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Women's Suffrage Through the CLIL Approach

Sufragio de las mujeres a través del enfoque AICLE

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to improve and develop students' critical thinking, as well as their linguistics skills, by making use of the CLIL approach. Focusing on relevant topics in today's society, such as the voting system, is an interesting opportunity not only to motivate students' learning, but also to be aware of the world they live in. The activities are designed for students around the voting age in Argentina with an intermediate level of English. Through the development of writing and speaking skills and collaborative work, students will be aware of the importance of past events, such as the women's suffrage, and social differences that are still happening all over the world.

Keywords: CLIL; CSE; critical thinking; women's suffrage; vote.

RESUMEN. El propósito de este artículo es mejorar y desarrollar el pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes, así como también sus habilidades lingüísticas a través del enfoque AICLE. Centrarse en temas relevantes para la sociedad es una oportunidad interesante para motivar la curiosidad y motivación de los estudiantes. Las actividades están diseñadas para alumnos próximos a la edad de votar en Argentina con un nivel intermedio de inglés. A través del desarrollo de habilidades de escritura, oralidad y trabajo colaborativo, los estudiantes serán conscientes de la importancia de eventos históricos tales como el sufragio femenino y diferencias sociales que siguen sucediendo actualmente en todo el mundo.

Palabras clave: AICLE; ESI; pensamiento crítico; voto femenino.

Introduction

Explicit discussion of feminism is present in today's society. Students hear words such as *feminism*, *equality*, or *human rights* on a daily basis. However, the lack of quality information can harm the basis of such an important issue. Thus, one of the biggest responsibilities of school is to provide tools that enable learners to create and develop their own point of view based on authentic historical events, such as the women's suffrage in Argentina.

The aim of this article is to describe classroom activities about women's suffrage in Argentina with students with an intermediate or B1 level in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The goal of working with such a topic is to develop students' critical thinking (Barnet & Bedau, 2011). To make this possible, it is necessary to follow a Content and Language Integrated Learning approach, where Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is undoubtedly included. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is guided by the 4Cs Framework, bringing together Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Consequently, the additional language becomes a vehicle to teach specific content — in this particular case, a historical event in Argentina.

Conceptual Framework

Women's suffrage has been one of the most remarkable events of all times. Women's role in society not only produces interrelated effects on diversity, inclusion, and critical thinking, but also aims to raise awareness of the present across cultures. Below, we outline how this topic is connected to key constructs in language education.

CLIL as a vehicle for critical thinking

Content and Language Integrated Learning has shown to have multiple benefits when it comes to deciding the right approach in the classroom.

As Banegas and Lauze (2020) state, CLIL can be used with two different intents: first, as a content-driven approach, or second, as a more language-driven approach. The first one focuses on teaching a particular subject in a different language. The second approach is adopted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons in which English learning is contextualized in curriculum to increase authenticity of purpose and topics (Pinner, 2013) and enhance language learning motivation (Banegas, 2013).

Thinking critically not only involves imagination, but also requires analysis and evaluation. As Barnet and Bedau (2011) state, critical thinking is “about searching for hidden assumptions, noticing various facets, unraveling different strands, and evaluating what is most significant” (p. 3). Through work with relevant and authentic topics and peer collaboration, students’ motivation and autonomy will develop, which will also lead to the development of their critical thinking.

Inclusion and diversity

In Argentina, Act 26.150 (2006) provides that Comprehensive Sexuality Education must be included in the curriculum. This perspective constructs and deconstructs socio historical and cultural assumptions. In fact, inclusion is “a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 13). As Pérez Berbain et al. (2021) state, “According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2002), diversity is a collective strength and the success of sustainable human development rests on the recognition and promotion of local knowledge” (p. 4). On the other hand, it suggests that it is essential to include representation and diversity in ELT because schools are key to socializing, preparing learners to become active and engaged members of society. Jenkins (2014), for his part, argues that “gender is one of the most consistent identificatory themes in human history, and one of the most pervasive classificatory principles” (p. 4).

Why women's suffrage?

Students need to be given the opportunity to grapple with questions that do not necessarily have one correct answer. As Oshiro (2019) suggests, including activities with higher-order questions is one way to stimulate critical thinking. Women's suffrage is a topic that leads the society to examine the impact that gender has on people's roles, opportunities, and access to economic and cultural capital (Gogna et al., 2013; Morgade & Alonso, 2008). The voting system in Argentina is a real social situation that students face now and will face in the future outside the classroom. It is important to note that the activities in the following section are illustrative and have not been necessarily put into practice yet.

Activity 1: Tic-tac-toe

After working with women's suffrage in Argentina as part of the CLIL approach, students will not only develop their previous knowledge about past events, but also their language skills. Learners produce sentences through peer collaboration.

Aim(s): To improve and develop students' speaking skills by working with historical events in Argentina.

Target learners: 16-year-old students - Intermediate Level (B1).

Language focus: Regular and irregular past tense.

Skills focus: Speaking.

Materials needed: Whiteboard, history copybook.

Figure 1. Tic-tac-toe grid

WOMEN RIGHTS	EVA PERÓN	WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
VOTE	IN THE PAST	8th MARCH
1947	ARGENTINA	JUAN PERÓN

Source: Own elaboration.

Estimated time: 15 minutes.

Procedure:

1. Students will be divided into two teams.
2. The teacher will draw a tic-tac-toe grid (Figure 1) on the whiteboard so students can complete it as they play along.
3. The teacher will pick one team and ask them to pick a word. Then, in groups, they will have to create a sentence containing the word they chose. For instance, “Eva Peron was a famous politician and activist in Argentina.” If the statement is correct, the group can draw a circle or a cross in the grid. Then, the other team will do the same.
4. The team that covers three spots in a row (across, down, or diagonal) is the winner.
5. Once students agree on the sentence, they will say it aloud. It must be grammatically correct, and it must be related to the material worked during the previous classes.
6. The teacher and the students will check the sentences on the board.

Feedback: At the end, the teacher will correct the sentences, asking peers if they think the sentence is correct.

Anticipated problems: If students are stuck on one sentence, they will be able to look in their history copybooks.

Alternatives: Students may write the sentences first and then read them aloud.

Activity 2: Word Map

In order to develop and expand students’ critical thinking, students exchange their ideas on CSE concepts related to women’s vote. Since they are very close to the voting age, the words on the word map may create an enriching discussion.

Aim(s): To discuss different concepts involved in women’s suffrage and to share examples from real life.

Target learners: 16-year-old students - Intermediate Level (B1).

Language focus: Simple Present and vocabulary related to giving opinion.

Skills focus: Speaking.

Materials needed: A poster (Figure 2) created by the teacher.

Figure 2. Poster



Source: Own elaboration.

Estimated time: 40 minutes.

Procedure:

1. Organize students into groups and give each group a copy of the word cloud.
2. Ask students to discuss one possible definition for each word; they may add an example to illustrate it.
3. Once students have finished, one member of each group shares the definition with the rest of the class out loud.
4. All the students must agree and create one definition for each word with all the collected ideas.
5. Each group must choose one or two words and illustrate them, taking examples from real life. For instance, a big stereotype can be women taking care of children.

Feedback: The teacher will be the oral mediator during the discussion. They will also take notes on grammatical mistakes, as well as

coherence and cohesion in the students' opinions and share them at the end of the students' discussion.

Anticipated problems: If a student needs more references to write the definitions, situational instances could be provided so that the student can figure out the meanings.

Alternatives: If learners have never discussed the topics included in the word cloud before, the activity could be flipped. This way, students read the definitions first, then match and discuss possible real situational instances to illustrate those definitions.

Activity 3: Comparing voting systems in different countries

Students will compare Argentina's voting system with that of some other country that they will be given from a box. The goal is to expand and review students' knowledge about the countries studied in history.

Aim(s): To foster collaborative work and critical thinking on suffrage by comparing different government systems.

Target learners: 16-year-old students - Intermediate Level (B1).

Language focus: Present and past time.

Skills focus: Writing and speaking.

Materials needed: The list of countries provided by the teacher or Poster (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Poster with countries

THE UNITED KINGDOM	SAUDI ARABIA
AFGHANISTAN	CUBA
SPAIN	SOUTH AFRICA

Source: Own elaboration.

Estimated time: 40 minutes.

Procedure:

1. The class will be divided into six groups of students.
2. The teacher will provide a list of countries and students will be assigned one randomly.
3. In groups, students will look up information online about the country they were assigned. They will write three different facts compared to the Argentinian system.
4. Students will show a poster showing the differences they found.
5. Every group will present the poster to the class.

Feedback: The teacher will correct grammatical mistakes in the poster and give oral feedback after the oral presentation of every group.

Anticipated problems: In order to avoid any confusion, the teacher will provide students with a list of possible information they can look for.

- 1) *How is the government system in _____?*
- 2) *How is the voting system? Voluntary? Is it compulsory?*
- 3) *In what year were women allowed to vote?*

Alternatives: In case students are not able to complete the activity, it will be homework for the next class.

Conclusion

The purpose of the article was to describe a set of activities from a CLIL approach. Women's suffrage is a historical event that goes beyond content. It leads us, as members of the society, to expand on CSE, where sexuality involves our identity as citizens.

A considerable implication for teachers applying the CLIL approach together with CSE may be making lessons more authentic and meaningful, especially taking into consideration students' future role in society. As students reach the voting age, working with a significant topic, such as women's suffrage, may be an interesting way to introduce historical events. As voters, students might be able to acquire a broader view, as well as foster critical thinking when it comes to

relevant issues such as the voting system. In addition, such practices may inspire teachers for related projects or for adapting them to similar topics. While the activities are set in Argentina, the discussion on voting and equal access to it can resonate with different contexts around the world.

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