responsibility and recognising the importance of civic commitment; working collaboratively to solve problems and achieve a just, peaceful and democratic community; respecting diversity among people, according to gender, ethnicity and culture; recognising that their own worldview is shaped by personal and societal history and by cultural tradition; respecting the cultural heritage and protecting the environment; promoting solidarity and equity at all levels.

In this sense, education for cosmopolitan citizenship is about enabling learners to make connections between their immediate contexts and the national and global contexts. “We are increasingly able to make these connections between ourselves and our identities and others and their concerns and feel solidarity with others at local, national, regional (e.g. European) and global levels” (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 8). Osler & Starkey (2005, p. 93) also say that

cosmopolitan citizenship implies recognition of our common humanity and a sense of solidarity with others. It is insufficient, however, to feel and express a sense of solidarity with others elsewhere if we cannot establish a sense of solidarity with others in our own communities, especially those others whom we perceive to be different from ourselves.

The challenge is to accept shared responsibility for our common future and for solving our common problems. It implies dialogue and peer collaboration to address differences of opinion. Language education from an intercultural perspective also shares these principles by encouraging awareness of and respect for otherness, perspective-taking, and processes of comparing and contrasting.

Osler & Starkey (2014) argue that education for cosmopolitan citizenship will enable all young people to perceive themselves as citizens with rights and responsibilities. It is

not a process that can be realised exclusively at school. Learning is taking place beyond the school and the school needs to build on this learning and to encourage learners to make connections between their experiences and learning in the school and in the community. This implies that teachers need to be aware of sites of citizenship learning beyond the school. They argue that education for cosmopolitan citizenship addresses peace, human rights, democracy and development. It is about equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to make a difference. It is orientated towards the future, preparing young citizens to play an active role in shaping the world, at all levels, from the local to the global.

The underlying idea here is that all human beings are members of the human family. Thus, the world is our home, and we are all global citizens. “A citizen is an actor in a democracy which requires fundamental freedoms and actions on the basis of the belief in equality, participation, responsibility, and solidarity” (Osler & Starkey, 2014).

Finally, Osler (2012, p. 6) explains that

education *about* rights implies knowledge about their own [children’s] rights and those of others and about how they can respond if those rights are not recognised, which necessarily includes some understanding of legal frameworks and mechanisms for seeking redress. Education *for* rights involves the development of skills and attitudes to strengthen human rights, which in turn implies respect for diversity, a sense of solidarity with others, particularly the oppressed, and skills to effect change and bring about greater justice.

Materials and Technology

- [Biomes of the World](#)
- [My Biome Song](#)
- [The Lion King](#)
- [Happy Feet](#)
- [Tarzan](#)
- [Romel’s rainforest](#)
- [Water](#)
- [Heroes of water saving](#)
- [Poems about water](#)
- [Conserve Water Style!](#) (Best Gangnam Style Parody PSA)
- [The importance of water](#)
- [Examples of leaflets and flyers produced by students](#)
- [Vocabulary games about the rainforest](#)

- [We know, poem by Benjamin Zephaniah](#)
- Interactives: world maps for students to locate different biomes

Preparation

1. Get acquainted with the school syllabus and the class teacher so as to be well informed on what students know about biomes and intercultural education.
2. Find out whether it is possible to put up posters on school walls, and where.
3. Take students to the school computer lab, use a personal computer with an overhead projector in the classroom, or ask students to bring their own laptops.
4. Work online or download the materials on a memory stick.
5. Send notes to parents asking them to take part in their children's homework.

Instructional Plan

Project timeline

Context	Tasks
Lesson 1 · Biomes of the World: weather, flora and fauna	Describing places
Lesson 2 · Biomes in films	Identifying biomes. Supporting opinions.
Lesson 3 · Romel's story - learning about other cultures	Reading and writing: describing people and places
Lesson 4 · Romel's story - intercultural competence	Comparing and contrasting cultures Role-playing dialogues
Lesson 5 · Romel's story - the importance of water and water saving	Raising awareness Giving advice
Lesson 6 · Water saving: poems and a video clip	Poem writing Song composing
Lesson 7 · Romel's story - deforestation	Discussing and debating attitudes
Lesson 8 · Rights and responsibilities towards the environment	Designing a leaflet/flyer

Table 1: Project timeline.

Objectives

There are linguistic, intercultural, and citizenship and human rights objectives.

Linguistic objectives. Students will:

- develop reading comprehension strategies through focus tasks
- describe people and places
- develop critical thinking and speaking skills (supporting opinions and interactions)

Intercultural objectives. Students will:

- learn about a different community and its practices
- care about other people’s feelings and see things from their point of view
- compare and contrast cultures considering inclusion and diversity

Citizenship and human rights objectives. Students will:

- gain awareness of ecological problems such as deforestation and water waste
- appreciate that water is a precious resource and a universal need
- understand and value the importance of trees, plants and forests as homes and take responsibility to protect the environment

Session 1

1. Write the word biomes on the board. Ask students to say what they know about biomes.
2. Tell students they will watch a video: Biomes of the world and ask them to fill in the chart below.

Biome	Weather	Flora	Fauna

3. Write the following structures on the board:
 In the.....it is.....
 There is.....and there are.....
4. Get students to repeat a couple of sentences as an example (In the desert it is hot and dry. There is no water and there are very few animals). Then ask them to produce their own statements.
5. Students listen to a song: [My Biome Song](#), watch images and find biomes on a world map.
6. Write on the board: Inthere is.....
 Students use this structure to describe what they can see on their maps, for example:
 In South America there are deserts, rainforests and savannahs.

Session 2

1. Ask students what they remember about world biomes. They are expected to produce the statements used in the previous lesson.
2. Tell students they will watch extracts from three Disney films and they will be expected to identify biomes. To support their answers, they are supposed to produce the statements used in the previous lesson: In the..... it is....., there is..... and there are.....
3. Play the first fragment: [The Lion King](#) (savannah) and do the same as above.
4. Play the second fragment: [Happy Feet](#) (tundra) and do the same as above.
5. Play the third fragment: [Tarzan](#) (rainforest) and do the same as above.
6. Tell students they will play guessing games in pairs. One describes a biome and the other guesses which one it is (both orally and in writing).
7. Students then describe the biome they live in. They are expected to write a paragraph and illustrate it.

Session 3

1. Ask students to describe the three biomes they have been dealing with.
2. Tell students they are going to read about Romel, a boy who is asking for help.
3. Viewing tasks (reading whole text for gist and interpreting images):
 - Why is he asking for help? (because the forest–his home–is being destroyed)
 - Which biome does he live in? (the rainforest)
 - Support your answer (In the rainforest there is.... there are....)

Space intentionally left blank

4. Reading comprehension: students are asked to solve different focus tasks.

Page 1: Right, Wrong or Doesn't Say?

1. Romel is very tall.
2. He is from North America.
3. He's got a big family.



Urakepe! Hello! My name is Romel. I'm a Chachi Indian and I'm 13 years old. I live in the village of San Salvador, in Ecuador. I have five brothers and two sisters.

Figure 1: Romel (and text above).

Page 2: Multiple choice

1. people live in Romel's village.
a. A few b. A lot of
2. There are in Romel's garden.
a. vegetables b. fruits



There are about sixty families living in houses spread along the Rio Sucio, in the rainforest. In my house, there is a big garden planted with bananas, cacao trees and papaya. We eat those plants.

Figure 2: Romel (and text above).

Page 3: Questions

1. Where do Romel and his father find animals?
2. Do they have running water at home?



Also, my dad and I go hunting in the forest. There are all kinds of animals around here: howler monkeys, toucans, coatis, snakes, etc. Sometimes I have to get water from the river too. Look! That's me getting some water for cooking.

Figure 3: Romel (and text above).

Page 4: Fill in the blanks

1. Romelschool.
2. He speaks languages.



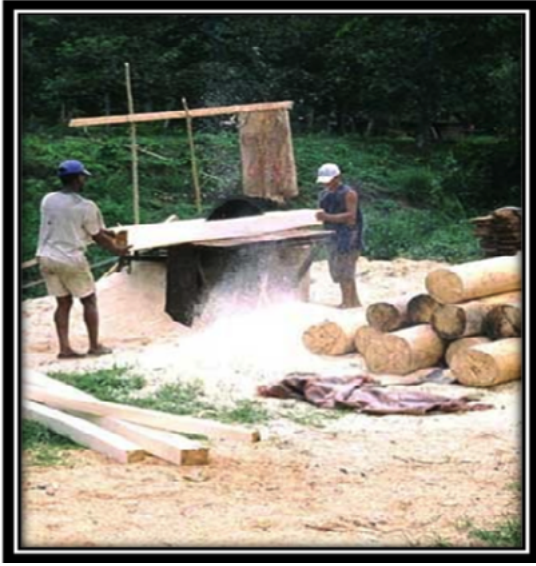
I like helping my family but I have to go to school too. I live close to school but some children have to walk 1 hour to get there. I like school. We Chachi speak Chapalachi but the books are all in Spanish so we speak both languages at school.

Figure 4: Romel (and text above).

Page 5: Match the halves

Trees are used
 They are being cut down
 Romel's home is being

destroyed.
 for furniture.
 by people from other places.



My grandfather says that when he was a boy the Chachi were the only people in this area. Now there are lots of people from other parts of Ecuador. The problem is that they are cutting down all the trees. We Chachi can't live without the rainforest because it gives us most of the things we need. For example, we use trees to make our houses, baskets and canoes. Even our medicine comes from the rainforest.

Figure 5: Romel (and text above).

5. Parallel writing: Students write about themselves using Romel's story as a model. They will be able to use their texts to introduce themselves in case they want to interact with English-speaking children around the world.

Session 4

1. Revise question forms. Remind students of yes/no and (w)h questions. Write both structures on the board. Give examples.
2. In pairs, ask students to imagine that one of them is Romel. They interact as if they had just met, asking and answering about each other's lifestyle.
3. Students discuss similarities and differences between Romel's biome/hometown/lifestyle and theirs.

In his biome it is..., there is... and there are... and/but in mine...

He and I... / He ... but I...

He lives... He has... He speaks... / I live... I have...

4. In pairs or groups, students ask each other questions about their own reality. Again, they are expected to compare and contrast their findings. Ellipsis can be introduced, for instance: s/he lives close to school but I don't; s/he doesn't help his parents at home but I do, etc.

Session 5

1. Draw students' attention to the fact that Romel has no running water at home. He has to carry water from the river to his house.

2. Show students [Water](#) and ask them to complete the following:
 need water (to).
 Water is used to.....
3. Ask students to reflect on the importance of water and saving it, since it is a natural resource we could not live without. Introduce the concept of global citizenship, which implies the world is our (everybody's) home and we all have to take care of it.
4. Tell students they will watch a video: [Heroes of Water Saving](#) and say whether they feel identified with any of the characters and their practices and why (not).
5. Use TPR (total physical response) to teach: I turn the tap off, I don't use a hose, etc. Get students to repeat both phrases and gestures.
6. Play a guessing game: some students mime actions from the video and others guess what they mean.
7. Teach the imperative form: turn the tap off/use a hose, etc. and ask students to describe the contexts of situation (Who to whom? When? Where? Why? How?) in which those imperatives can be used, for example: I can tell someone in my family to turn the tap off when they are brushing their teeth.
8. Ask students to work in groups and design posters with tips for saving water. Their posters will then be put up on different walls at school, for other classes to have the opportunity to learn from them and interact with their designers.

Session 6

1. Tell students they will have a look at poems about saving water written by children their age.
2. Ask them to choose the one/s they prefer and explain why.
3. Get students to write their own poem about water.
4. Show students a video clip about water saving: [Conserve Water Style!](#) Tell them they will then be expected to compose their own song adapting the lyrics and creating their own choreography. They could afterwards visit classes to show their creation and invite other students to sing along and dance with them. There could also be a discussion or debate about ways of saving water.
5. Extension/after school work: as homework, ask students to research [reasons for saving water](#) and use that information to play the [Water Family game](#) with their families (In this game you have fun while you help a family cut down their water use in their home and garden. To win, you have to make decisions about your family's use of water).

Session 7

1. Ask students to share their findings to create water saving displays and put them on the school walls. Here are some [examples and ideas](#).
2. Get students to find the connection between water and the rainforest/trees.
3. Have students analyse the end of Romel's story and its message. Discuss the concept of deforestation. Remind students of the global citizenship concept: we must all take care of the environment. Mention Article 25 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing") and Article 7 ("All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination") and ask how they think they apply in this case.



My dad is working with the government to make these people stop destroying the forests. But it's difficult to get help when you are an Indian. We need to protect the rainforest. It is our home. Please, **HELP** us!

Figure 6: Romel (and text above).

4. Ask students to look around and say how many things are made of wood. Could we do without them? If so, how? Why don't people stop cutting down trees?
5. Ask students to debate who they think is responsible for deforestation, where in their country it has destroyed natural habitats and what could and should be done to stop it.
6. Extension/after school work: ask students to [practise vocabulary](#) and [complete statements](#), and, as a follow-up activity, tell students to write as much as they can remember about rainforests. In groups, they can then share their productions and find similarities and differences among them.

Session 8

1. Tell students about Benjamin Zephaniah and his commitment towards the environment.
2. Read the following [poem](#) aloud.
3. Get students to listen and repeat.
4. Ask them to illustrate the poem.
5. In groups, students design a leaflet or a flyer about rainforests and deforestation and they hand them out both at school and in the street.
6. Encourage students to open a webpage or a blog to show their productions (poems, songs, posters, flyers) and to help others become aware and reflect upon everyone's rights and responsibilities towards the environment.

Related Websites

- [Lesson plans and teacher resources](#)
- [Ways of taking global action](#)

Conclusion

This project is designed to raise awareness on environmental issues such as water saving and deforestation, through language learning, comparison and contrast between two cultures, and an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities we all have as cosmopolitan citizens. It is framed within an intercultural and human rights education focus which is valuable to primary school children since it prepares them to participate and take action in an increasingly diverse society. It fosters inclusion, as it raises awareness on the fact that different lifestyles, customs and worldviews can coexist peacefully. It promotes equality and challenges discrimination, contributing to the children's moral and spiritual enrichment and developing their intercultural competence. It also encourages acceptance and respect for the values and beliefs of others, stimulating a sense of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship which gives them the opportunity to explore their own and other identities.

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