Comprehensive Sexuality Education Activities in the EFL Lesson through Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to show how contents of Comprehensive Sexuality Education can be included both in primary and secondary level EFL lessons through the use of different educational technological resources and remote teaching proposals. The passing of National Law 26,150 (2006) created a national program on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) which enforces the inclusion of perspectives, contents and discursive practices around CSE in all areas of the curriculum —EFL included— and at all levels of the educational system. During these times of pandemic and emergency remote teaching, the inclusion of CSE in our lessons continues to be of paramount importance. This article describes some of the initiatives and practices implemented for the inclusion of CSE.
Keywords: Comprehensive Sexuality Education, EFL, social distancing

RESUMEN

La aprobación de la Ley Nacional 26.150 (2006) creó un programa nacional de Educación Sexual Integral (ESI) que impone la inclusión de perspectivas, contenidos y prácticas discursivas en torno a la ESI en toda la currícula —lenguas extranjeras incluidas— y en todos los niveles del sistema educativo. Este documento tiene la intención de describir algunas de las iniciativas y prácticas que, hasta ahora, se han implementado para la inclusión de la ESI y demostrar cómo algunos de sus contenidos pueden incluirse en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera, tanto en nivel primario como secundario, a través del uso de diferentes recursos de tecnología educativa y propuestas de enseñanza remota, aun en contexto de pandemia.
Palabras clave: Educación Sexual Integral, Inglés lengua extranjera, distanciamiento social

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Introduction

Since the passing of National Law 26,150 (year 2006), which created the National Programme of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Argentina, CSE must be present in all educational proposals, EFL included, and at all levels of the educational system. That is, it is expected that CSE contents be worked transversally and throughout all school subjects by the development of initiatives that involve all participants in the same institution. These initiatives, in turn, should deal with the contents allocated to each level (preschool, primary and secondary school, teacher training college and tertiary level education) and be based on the CSE Curricular Guidelines elaborated by the Argentine Federal Board of Education in 2018.

Due to an unusual and unprecedented situation that the world is going through since the CoVid-19 outbreak, instruction of all school subjects at all levels has migrated to remote teaching/learning experiences. Therefore, CSE and its gender and human rights perspective should be included in all the educational proposals being taught online during this exceptional health emergency, not only to guarantee pedagogic continuity but also to guarantee our students' basic right to quality education.

Although the CSE National Law was passed fourteen years ago, the inclusion of CSE seems to be still at "*an embryonic stage*" (Banegas, 2020:2) due to the lack of constant implementation or the fact that some teachers feel they do not have the right tools to apply CSE in their daily educational practices. This article, therefore, intends to show how despite the fact that lessons are being delivered remotely due to the CoVid-19 outbreak, this does not exempt EFL teachers from developing initiatives or working in articulation with other areas and teachers to include CSE. For that matter, this article describes some of the initiatives that have been implemented to include and teach CSE and to provide tools and help other EFL teachers carry out similar practices.

Theoretical Framework

What is Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)?
The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) defines comprehensive sexuality education as "Education about all matters relating to sexuality and its expression. Comprehensive sexuality education covers the same topics as sex education but also includes issues such as relationships, attitudes towards sexuality, sexual roles, gender relations and the social pressures to be sexually active, and it provides information about sexual and reproductive health services. It may also include training in communication and decision-making skills." However, as complete this definition may seem, Comprehensive Sexuality Education involves critical thinking, citizenships, social and life skills, as well as a pedagogy of collective care.

As advocates for CSE, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and numerous researchers and practitioners have specified and clarified that CSE is constituted of (1) a basis in values and human rights of all individuals as a core component, not an add-on; (2) thorough and scientifically accurate information about human rights, gender norms, and power in relationships, (including consent and decision making, sexual coercion, intimate-partner and gender-based violence, and sexual diversity); the body, puberty, and reproduction; relationships, communication, and decision-making; and sexual health (including STIs/HIV and AIDS, unintended pregnancy, condoms and contraception, and how to access health and other support services); (3) a gender focus (gender norms and gender equality) as a stand-alone topic and also infused across other CSE topics; moreover, such gender content dovetails with efforts to keep girls in school and to promote an egalitarian learning environment; (4) a safe and healthy learning environment; (5) effective teaching approaches that are participatory, help learners personalize information, and strengthen their skills in communication and decision making and in critical thinking; (6) youth advocacy and civic engagement in program design but also in empowering learners beyond the curriculum, as agents in their own lives and leaders in their communities; (7) cultural appropriateness, tailored as needed for distinct subpopulations.

Going back to our country, Argentina, based on our National CSE plan, the teaching of CSE revolves around five main axes whose main objectives are to ensure a more holistic approach to its implementation. These are: (1) recognition and inclusion of gender perspective, (2) respect for diversity, (3) value of affectivity, (4) exercising sexual and reproductive rights, and (5) body and health care. And as Cahn et al. claim (2020, p.31), "CSE is a systematic and continuous space of teaching and learning that does not limit itself to one educational intervention, a talk or a movie screening. CSE considers sexuality as one of the dimensions of people that keeps developing since birth."

Therefore, it could be said that CSE is a set of comprehensive and holistic life skills that includes all the possible aspects in the construction of one's subjectivization as a human being and as a global, critical and sexual citizen. And as such, it should be present in all educational proposals and at all levels as a core of the curricula.

Why Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and not Online Teaching?
During these times of emergency, uncertainty and social distancing, teachers around the world have been working on providing students with support and temporary access to instruction through technology as a solution to an immediate problem. In this article, I will be using the term Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to describe this mode of work instead of the term Online Teaching.

As Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond explain in their article *The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning*, the main difference between

both approaches lies in the very founding moment of each approach. Online Learning has been around us for a long time and online teaching proposals have been born, planned and designed as such since their very beginning to create a systematic model of instruction. In fact, to design and develop a quality course takes time, effort and instruction. However, Emergency Remote Teaching encompasses "a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances" (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020). Furthermore, it is considered that instruction will return to its previous face-to-face format once the crisis has abated.

Hence, the term Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) will be used to describe the methodology of online teaching since it is considered more suitable and coincides with our local present situation in our educational system.

How? Through Task Based Learning (TBL)

As Haberland (2015:34) states in her paper *The Case for Addressing Gender and Power in Sexuality and HIV Education: A Comprehensive Review of Evaluation Studies*, "one program characteristic that has been fairly consistently correlated with effective programs is interactive, learner-centered and skills-based teaching approaches. (...) using interactive, participatory, learner-centered or critical thinking pedagogy."

That is why, Task Based Learning (TBL) fits as a suitable teaching approach to include and implement CSE contents and projects in the EFL lesson. Furthermore, TBL promotes the development and integration of skills while engaging with different tasks along the course of the projects, which makes it not only a means but also a way to develop CSE contents in the lesson.

The initiatives described below try to follow a Task Based Learning scheme. As Willis (1996) explains in Díaz Maggioli & Painter-Farrell (2016, p.353), "there are four conditions for language learning: three obligatory and one desirable. The three obligatory conditions for language learning include (1) exposure to varied input of authentic language in use, (2) motivation to use that input in reading or writing and (3) opportunities to put the input in use." These three conditions can be found in the initiatives described in this article. The students were exposed to a variety of input and authentic material such as videos, texts, images. Both initiatives started with a driving question that engaged students in real world problems. They were motivated to use that input in reading and writing. And students had opportunities to put the input in use through oral discussions and project work. Students inquired into a topic and created final products that were made public afterwards.

Context

The initiatives were carried out at a low-middle/middle class private Catholic school in Buenos Aires City (CABA).

Students in primary level have three periods of classes, each of forty minutes, whereas secondary level students have four periods of forty minutes each. During face-to-face instruction, students had lessons twice a week.

Another difference between both levels is that students in secondary school are divided into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced.

Most students have an internet connection available and an electronic device to connect to the synchronous instruction meetings, either a mobile phone, a tablet or a computer. However, not all of them count with working webcams.

Initiatives

Initiative 1: Illustrated Biographies of Important Women in History in Primary Level
The following initiative was carried out during the first term of 2020 with two joined courses of seventh graders of 34 students each. Students had instances of asynchronous teaching/learning with materials and videos created by the teacher and uploaded to the school platform, and synchronous teaching/learning with a 60-minute-online meeting through Zoom or Google Meet.

It was part of the school and teachers' practices to have staff meetings to share plans and future projects in order to guarantee collaboration and articulation between areas and to generate cross-cutting spaces. This practice was usual not only before the pandemic, but it also continued to be implemented during lockdown. Video Conferences among schoolteachers from different levels and areas ensured the creation of cross-curricular projects. Therefore, seventh grade EFL teachers agreed to join homeroom teachers in a project related to women's rights by creating a broadened initiative that encompassed Social Studies, Ethics & Citizenship in relation to EFL.

The main objective of this initiative and sequence of activities was to visibilize women's role in history and their fight for equality. The activities were then complemented with the reading of illustrated biographies of famous women, such as *Fantastically Great Women that Changed the World*, by Kate Pankhurst (Bloomsbury: 2016), *She Persisted Around the World*, by Chelsea Clinton & Alexandra Boiger (Philomel Books - Penguin Random House: 2018) and *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*, by Vashti Harrison (Puffin Books - Penguin Random House: 2017). Through this initiative, students were able to know more about important women in history, from different fields and around the world, including Argentinian pioneers.

EFL teachers decided to begin their lesson by carrying out a brainstorming activity that allowed them to check students' ideas and assumptions about women using an app called Mentimeter. Students shared their knowledge and views by expressing the first word - adjectives, mostly- that came to their minds (See Pictures 1.a and 1.b). Then, they shared what famous women in history they knew or remembered. (See Picture 2).

Picture 1.a

Picture 1.b

Picture 2

Some students expressed a more traditional view by saying that women were beautiful, sweet, lovely, thin or blond, whereas others stated that women were strong, powerful, kind and important. As regards famous women in history, some students could name women from different fields while others just a name, e.g. Frida Kahlo and Marie

Curie. In another class, students had to choose an important, pioneer and groundbreaking woman in history to represent. To do so, students had to bring an object, an item of clothing (or wear a costume) and three clues so as to play a guessing game. They also had to tell why they had chosen those exponents. As homework, students had to recreate photos of famous women doing the types of work that were traditionally thought for men.

In the video conference before meeting the deadline of their final task, one of the teachers modelled this task by dressing up as the iconic figure of Rosie the Riveter, Dr. Jane Goodall or scientist Marie Curie, among other famous and important women in history during their zoom classes. She showed some elements and gave some clues before revealing the complete outfit and students could guess who she was.

Throughout the online meeting and by sharing the screen, students were also presented with other salient women in history through PowerPoint presentations and videos. Students played games in teams such as Jeopardy or Baamboozle where they had to answer trivia questions about important women in history. Another useful tool was Jamboard. This app allowed students to write sticky notes under each column and move any they considered not properly placed. Afterwards, they had to justify their decisions. The columns had the following titles above: "In the past, women could…", "In the past, women couldn't…", "Long ago, women used to…" and "Long ago, women didn't use to…".

As a final activity, students were asked to write about three important women in their lives and choose an outstanding woman from history to write a short biography. Students created presentations and videos and shared their work through online lessons. Students and teachers repeated the first activity. The objective here was to check students' progress, see if there was a change in their notions and opinions, and if they could include more women referents in history to their lists. (See Picture 3 and 4)

Picture 3

Picture 4

Teachers showed students all the slides to compare them and to self-evaluate their process. They all concluded that they had been able to learn more about women and to appreciate their role in history. Students also reflected upon their notions and preconceptions about women and were able to learn of different women from different fields such as sports or science. It opened a new world of possibilities and goals.

Initiative 2: How are you feeling in Lockdown? An Experience in Secondary Level
The following initiative was carried out on June 24, which was the first of three days throughout the year included on the Buenos Aires City Education calendar to deal with CSE contents in all educational institutions, both state-run and private, and at all levels. The initiative involved a group of 24 students from first year intermediate level. Again, students had instances of asynchronous teaching/learning, with materials and videos created by the teacher which were uploaded to the school's platform, and synchronous teaching/learning with a 60-minute-online meeting through Zoom or Google Meet.

Each secondary level course has a special video meeting with their tutors every week. Students, tutors and teachers from all areas get together to play games and talk about how they are all doing in lockdown. It must be remembered that these first-year students had just started secondary school and had shared the classroom only for a week, both new students and students that came from the primary level. They had little time to adapt and socialize as adolescents beginning a new stage in their lives. Therefore, these meetings try to help them socialize and get to know each other better. However, that week their meeting had a focus on CSE. All meetings were organised by their tutors and based on the documents sent by the City of Buenos Aires Ministry of Education.

Although gender perspective and CSE are included transversally in projects and lesson plans throughout the year, this time a special CSE day was also carried out during our weekly meeting. The first step was reading the documents and guidelines sent by the Ministry of Education and the booklets created by the National Ministry of Education called "We Continue Teaching", which have a special section for CSE for each level and group.

The focus in the guidelines was on health, healthy habits and being at home due to the pandemic. Therefore, our CSE meeting continued along that same common thread. First, students were presented with a Mentimeter presentation were they had to answer two main questions:

1. WORD CLOUD: How do you take care of yourself and your health? What do you do?
2. WORD CLOUD: What are your feelings in lockdown/quarantine? How are you feeling?

After students completed each slide, we all stopped to talk about the answers that were coming out in each word cloud or chart.

In the first slide, students shared some of the things they do to take care of themselves such as drinking a lot of water, washing their hands, using a sanitizer, wearing a facemask, sleeping eight hours, walking or doing exercise. Others expressed that they were eating a big amount of unhealthy food because it was easy to cook, it was just there or because they were experiencing cravings for sweets and floury food.

Some of the answers that came up in the second word cloud were tired, stressed, bored, sad, worried, tired, "saturated by homework", confused or "I can spend more time with my family". These answers needed a deeper involvement since some students could open up and express how they were experiencing this unprecedented moment in history. To do so, students used their L1 when needed or they felt more comfortable.

This activity led to talking about their routines, their spaces around the house and about how some of them felt they had lost their privacy.

Afterwards, it was Think-Pair-Share time. We carried out a task called "*1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1*" (Picture 5). This activity was carried out through breakout rooms where they got together randomly in groups of three. Smaller groups showed they felt more comfortable to speak and share their opinions and experiences.
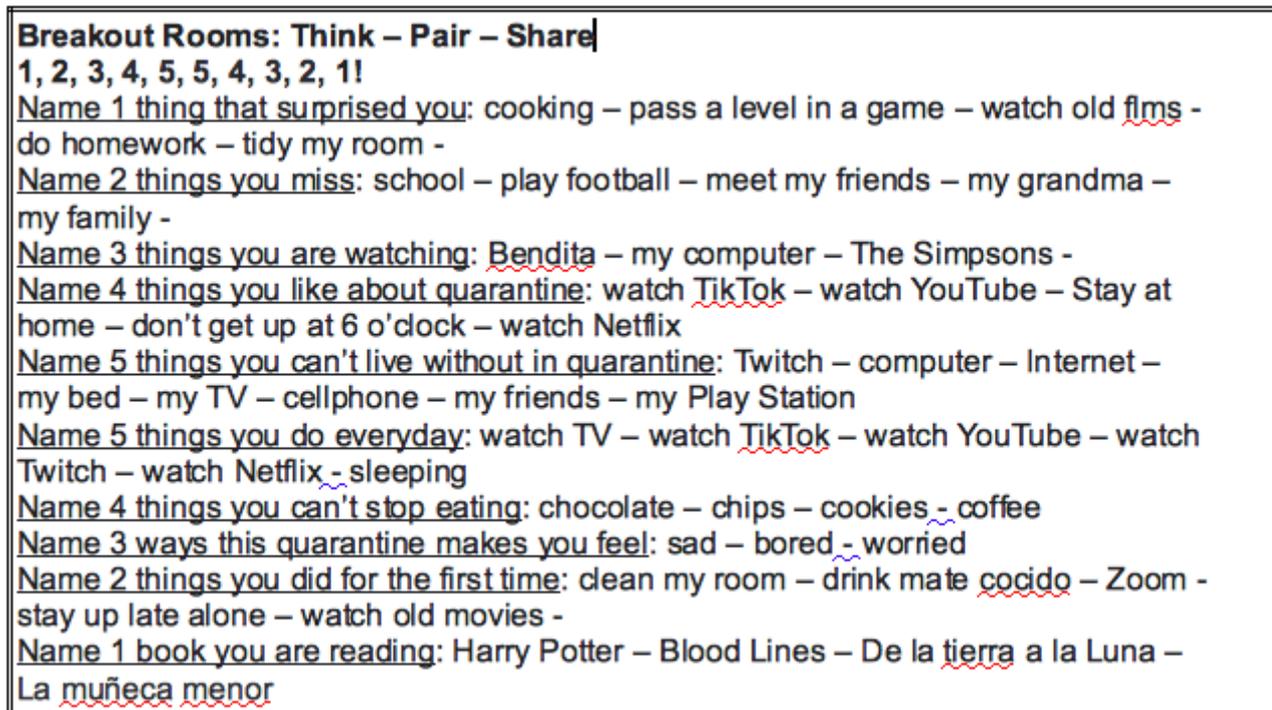

Breakout Rooms: Think – Pair – Share
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!
Name 1 thing that surprised you during quarantine:
Name 2 things you miss:
Name 3 things you are watching:
Name 4 things you like about quarantine:
Name 5 things you can't live without in quarantine:
Name 5 things you do everyday
Name 4 things you can't stop eating:
Name 3 ways this quarantine makes you feel:
Name 2 things you did for the first time:
Name 1 book you are reading:

Picture 5

All groups had five minutes to pair and share. Then, they all got together and said what they had shared in the breakout rooms and agreed or disagreed on their classmates' answers (Picture 6).

Breakout Rooms: Think – Pair – Share
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!
Name 1 thing that surprised you: cooking – pass a level in a game – watch old films - do homework – tidy my room -
Name 2 things you miss: school – play football – meet my friends – my grandma – my family -
Name 3 things you are watching: Bendita – my computer – The Simpsons -
Name 4 things you like about quarantine: watch TikTok – watch YouTube – Stay at home – don't get up at 6 o'clock – watch Netflix
Name 5 things you can't live without in quarantine: Twitch – computer – Internet – my bed – my TV – cellphone – my friends – my Play Station
Name 5 things you do everyday: watch TV – watch TikTok – watch YouTube – watch Twitch – watch Netflix - sleeping
Name 4 things you can't stop eating: chocolate – chips – cookies - coffee
Name 3 ways this quarantine makes you feel: sad – bored - worried
Name 2 things you did for the first time: clean my room – drink mate cocido – Zoom - stay up late alone – watch old movies -
Name 1 book you are reading: Harry Potter – Blood Lines – De la tierra a la Luna – La muñeca menor

Picture 6

As a final individual task, each student had to create a TikTok video, a poster, a PowerPoint presentation or a Word document where they would share their pieces of advice to other teenagers on how to survive quarantine and social distancing. They could choose the format they felt more comfortable with, include photos or themselves in the video or not. Students who wanted to share their productions did so by sharing their screen and talking about their work. This also encouraged others to do the same.

According to Krashen (1981:31) "*The Affective Filter hypothesis implies that our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input, but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter.*" It could be said that by lowering the affective filter and anxiety levels some students could open up and share about their daily lives at home, their fights with members of their family, missing grandparents, not having a good hygiene routine or having video calls with their former classmates instead of making new friends at a new school. Last but not least, students mentioned two things that I considered as clues that lead the way: "the only subject I really want to attend on Zoom is English" and "Can we still meet during the winter holidays?" Therefore, it could also be concluded that students need spaces where they feel safe, heard and taken into account. By including CSE and generating projects with the students, all five axes of Comprehensive Sexuality Education were present throughout the didactic sequences: recognise gender

perspective, value affectivity, respect diversity, take care of our bodies and exercise our rights. However, we could highlight the importance of valuing affectivity and consider it as a tool to build rapport and connect through meaningful content and activities during the pandemic.

Conclusion

The objective of this article was to describe some of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) initiatives carried out in the EFL lessons, both at primary and secondary level, in a private school in Buenos Aires City in times of pandemic and lockdown. The aim was to describe some practices that would serve as models on how to include and teach CSE contents through Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). The descriptions of such initiatives also show that teachers cannot dismiss CSE contents, no matter if the students are attending even online lessons, both synchronous and asynchronous. Despite social distancing, teachers can open the door to self-expression and creativity, gender equality and gender perspective, critical thinking and articulation with other areas and teachers. As educators, we are agents of change and advocates of our students' rights. There is no doubt that we have the duty to secure and guarantee those rights. And by doing so, we will be creating safer, fairer and more inclusive spaces where our students can feel they can express themselves, feeling close even though we are just one screen away from each other.

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